
Editorial Political blogs

THIS edition of *Pacific Journalism Review* publishes some of the articles presented at the Public Right To Know (PR2K6) conference held in Sydney on 23-25 November 2007. The conference is hosted by the Australian Centre for Independent Journalism (ACIJ), University of Technology, Sydney. The 2007 conference was the sixth in the series and its theme was ‘Reporting futures: journalism, new media, new publics’.

The conference coincided with the 2007 Australian Federal election that resulted in a decisive Labor victory, ending 11 years of a Liberal-National coalition government. This edition comes out on the eve of the 2008 New Zealand election where the Labour-led governing coalition is fighting for survival after three terms in office.

Against the backdrop of politics in November 2007, the conference opened with ‘Election 07: straws in the wind for the future of journalism’ presented by **Mark Bahnisch**, sociologist and founder of the blog *Larvatus Prodeo*. He spoke on the role and significance of political blogging in the leadup to the Federal election. Bahnisch argues that the real value of Australian political blogs is the public and political conversation that they create, which migrates beyond the blogging platform itself. Continuing on the theme of new media, academic and journalist **Chris Nash** comments on *Possum Pollytics*, an anonymous blog that emerged in the course of the 2007 Australian Federal election campaign, and how it highlights the challenge of new media to professional journalism, including a public’s capacity ‘to know, to criticise and to interrogate’.

The public’s right to know and political manipulation are explored by **Richard Mills**, former Chief-of-Staff to the Minister for Defence and Deputy Ombudsman. He comments on the manipulation of intelligence agencies by the Australian government in its decision to commit Australia to the 2003 Coalition invasion of Iraq on the basis of its weapons of mass destruction.

Academic and former legal counsel for an Australian subscription television broadcaster, **Susanne Lloyd-Jones**, explores the evolving future of communications regulation in Australia in light of the current national security context of post 9/11. Her view is that communications regulation will increasingly be calibrated with national security policy.

Continuing the theme of restricting press freedom, and the fact that recent international surveys of press freedom have listed Australia well down on world rankings, academics **Jane Johnston** and **Mark Pearson**, examine some of the shrinking press freedoms occurring in Australia, in particular, the laws relating to freedom of information, camera access to courts, shield laws and whistleblower protection and the revamped anti-terrorism laws. Johnston and Pearson suggest that laws controlling media reportage in Australia need to be renegotiated and welcome the recent initiative by industry leaders to form Australia's Right to Know campaign as a research and lobbying tool.

Broadcast journalist and lecturer in journalism, **Tony Maniaty**, comments on the changing nature of conflict reporting, with its strong tradition of independence and freedom to report at the frontline, which has increasingly morphed into reporting done far from the war zone, by correspondents reliant on common and supplied footage. He proposes that conflict reporting has become narrower and more homogenised as a result, even though the flow of war stories through secondary information outlets, such as niched cable channels, websites, blogs and so on, would imply otherwise.

Since 2000, 60 journalism students from the Queensland University of Technology, have undertaken practical work overseas as part of their degree. Academic and former editor, **Lee Duffield**, reports on the programme and concludes that there are multiple benefits to the students, particularly in helping to equip them to be journalists in a global environment.

Academic **Susan Angel** argues that a cultural studies approach to analyse journalism will enable the identification of meaning in contemporary events and their reportage. Angel draws on post-colonial theory to examine the production of journalism in the context of the media coverage of the Australian government's intervention in the Northern Territory Aboriginal communities.

The final article from this collection from the Public Right To Know conference is that of **Ruth Skilbeck**, an academic and arts writer. Ruth looks at the role of art journalism in the ongoing expansion of the international contemporary art world and the multi-billion dollar global art economy, and discusses some contradictory impacts of globalisation on art journalism.

Chris Nash, former director of the Australian Centre of Independent Journalism and Tony Maniaty, current director, wish to thank **David Robie** of AUT University's Pacific Media Centre for inviting them to publish papers

from the 2007 conference in *Pacific Journalism Review*. Dr Robie's support of the conference, the ACIJ and to this edition, is greatly appreciated. The directors also wish to thank the authors and reviewers for their involvement and support and **Jan McClelland** of the ACIJ for her editorial and administrative contribution to this edition.

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IN THE context of the themes of political blogging, security issues and communications regulation with many papers at PR2K6, New Zealand now faces a general election on 8 November while interrogating its own set of public right to know issues. As this edition went to press, *The Dominion Post*, whose award-winning editor **Tim Pankhurst** (2008) featured in the last edition of *PJR* with an article about the investigative successes of his newspaper, was facing contempt of court proceedings over publishing the so-called 'Terrorism files' leading to the Tuhoë raids in October 2007. In this edition, a commentary by former *New York Times* journalist **Alison McCulloch** examines post-9/11 narratives at work in New Zealand media coverage. In other articles, **Sarah Baker** and **Jeanie Benson** analyse media treatment of Asian crime in 'The suitcase, the samurai and the Pumpkin', while **Allison Oosterman** assesses war correspondent Malcolm Ross at work during the Samoan 'troubles' of 1899.

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Reference

Pankhurst, T. (2008). The power of print remains undiminished. *Pacific Journalism Review*, 14(1): pp. 33-44.