

**The Effect of Centralisation on
Regional Radio:
A Case Study of the Super Radio
Network in Northern New South
Wales and South East Queensland**

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B.Bus**

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

to

School of Design, Communication and Information Technology,
Faculty of Science and Information Technology,

University of Newcastle, Australia.

July 2015

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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Abstract

This research presents a case study of the Super Radio Network, the largest regional radio network in New South Wales (NSW), Australia. Since the 1920s when radio, as a broadcast medium, was introduced to Australia the industry was highly regulated. This regulation extended to licensing, ownership limits, foreign investment and content. However, in 1992 the Keating Labor government further deregulated the radio industry through the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* giving licensees more freedom by removing ownership limits. Deregulation was meant to create a more diverse and localised radio industry. However, from 1992 onward, there has been an increase in the number of radio stations networking their programmes to regional Australia resulting in a perceived loss of local content and locally hosted programmes.

This research examines the development of networking and the provision of local content and diversity in those networked environments. It examines, through interviews with radio practitioners, in particular programme-makers and managers within the Super Radio Network, how the role of radio practitioners as choice making agents work within the structures of legislation and radio formats to develop programme content for a local audience within a radio station's licence area.

Underlying this research is the focal theory of structuration developed by Anthony Giddens. The features of social systems and social production can be explained, according to Giddens, through the theory of structuration, specifically the notion of the duality of structure, which proposes that social systems, such as radio networks, exist through structural properties that consist of rules and resources that are both allocative (available material such as technology) and authoritative (non-material or human) and expressing the 'mutual dependence' of structure and agency.

Interviews with radio practitioners show how these agents work within the structures in which the radio industry operates and the analysis shows how programme content is compiled and whether it relates to the local licence area. This analysis considers whether regulating local content and having locally hosted programmes adds to the localness of regional radio. Finally, as the thesis will demonstrate there is some confusion over the term 'local' and this confusion occurs not only in its use by programme-makers but also in its lack of definitional precision in broadcasting legislation and government policy statements. This results in problems for both the network operators and the communities they service. This research directly interrogates the question of what constitutes the local and localism by putting forward a definition of these terms to reflect the nature of regional radio as it competes with a burgeoning and fluid set of industry structures that streams audio content over the Internet.

Declarations

Declaration 1:

I hereby declare that the work embodied in this thesis generated the following publications.

Refereed Conference Papers:

Criticos, H. (2010). Centralisation in regional radio: Networking and localism in the Super Radio Network. In K. McCallum (Ed.), *Media Democracy and Change: Refereed Proceedings of the Australian and New Zealand Communications Association Annual Conference, Canberra, July 7-9*. ISBN 987-1-74088-319-1. Available at: <http://www.proceedings.anzca10.org>

Criticos, H. (2012). From deregulation to regulation: A change for the better for regional radio? in C. Anyanwu, K. Green, J. Sykes (Eds), *Refereed Proceedings of the Australian and New Zealand Communication Association conference: Communicating Change and Changing Communication in the 21st Century*, ISSN 1448-4331, available at: <http://www.anzca.net/past-conferences/past-conf-index.html>

Pending:

Criticos, H. Local and Localism: The Broadcasting Dialectic *Rethinking Communication, Space and Identity Refereed Proceedings of the Australian and New Zealand Communications Association Annual Conference, Queenstown, July 8-10*

Refereed Abstracts

Presented at: Communication, Creativity and Global Citizenship: Refereed Proceedings of the Australian and New Zealand Communication Association Conference July 2009:

Criticos, H. (2009) *The Effect of Centralisation on Regional Radio: A Case Study of the Super Radio Network (SRN) in New South Wales and South-East Queensland*.

Presented at: The Radio Conference: A Transnational Forum January 11-14, 2011

Criticos, H. (2011). *The Centralisation of Regional Radio: City Versus Country in the Super Radio Network*.

Book Chapter

Criticos, H. (2011). The Centralisation of Regional Radio: City Versus Country in the Super Radio Network. in Mollgaard, M. (ed) *Radio and Society: New Thinking for an Old Medium*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Book Entry

Criticos, H. Networking. In Griffin-Foley, B. (ed) *A Companion to the Australian Media*. Due for publication mid 2014.

Abstract refereed

Presentation of Non-refereed conference paper:

Presented at: The Radio Conference: A Transnational Forum 2013. University of Bedfordshire, Luton campus July 9-12, 2013.

Criticos, H. (2013). Regulating Local Content: Can it Restore Local Radio in an Era of Convergence.

Pending Publications:

Criticos, H. Regulating Local Content on Australian Radio: Can it Restore Local Radio in an Era of Convergence? *The Radio Journal*, October 2015

Acknowledgements

A PhD doesn't just happen. It is a fusion of talented people ranging from interviewees, academics and your supervisor. I thank the programme-makers and managers who allowed me into their performance space, a space that for many is private.

The Faculty of Science and Information Technology and the School of Design, Communication and IT at the University of Newcastle have some truly wonderful people. There are many in the school whose support made the journey a much better experience. Thank you to Dr Anne Llewellyn our Head of School for offering me a space to complete my thesis when I needed it most. Thank you to the academics, the 'techs' those wonderful souls in the administration office.

I am most appreciative of the assistance given by Dr Karen Blackmore. Without hesitation, Karen saved me from a great deal of heartache with her skills as a cartographer. Also, thanks to Garry Haworth from the School of Business. He didn't do much for me, except mention me in his acknowledgements. I'm returning the favour.

To my 'Vegas Room' buddies Denise Mohan and Victoria Jack. We shared the good and bad times, highs and lows and a lot of laughs, thank you. To Paul Scott my co-supervisor, thank you for the proof reading and editing. I owe you a beer or two.

To Dr Janet Fulton, who has some of the best shoulders to lean upon. Thank you Janet from the bottom of my heart, you always had time to listen and share your wisdom.

Dr Phillip McIntyre, my primary supervisor is an incredible human being with a depth of knowledge, generosity and patience that I have rarely, if ever, encountered in my time at any institution. To have a supervisor that can answer any question, shares their wealth of knowledge and makes time to listen, is the best supervisor a PhD candidate can have. I consider myself extremely fortunate and proud for having Phillip as my supervisor and hopefully in years to come as a colleague.

Finally, to my wonderful family Ami, Peter and Elleni, thank you for your love, patience and support meant through this journey.

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