

Writing to be heard: The Indigenous print media's role in establishing and developing an Indigenous public sphere

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Warning

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are warned that this thesis contains images of deceased people.

Abstract

Indigenous Australians make up only 2.5 percent of the Australian population and have historically had limited opportunity to influence public debate or policy. This has led to many Indigenous people feeling democratically disconnected from the broader Australian society. Despite this, since 1938 more than 35 publications have been produced by Indigenous Australians and those with an interest in Indigenous affairs, yet very little research has been carried out to establish how and why these newspapers were produced or what they achieved. Similarly, little is known about the role Indigenous print media in establishing and developing an Indigenous public sphere. This thesis seeks to bridge these gaps.

The thesis investigates the nature of an Indigenous public sphere in Australia, and aims to provide both an historic and journalistic understanding of how and why these newspapers existed with an insight into the people who produced the newspapers, the problems they faced and the journalistic techniques that they employed to achieve their very diverse aims.

A three-phase research approach was undertaken. A series of semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with Indigenous print media producers and contributors. A general textual analysis was then undertaken of a wide range of Indigenous publications accessed through Australian libraries and universities. Finally, available archival materials relating to the organisations and individuals involved in the production of Indigenous publications were analysed. The data gathered was then evaluated using the qualitative analytical software program, Nvivo.

The study reveals Indigenous public spheres have always existed and since 1938 Indigenous print media have played a significant role in their development. This study suggests the broader Indigenous public sphere consists of a series of overlapping spheres that are themselves made up of layers. The tiered construction of Indigenous public spheres limits the access individuals may have to public sphere processes and therefore influences engagement with Indigenous public spheres. Another key conclusion drawn by this investigation is that Indigenous public sphere processes are not static and have transitioned through different stages since 1938. This transition has occurred in response to stimuli from both within and outside the Indigenous community.

Until the 1990s, most Indigenous publications produced were connected to organisations concerned with Indigenous affairs. The growing number of Indigenous political and social organisations, resulted in a growing number of publications and is evidence of the level of healthy debate taking place within the Indigenous public sphere. However, a constant theme throughout these publications, from both an historic and contemporary perspective, has been the desire to obtain and maintain control of Indigenous public sphere processes and the messages and ideas being disseminated from within and throughout the Indigenous public sphere. Indigenous newspapers have mapped this battle for control.

Educating mainstream Australians in order to bring about attitudinal and social changes was and is an important focus for Indigenous publications. In an attempt to influence public opinion, Indigenous campaigners have used these publications to educate, inform, shame and cajole mainstream Australians. Indigenous newspapers have also been used successfully to bridge the gap between the Indigenous and dominant public spheres. Newspapers like *Land Rights Queensland* and the contemporary newspaper the *National Indigenous Times* have successfully managed to facilitate mainstream media engagement with issues that are of particular concern to Indigenous communities.

Indigenous publications have opened up Indigenous public sphere processes by including a diverse range of Indigenous voices and by covering topics that are often ignored by mainstream media. The connection between Indigenous publications and the Indigenous community is inextricable. Importantly, Indigenous newspapers provide an historical record of the views and actions of Indigenous public sphere participants and of their engagement with the dominant public sphere across time.

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During this investigation I visited the National Library of Australia, the State Library of New South Wales, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, the University of Queensland's Fryer Library and the National Archives of

Australia. I want to thank the librarians and archivists I met in each of these places who helped me to gather the information I needed for this study from copies of newspapers to dusty files in the archives. Your expertise, and willingness to share it, helped me to find little nuggets of information that I might otherwise have missed.

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Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the dissertation itself.

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Elizabeth Anne Burrows	Date
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Figures and Images

Figures

Figure 1 Diagrammatic representation of research design

Images

Image 1 Faith Bandler, Sydney, NSW, 30 November 2004.

Image 2 Corey Bousen, Brisbane, Queensland, 24 February 2005.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“People often say that, in a democracy, decisions are made by a majority of the people. Of course, that is not true. Decisions are made by a majority of those who make themselves heard and who vote - a very different thing.” **Walter H. Judd (1898-1994)**

This thesis considers the role Indigenous print media have played in providing Indigenous Australians with a voice to communicate within and across their own communities, and within Australian society generally since 1938. It is particularly concerned with the part Indigenous print media have played in mediating between the Indigenous community and the broader public sphere in Australia. Since the media's choice of news stories and the voices they choose to cite influence our understanding of the world around us, this thesis will conduct this discussion through a consideration of the news values and source choices of journalists writing for Indigenous newspapers.

Within an Australian context, the word “Indigenous” describes people of either/both “Aboriginal” or “Torres Strait Islander (TSI)” descent (ABS 1999). Information about the size of the Aboriginal population prior to colonisation in 1788 is sketchy with the anthropologist Elkin suggesting there were 300,000 Aboriginal people in Australia at that time and the Australian Bureau of Statistics claiming the Aboriginal population could have been as high as one million (Elkin 1961; ABS 2002). Elkin (1961) further suggests there were around 500 Aboriginal tribes or groups in existence, and around 250 distinct languages were spoken, with over 500 dialects (ABS 1999). After colonisation, disease, dispossession from their lands and the actions of settlers (Goodall 1996) led to a dramatic decline in the Aboriginal population and by 1901 it had dropped to less than 94,000 (ABS 2002). Census information from June 2006 shows the Indigenous population has increased and now makes up 2.5% (517,043) of the total Australian population (of just over 20 million). Indigenous communities and groups are dispersed throughout Australia (AIATSIS 2005) with more than a third of Indigenous people living in major cities; nonetheless, more than a quarter of Indigenous people live in remote or very remote parts of Australia (ABS 2006). Despite their small numbers AND the importance of oral history and language in Aboriginal culture, Indigenous Australians have produced an array of published material, including a range of newspapers.

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1.1 Previous research

Despite more than 35 different Indigenous publications being produced since 1938 in Australia (see Appendix 1), very little research has been carried out into why or how they were established, or indeed what they achieved. Marcia Langton and Brownlee Kirkpatrick produced *A listing of Aboriginal periodicals* in 1979 that primarily provided an expanded list of Aboriginal publications with limited discussion. Since Langton and Kirkpatrick’s list, Michael Rose has been the most cited voice in this area with his major contribution *For the Record: 160 Years of Aboriginal Print Journalism* (1996). Despite acting as a useful starting point for this research, Rose’s book is—and was intended to be—a comprehensive catalogue of Indigenous publications with examples from the newspapers rather than a considered discussion of their role and function. In contrast to his book, Rose’s unpublished Masters thesis provided more in-depth analysis of the history and background to the first national Indigenous newspaper, the *Koori Mail*.

Important work that provides the foundation for this study was published by Avison and Meadows in 2000. In *Speaking and Hearing: Aboriginal Newspapers and the Public Sphere in Canada and Australia* (2000), the authors provide an overview of the development of Indigenous communication in both Canada and Australia and theorise about why Aboriginal newspapers were produced in these countries. They propose that these newspapers have played an important role in the development of Aboriginal public spheres. They also explain that an important function for Aboriginal newspapers has been to counteract the lack of access afforded to Indigenous people by mainstream media.

Mainstream media are the principal mechanism for political public sphere processes in both Canada and Australia, and provide an important link between government and society. In fact the relationship between news media and government has been described as a symbiotic one, with each party dependent on the other (Schultz 1998, p. 42). However, when considering the role of mainstream media as a mechanism for mediating between society and government, Habermas's public sphere theory contends mainstream media discussions are no longer framed around the concerns raised by the voting public, but are most likely to be constructed by public relations practitioners, publishers and big business (1989, pp. 152-175). Mainstream media discussion of these manufactured topics is also dominated by elite voices (Bullimore 1999, p. 73). Ordinary people, and especially Indigenous people, are excluded from debates taking place even when they relate to issues concerning them (Meadows 1994; 1995; 2001; Burrows 2000; Ewart 2002). Avison and Meadows (2000) suggest Indigenous people have addressed this lack of access to democratic processes taking place within the political public sphere through the development of media which operate within their own public spheres. Herein lies the problem examined by this thesis, have Indigenous newspapers in Australia helped to establish and/or develop an Indigenous public sphere?

Habermas's original ideas around the concept of the public sphere specifically focus on the bourgeois public sphere. Fraser elaborated on this initial theory by suggesting alternative or subaltern public spheres have always existed and have always been in conflict with the dominant public sphere (1992, p. 116). Similarly, Avison and Meadows (2000) acknowledge the existence of Aboriginal public spheres prior to colonisation and argue they have provided a unique, culturally-appropriate space

where Aboriginal people can “deliberate together, to develop their own counter-discourses, and to interpret their own identities and experiences”. The aim of this study therefore is to build on the work done by Avison and Meadows and to investigate the function of Indigenous newspapers in Australia within an Indigenous public sphere or spheres. Importantly, it also seeks to provide a much-needed historical background to the development of the Indigenous print media in Australia. While the primary theoretical consideration of the thesis is the Indigenous print media’s role in the establishment and development of Indigenous public sphere/s, its dual function is to chart the emergence and trajectory of many publications through time. This thesis will endeavour to provide a brief history and clearer portrait of the people who participated in the production of these newspapers and the problems, successes, achievements and battles they faced. This study will also examine how these newspapers were funded, produced and circulated.

1.2 Defining Indigenous media

Since the term “Indigenous newspapers” is a broad one it is necessary to set some limits on this project. For instance, a number of newspapers and magazines have been produced by government departments and organisations to promote issues/ideas/information Australian governments have wanted Indigenous people to read. Examples include *Dawn* and *New Dawn* which were produced by the NSW Welfare Board from 1952-1975, *ATSIC News* produced by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), and *Namala Tusi* produced by the Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. These newspapers, while perhaps having good intentions, were connected to and emerged from government agencies rather than the Indigenous community and their function was to promote messages that were palatable to those agencies. Publications that fall into this group were not included in this study. Similarly, *The Flinders Island Chronicle* was published from 1836-1837 on Flinders Island, off the Tasmanian coast, under the auspices of the Chief Protector of Port Phillip, George Augustus Robinson, by three Aboriginal men Thomas Brune, Walter George Arthur and Walter Juba Martin. Since it is unclear how much influence Robinson had over the content of this publication it is again not included in this study.

Newspapers included in this study's definition of "Indigenous" print media are those publications that have been established by members of the Indigenous community or on occasion non-Indigenous people who were motivated to produce publications about Indigenous affairs which had Indigenous community involvement or strong synergies with the broader Indigenous community. Their prime goal must have been to be a central element of the Indigenous public sphere and to promote messages and ideas emerging from *within* this space rather than to promote messages or information from outside agencies, government departments or government statutory bodies. Key criteria for publications to be included in this study are that they should be produced by people with connections to the Indigenous community; their purpose should be driven by the needs of the Indigenous community and publications should include a range of Indigenous community voices. Howley's definition of "community media" is particularly apt when applied to Indigenous media. These media should be grassroots publications, they should respond to a "profound senses of dissatisfaction with mainstream form and content" and seek to encourage "free expression and participatory democracy" and be motivated to "enhancing community relations and promoting community solidarity" (2005, p. 29). Similarly, comparisons can be drawn between Australian Indigenous media and African American media. For instance, Vogel (1998, p. 38) characterises African-American newspapers as providing a "stage" on which editors presented an "alternative vision" of African-American individuals and communities. He argues African-American newspapers have historically tried to change perceptions about black people, their philosophies and lives. These newspapers sought to educate their readers and to "counter and remake the dominant discourse" (Vogel 1998, p. 45). How Indigenous media fit into the broader mediasphere will be expanded upon, with definitions of both mainstream and alternative media, in Chapter Two.

1.3 Overview of this thesis

Chapter 2 forms the first part of a three-part consideration of previous research relevant in this field. In particular it provides an overview of the democratic role of mainstream and alternative media in society and explains why Indigenous Australians are largely excluded from the mainstream democratic conversation in Australia. It briefly examines the effect of colonisation on Indigenous Australians and considers how this has influenced *their* perception of their place in democratic Australian

society. While Indigenous people in other countries have also lived through the process of colonisation, the literature suggests Indigenous people in Australia have had a unique experience. Chapter 2 also discusses the evolution of unique Indigenous communication methods such as dance, art, and music along with more conventional communication methods such as broadcast and print media.

Like Avison and Meadows 2002 work, this study finds Habermas's public sphere framework useful to help understand and evaluate the Australian Indigenous print media. Chapter 3 provides an synopsis of Habermas's theory of the bourgeois public sphere (1989), and this discussion continues with a consideration of research by scholars such as Fraser (1992), Dahlgren (1991) Eley (1999) and others who have further developed public sphere theory. Given the exclusion of minority groups from Habermas's original theory (although he has since amended this) this deliberation is followed by an investigation of the literature related to the existence of counterpublic spheres and how democratic debates can successfully take place if there are a multitude of competing interests battling for attention (Poodle 1989; Fraser 1992; Eley 1999; Garnham 1986, 2000). This chapter surveys the literature relating to studies that focus on other counterpublic spheres such as Canadian Aboriginal public spheres (Avison 1996; Avison & Meadows 2000), the African American public sphere (Jacobs 2000; Squires 1999, 2002) and the Maori public sphere (Stuart 2003, 2005). This discussion of counterpublic spheres also considers Hartley and McKee's (2000) research into the Indigenisation of the Australian mainstream public sphere.

The third and final component of the consideration of previous research (Chapter 4) shifts the focus of discussion away from public sphere frameworks, and back to the journalistic practises of the mainstream and alternative media—particularly how news values and sources are used. Chapter 4 considers how alternative and mainstream journalists make news decisions and how this impacts on minority groups and particularly Indigenous Australians. This chapter will also consider the different ways mainstream and alternative journalists choose the sources they include in stories and the effect this has on social movements and pressure groups.

Chapter 5 details the three-phased research strategy undertaken to complete this study: a survey; semi-structured interviews and textual analysis. The decision to carry out semi-structured, in-depth interviews and a survey instrument is discussed. The benefits, disadvantages and specific process undertaken during the textual analysis of

the range of Indigenous newspapers are explained. These research methods were complemented by significant archival research to facilitate the inclusion of thorough historical background to each of the publications, and to the political and social climates of the different eras discussed. Finally, the data analysis process discusses the use of qualitative data analysis software, which assists in the identification of the main themes of each of the subsequent results chapters.

The results are presented as four distinct chapters, building a picture of the development of Indigenous communication methods and political strategies since 1938. To allow for comparison across the different time frames, each chapter considers similar themes. Specifically each chapter provides an overview of the living conditions Indigenous people experienced during each era along with their ability to participate politically. Furthermore, each chapter considers the roles of the Indigenous newspapers within Indigenous public spheres of the time. Since alternative media research has suggested a range of characteristics that newspapers in this media zone may exhibit, each chapter will also discuss the characteristics exhibited by Indigenous newspapers. Therefore information that illustrates the levels of their funding, circulation, distribution, goals and roles, news value, source choices and pressures they experienced will be discussed.

Chapter 6, the *Trailblazers*, draws on the data gathered predominantly from a textual analysis of *Abo Call*, *The Voice of the Aborigines*, *Smoke Signals*, *Churinga* and archival materials gathered at the Mitchell Library in NSW. Some background data was also gathered from interviews. Since many of the people involved in the Indigenous print media at this time are deceased, the primary data gathered for this chapter has been supplemented with secondary data from historians such as Attwood (2003), Horner (1974) and Lippman (1991). This chapter also examines perhaps the first attempts by Indigenous organisations to use contemporary communication methods and to try to influence government policy relating to Indigenous people.

Chapter 7, the *Revolutionaries*, considers the range of Indigenous newspapers produced from the late 1960s through to the late 1970s. Although many Indigenous newspapers were produced during this era, this chapter specifically focuses on five influential newspapers: *The Koorier*, *Identity*, *the Black Australian News*, *Black Liberation* and *the Black News Service*. These publications were chosen because of the significant role they played in the development of an Indigenous public sphere,

and this chapter is enhanced by the availability of a number of the key personalities from that era. The data discussed in this chapter was therefore gathered from interviews, archival research and a textual analysis of the newspapers. As in the previous chapter, analysis of what I have termed the “revolutionary” newspapers shows the diversity of views that existed across the Indigenous public sphere. Analysis of Indigenous newspapers during this time highlights the existence of factions within the Indigenous public sphere that fought to control the messages being communicated outwards from the Indigenous sphere to the broader political public sphere. The newspapers produced during this era clearly show Indigenous people were in control of their own public sphere processes and provide the first evidence that rather than one Indigenous public sphere, there are multiple Indigenous public spheres.

Chapter 8, *The Fight for Land Rights* concentrates on five Indigenous newspapers that were particularly focused on the land rights issue. The data in this chapter is drawn from interviews and analysis of the newspapers with some information being gathered from archival materials. Land rights have been and still are an immensely important issue for Indigenous Australians however the land rights debate was at its most prominent from the late 1970s through to the end of the 1990s. This chapter considers how *Bunji*, *NQ Messagestick* and *National Messagestick*, *Land Rights News* and *Land Rights Queensland* were used to further this discussion in both the Indigenous and dominant public spheres.

Chapter 9, *The Professionals*, illustrates the evolving nature of communication within the Indigenous public sphere. This chapter considers the two contemporary national Indigenous newspapers, *The Koori Mail* and the *National Indigenous Times (NIT)* and regional and local newspapers *Yamaji News*, *Kurbingui Star*, *Murri Views*, *Torres News* and the Indigenous magazine *Deadly Vibe*. Most of the data in this chapter has been gathered from interviews with participants and analysis of the publications. These newspapers were produced from the early 1990s through to the present day.

At a macro level, this more contemporary era is defined by the drive for self-determination and the implementation of government policy such as the establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), land rights legislation and the *Bringing Them Home* report which gave evidence to the nation about the widespread practice of “removing” Indigenous children from their families

up until the 1970s in Australia. Major features of this era are the contrasting attitudes of the Hawke/Keating governments and the Howard Government to Indigenous affairs. Yet at a micro level, this was also a time of change for the Indigenous print media. Analysis of the newspapers and the interviews with participants illustrate a growing professionalism in the Indigenous print media. These developments in the Indigenous print media show the continuing changes in Indigenous public sphere processes and structure. Overall, this chapter continues to illustrate the evolving nature of the Indigenous print media within the Indigenous public sphere.

Chapter 10 begins to draw connections between the study's findings and the broader concepts which frame the thesis such as public sphere processes, journalistic practices and news values in the contrasting media spheres. This chapter considers how analysis of these newspapers has demonstrated not only the range of public sphere processes undertaken by Indigenous print media but how these processes are indicative of the evolving nature of the Indigenous public sphere in relation to its wider, political and social setting. Furthermore, the chapter examines the role of Indigenous organisations in Indigenous public spheres. As a wider range of Indigenous political organisations have been established and developed, the ability of these organisations to use their own communication methods to lobby mainstream audiences and governments has also expanded. This chapter suggests that Indigenous public sphere processes change, react, withdraw and push forward in response to the political and social environment in which they exist. This analysis of the way Indigenous print media operate has also provided a clearer picture of the structure of Indigenous public spheres and how they interact and connect with the dominant public sphere. This chapter suggests the inherent differences between the structure of the Indigenous public sphere and Australian political processes may impact on the inclusion and effectiveness of Indigenous voices within broader public sphere discussions.

The second half of this chapter considers the suggestions in earlier chapters that alternative media fulfil a wider range of counterpublic and dominant public sphere processes than the mainstream media. Drawing on the evidence presented in this study the discussion explores ideas about Indigenous identity, Indigenous political participation and the mainstream Australian community's understanding of Indigenous perspectives. Since the literature suggests alternative and mainstream journalists use a different range of news values and choose sources based on different

criteria, this final chapter will also examine whether the evidence supports the idea that Indigenous print media journalists make different news decisions from mainstream journalists.

Chapter 11 brings this study to a close with a summation of the main arguments made and draws conclusions which address the primary concern of this thesis – does an Indigenous public sphere exist and have Indigenous print media helped to develop Indigenous public sphere processes? If so, how can we describe the operations of the Indigenous public sphere? The final chapter includes recommendations for the future direction of the Indigenous print media and government practice and policy based on the findings of this study. It highlights the limitations of the study and suggests future research directions in the field.

Chapter 2: Media, Democracy and Indigenous Australians

While contemporary Australian society is made up of many diverse groups it is still primarily a white, Anglo-Saxon-Celtic culture. Indigenous people—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders—make up only 2.5 percent of the total population (ABS 2006). This has implications regarding the ability of Indigenous people, and others who belong to ethnic minority groups, to participate in the democratic conversation. This chapter investigates the literature which has examined the “lack of connectedness” Indigenous Australians feel towards Australian democracy. Indigenous participation in the mainstream “sphere” of Australian society is key to future discussions in this study about the creation of an Indigenous public sphere. This chapter also considers the role of mainstream, alternative and Indigenous (both broadcast and print) media within the Australian democratic framework. Of course, Indigenous communication did not start with the arrival of white men on Australian shores in 1788, and I discuss the range of communication techniques used by Indigenous Australians prior to colonisation. Overall, my aim is to investigate the communication methods and conduits for Indigenous Australians, and the possibilities these offer to fully participate in Australian democracy.

2.1 Democracy and Indigenous people

While Australia has similarities with countries such as New Zealand, Canada and South Africa (Tomaselli & Louw 1989; Switzer 1991; Louw 1995; Avison 1996; Stuart 2003, 2005) in terms of its colonisation and development, the way Australian society has been framed and shaped by the events and laws of its past make it unique (Reynolds 1996, p. xii). Australia’s Indigenous people have lived with the myth of *terra nullius*¹ for most of their shared history with non-Indigenous Australia and this in itself sets Australia apart from other colonised countries. The *terra nullius* myth has shaped the way Indigenous Australians view their place within Australian society (Peterson & Sanders 1998, p. 6; Bennett 1999, p. 154), and indeed in the way they are viewed by “the colonisers” and their descendents. Australia was declared “empty” despite the existence of at least 500 distinct Aboriginal tribes (Elkin 1961).

¹ Terra nullius literally means “land belonging to no one” and was the term used to describe the state of Australia when originally colonised to justify its availability for settlement. In practice, it meant the British colonizers were not required to reach any formal agreements, or treaties, with Indigenous people if they claimed the land was “empty” or belonging to no-one, when they arrived.

Similarly, the fact that some Indigenous people do not believe they enjoy the same rights that are considered basic pillars of democratic society by non-Indigenous Australians highlights a need to provide a fair and equitable space where Indigenous people can come together, either physically or metaphysically, to debate issues of concern to them (Ivanitz 2001, pp. 127-128). Ivanitz argues the democratic system in Australia is “unresponsive to Indigenous needs” and this has led to a lack of trust from Indigenous people towards government about their ability to formulate and develop appropriate policy. She argues the severe disadvantage endured by Indigenous Australians demonstrates that democratic principles have failed them (Ivanitz 2001, p. 127). While Indigenous people are Australia’s traditional owners, they have been considered “foreigners” in their own land (Hartley 1992, pp. 198, 206). Consequently, many Indigenous people feel disconnected and ignored within the democratic frameworks that exist in Australian society.

2.2 The media and democracy

How a range of diverse voices, and particularly those of Indigenous Australians, might achieve an equal hearing within society is a question that goes right to the heart of this thesis. A healthy society requires the participation of a multitude of voices and the acceptance of a wide range of diverse opinions (Schultz 1989, p. 82). Yet having many different groups or participants competing for the public “ear” could end up being nothing more than a babble of noise above which very few but the most dominant or loudest can be heard (Husband 2000, p. 207). Therefore, a workable, legitimate democracy requires all voices to be heard, understood and informed (Keane 1991, p. 175; Curran 1991, p. 30; Fraser 1992, pp. 119, 123).

Mainstream media provide the channels that should allow a range of diverse voices. The mainstream media’s role in informing citizens through their distribution of news and opinion and their ability to frame social and political agendas makes it one of the most, if not *the* most, important institution in a democratic society (Schultz 1989, p. 80). Media fulfil an important function by “feeding and sustaining the democratic process” and by providing citizens with the information they require to make “rational electoral and economic choices” (McNair 1994, p. 21). While much research has been carried out into how mainstream media fulfil these democratic functions, there has been little consideration of how successfully Indigenous print media specifically

might perform this task. If we consider that mainstream media journalists tend to be “white, Anglo or Irish-Australian and usually male, middle-class, able-bodied and not too ugly” (Jakubowicz 1989, p. 107; Henningham 1993) and that majority group viewpoints and concerns dominate the mainstream media because they make up the largest target audience for advertisers (Gross 1998, p. 88; Allan 2004, pp. 48, 52), it is unlikely mainstream media publications will meet the needs of the Indigenous community. Since Indigenous people make up only around two percent of the Australian population their needs are unlikely to be a primary consideration for mainstream media. This suggests a void that Indigenous media outlets could bridge.

Furthermore, Fuller argues newspapers must reflect the concerns of their audience and share the same “interests, tastes and values” and that ultimately newspapers “not only serve but also create their communities. And then they lead them”. Newspapers should help to connect the individuals who make up a community and provide the impetus for them to converse and to help combat the fragmentation that can occur within communities (Fuller 1997, pp. 228-229). McNair suggests mainstream media should not only provide access to a range of diverse opinions and facilitate discussion but also that it should feed and sustain the democratic process and provide the information citizens need to make informed political and economic decisions (1994, p. 21). “Informed citizen[s]” are essential to democracy and governments should always be accountable to the citizens they represent (Gurevitch et al. 1991, p. 195). Consequently, media have the ability to shape public opinion (Schultz 1998, p. 151; Lewis & Wahl-Jorgensen 2005, p. 99) and to be the “link between the governors and the governed” (Schultz 1994, p. 57). The media are “watchdogs of the public interest” and part of their role is to scrutinise the powerful forces within society and to report back to the public (Schultz 1994, p. 35; Lewis and Wahl-Jorgensen 2005). In summing up then, media should open up access to democratic processes to all groups in society, provide citizens with sufficient information to make decisions, facilitate political participation and finally monitor government activities and report back to the public.

Yet despite much agreement about the part media (and particularly mainstream media) *should* play within a democratic society as an integral component of the political public sphere, how successfully they fulfil even the most basic of these

requirements is questioned by some scholars. Carey (1997) argues traditional media do not facilitate the participation of ordinary people in the public sphere and the professionalism that was fought for by journalists has actually precluded access to media by ordinary citizens (Ewart 2002, p. 61; Manca 1989, p. 171). Instead the news agenda is now driven by elites and politicians (Allan 2004, p. 101). Consequently, rather than citizens participating in the “grassroots” discussion that is essential to democracy, they have become “passive spectators” of discussions driven by politicians, public relations practitioners, journalists and columnists and other elites (Manca 1989, p. 171).

These criticisms regarding access to the media and the failure to encourage political participation are predominantly directed at the mainstream media and offer justification for the emergence of alternative media (Forde 1997, 1999; Johnstone et al. 1976; Kellner 1989; Tomaselli & Louw 1989; Downing 1988; Rodriguez 2002; Atton 2002, 1999, 2003). While in a broad sense mainstream media offer information about and to communities and individuals at a local, state, national and international level, often this information excludes the voices and opinions of marginalised and minority groups (Ewart 2002, p. 65). In fact, access to the mainstream media is “stratified” and this stratification occurs as a direct result of journalistic practices which are biased towards the dominant group in society (Jacobs 2000, p. 25).

Cottle (2000, p. 2) and Gross (1998, p. 88) suggest that media often provide us with a sense of our identity and place in society. Media define the social space people occupy and the cultural power plays that affect them by providing individuals and communities with an impression of whether they belong to the “us” or “them”, “colonized” or “colonizer”, or the “insider” or “outsider” (Cottle 2000, p. 2). “White” audiences often have little or no contact with minority and marginalised groups, and media are therefore often their only source of information about these groups (van Dijk 2000, p. 36). Cottle accuses mainstream media of “producing shocking examples of xenophobic reporting and racist portrayals” of minority groups and van Dijk asserts minority groups portrayed in this way often have little recourse or power to put forward an alternative perspective (Cottle 2000, p. 3; van Dijk 2000, p. 36; Downing & Husband 2005, p. 36). Minority groups are often rendered invisible or are subject to stereotypical reportage within the mainstream media (Gross 1998, p. 88), and those

deemed to be unsuitable sources by mainstream journalists find it difficult to be included in news stories (Ewart 2002, p. 65). Van Dijk asserts the opinions of minority people are considered “less credible or newsworthy” and as such are asked for less often (2000, p. 37). Like Jakubowicz (1989, p. 107), van Dijk blames this omission on the fact that most journalists are white (2000, p. 37).

Lack of access to the mainstream media and their inability to be heard within the political or mainstream public sphere (Allan 2004, p. 52) has led to many minority groups turning to alternative media and alternative public spheres in order to be heard (Jacobs 2000, p. 28). Since Indigenous people are a minority and marginalised group within Australian society, and their media are generally placed within the realm of alternative media in the “mediasphere” (Hartley & McKee 2000), this chapter will investigate in some detail how alternative media fit into the mediasphere.

2.3 Defining “alternative media”

There is no clear definition of the term “alternative media”. There are a range of names used to describe publications that fall outside the mass or mainstream media—alternative, citizens’, development, radical, community, democratic, grassroots, progressive, people’s and advocacy media (Atton 2002; Downing 2001; Traber 1986; Rodriguez 2002; Tomaselli & Louw 1989; O’Siochru 1999)—although Downing argues these categorisations “conceal more than they reveal” (1995, p. 38). Creating a definite list of characteristics that make alternative media different from the mainstream media is no simpler and Atton argues the inability to form a “meaningful” definition of alternative media has resulted in many alternative forms having to prove they actually exist (2002, pp. 7, 12, 14). Therefore, the “boundaries” surrounding what is considered alternative media are “very unclear” (Hackett & Zhao 1998, p. 203) but Atton has specified three defining features alternative media should conform to: they should be “non-commercial”, motivated to promote ideas that are in opposition to those promoted in the mainstream media and they should define *themselves* as alternative (2002, p. 12).

2.3.1 The role of the alternative media

Despite the difficulty in pinning down a clear definition or name for these outlets, alternative media are an important part of the media landscape that, in contrast to mainstream, provide alternative and marginal groups with a space in which to be heard (Kellner 1989, p. 144). A common alternative media characteristic is that their “emphasis is on ordinary people rather than the newsmakers” and their keyword is “participation” (Tomaselli & Louw 1989, pp. 204, 213). The provision of a forum where ordinary people can be heard is vital for minority groups who are excluded or invisible within mainstream media and the dominant public sphere. Past research suggests defining functions of the alternative press are that they provide more comprehensive contextual information for issues already covered in mainstream media; they provide an arena in which alternative and minority voices can be heard; they seek to improve the lives of minority/marginalised groups; and to advance the relationship between these people and the dominant group in society and encourage political participation (Forde 1997, p. 119; Atton 1999; Anderson 1997; Traber 1986, p. 108; Hackett & Zhao 1998, p. 203; Atton 2002, p. 12). However, Rodriguez warns against simply considering alternative media as an “alternative” to mainstream media and argues alternative or citizen’s media are instrumental in helping to facilitate community change and development, and are a source of empowerment (2002, p. 79). Furthermore, journalists who work for alternative media possess “a very strong notion of their public role, and of the function of their publications within the community and the media industry generally” (Forde 1997, p. 119). Alternative journalists consider it part of their role to encourage and influence public sphere debate (Forde 1997, p. 126). Forde’s research into the different use of sources and news values within the alternative media validates the need to consider the use of sources and news values in this study (Forde 1999).

2.4 Alternative media and social movements

This analysis of how alternative media connect into the mediasphere is also important because of their connection to social movements. Social movements have played an important role in Indigenous communication and politics in Australia since the 1920s. The connection between social movements and alternative media was also made by Downey and Fenton who identified an increase in both the numbers of new social

movements and non-government organisations operating throughout Central and Eastern Europe and an increase in alternative media operations. They also identified that these organisations and movements did not restrict their communications to alternative or mass media but used both within their work (2003, pp. 187-188). The use of alternative media by these social movements and NGOs ties in with Downing's argument that radical [or alternative] media are "essential to the creation, maintenance and survival of social movements" (2001, pp. 23,31). Social movements are "dynamic expressions of resistance" and it is often within these social movements that societal change begins (Downing 1995, p.23). Downing maintains social movements are "where the action is" and this action generates public debate and conversation about issues in the hope of causing social change. Social movement activity is not passive or gentle but features dramatic highs and lows of resistance and conflict and without media to publicise their actions, they could not survive. Downing argues radical media and social movements are inextricably linked and the need for efficient and effective communication within and between these social movements is paramount. Their messages must be communicated to the general public, between group members and throughout the various groups (Downing 1995, pp. 23, 26, 31-32).

Traber called for a communications revolution by grassroots people that should not be limited to the poor and downtrodden in South American countries but should reach into the industrialised first world nations (1986, p.4). Perhaps as an example of where this has occurred, Raboy discusses the use of alternative media by social movements during the communications revolution that took place during the 1960s and 1970s in Quebec, Canada. Raboy argues the media used by social movements at the time were viewed as propaganda tools that urged "a target population on towards a specific action" and created a "sense of revolt" that ran through Quebecois society and the social movements operating at that time (1984, pp. 15, 47). These groups needed "a system of communication to express their own political voice" and communications networks that "truly belonged to protest movements" (Raboy 1984, pp. 57, 74). Consequently, alternative media can provide the mechanisms social movements use to target their constituents and to generate the people power necessary to pressure governments and organisations for social change.

Dahlgren and Sparks suggest alternative organisations and groups also produce their own media to *complement* mainstream media (1991, p. 14). They argue these alternative media are more in touch with grassroots people and therefore have alternative sources of information and stories. While alternative organisations such as Greenpeace have successfully used mainstream media to reach the wider community, social movements now create their own media that compete for mainstream media attention but also become a source of story ideas for mainstream media journalists (Dahlgren 1991, p.14). As Downey and Fenton have suggested has occurred in Europe, social movements may use both mass and alternative media to achieve their aims (2003, p. 188). While radical media may be dependent upon each other for survival (Downing 2001, pp. 23, 31), to successfully achieve their goals and bring about social change they must engage with mass media too (Downey & Fenton 2003, p. 193). Therefore, social movements cannot ignore the power of the dominant news media because it is in this media sphere that public opinion and policy is shaped and consequently, while radical/alternative media can help build identity and cultural values, social movements must also develop strategies to break into the mainstream arena.

2.5 Indigenous communication prior to colonisation

So far I have considered mainstream methods of communication in contemporary society and the need for “alternatives” to emerge. However, to understand the role and contribution of Indigenous media—and in the case of this study, specifically the Indigenous print media—it is important to consider Indigenous patterns of communication prior to the advent of what we currently understand as “media”. While information is scarce about the extent and nature of Aboriginal communication systems prior to colonisation in 1788, there is no doubt that communication systems existed (Molnar & Meadows 2001a, p. 3). These traditional communication systems included “song, performance, artistic genres...use of message sticks and smoke signals for distant transmissions” (ATSIC 1999, p. 9). Prior to colonisation there were between 200 and 250 different Indigenous languages spoken with more than 500 dialects, although at least 50 of these languages are now extinct (ABS 1999; Molnar & Meadows 2001a, p. 9). Van den Berg explains storytelling was a key part of Aboriginal culture in Australia and was used to educate children about the Dreamtime and aspects of their culture (sacred sites and where they could and could not go) and

environment (fishing and hunting spots). Story telling, which might be told through the medium of dance, was a part of trade meetings, corroborees and ceremonies (marriage, rites of passage). Stories whether communicated orally or through dance or art were used to record history and to communicate information (Van den Berg 2005).

Following colonisation, Indigenous languages, communication and culture were devastated. Indigenous people were considered “primitive” and mainstream media have been instrumental in fostering the view among non-Indigenous Australians of Indigenous people as “the exotic “other”, the noble savage, the ignoble savage, a dying race, the welfare dependent, the drunk, the activist, the colonial dependent, the threat to the existing order, and invisible” (Molnar & Meadows 2001a, p. 196). Indigenous people have had little or no control over the way they have been represented to Australian society by both governments and the mainstream media (Molnar & Meadows 2001a, p. 196). The Indigenous print media could therefore be considered as a mechanism used to exert control over the messages and ideas relating to Indigenous people and their culture.

2.6 The role played by Indigenous media

Mainstream or mass media have been described as “battlegrounds” between contending forces (Curran 1991) and Indigenous people’s struggle for their issues to be heard has been likened to their struggle to obtain land rights (Molnar & Meadows 2001a, p. 5). When Indigenous people do obtain access to mainstream media, it is a restricted access with little control over content (Molnar & Meadows 2001a, p. 4). Indigenous Canadians were quick to recognise the value of new communication technologies in providing media diversification and control (Roth & Valaskakis Guthrie 1989, p. 221). Despite initially being concerned about the negative impact such technology could have on their culture, they are now demanding access to new communication technologies “to build community, reinforce cultural identity, and support the activities and values of native lifestyles” (Roth & Valaskakis Guthrie 1989, p. 221). Roth and Valaskakis Guthrie argue that by adopting these new forms of communication, broadcasters have supported the cultural diversity of Canadian society and made the broadcast system there more democratic (1989, p. 221).

In its 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations identified the importance of communication (Article 19) and identified it as a basic human right. The ATSIIC report, *DIGITAL DREAMING: A National Review of Indigenous Media and Communications* defined the importance of communication as being:

Communication is not just imparting information, but the representation of shared beliefs. It therefore does not meet a people's need for communication that others, no matter how well-intentioned, should speak on their behalf (1999).

Yet, while racism has been inherent in mainstream media, this has ironically had a positive impact on the diversity of Indigenous media which have been used to advance Indigenous political, social and economic agendas (Molnar & Meadows 2001a, pp. xiii, 196). Within ATSIIC's 1999 *National Review of Indigenous Media and Communications, Digital Dreaming*, Indigenous media organisations warned any information circulated must be culturally appropriate for it to be effective. ATSIIC described the role of Indigenous media as crucial in "maintaining and regenerating" Indigenous languages and culture (1999, p. 12). Former ATSIIC Chairperson, Lowitja O'Donoghue pointed out the agenda setting role played by Indigenous media should not be overlooked (O'Donoghue 1993).

2.7 Indigenous print media research

Only a handful of studies into the role and workings of the Indigenous print media have been undertaken (Rose 1996; Avison 1996; Langton & Kirkpatrick 1979; Murphy & Murphy 1981). Conversely, Indigenous broadcast media have attracted more attention with research in Canada being undertaken by Roth (1989), and in Australia by Spurgeon (1989), ATSIIC (1999) Molnar & Meadows (2001a), and more recently by Meadows, Forde, Ewart and Foxwell into Indigenous broadcasting in the Australian community broadcasting sector (Meadows et al 2007).

While the preference for broadcast media can largely be understood given the oral tradition of Aboriginal culture and the literacy and language problems that have and do still exist within Indigenous communities, the Indigenous print media provides a unique and essential perspective on the history of Australia (Rose 1996, p. xx). The lack of interest in or appreciation of the importance of the Indigenous print media is, however, not limited to non-Indigenous Australians. Langton and Kirkpatrick pointed

out that Aboriginal people have also overlooked Aboriginal print media and have considered them to have “limited value for the Aboriginal population” (1979, p. 121). Yet, while broadcasting may be more easily adopted by Aboriginal people because of its similarity to their own oral traditions, newspapers and journals provide a permanent record of the thoughts, opinions and experiences of the people who wrote them (Rose 1996, pp. xxi-xxxv). The need to understand why Indigenous print media exists is made more pertinent by the fact that up until 30 years ago very few written accounts of history existed from an Indigenous perspective (*The Australian Abo Call*, April 1938). Indigenous people who worked on early Indigenous newspapers like *The Australian Abo Call* (1938) were still living under restrictive government legislation and many of them faced pressure from government to stop their presses rolling (*The Australian Abo Call*, June 1938). That they persevered demonstrates the value these early Indigenous journalists placed on having their voices heard. It is lamentable that their words which provided us with a unique view of events which form part of the history of this country have become lost and unread on the shelves and archives of libraries.

The limited scholarly research into the Indigenous print media can be traced back to an article by Langton and Kirkpatrick (1979) which provides a comprehensive list of Indigenous publications including newsletters from 1837 through to 1979. Langton and Kirkpatrick describe the newspapers and newsletters that form the Indigenous print media as “fiercely political resources”. They argued Indigenous media kept Indigenous people informed about organisations that represented them but also informed white Australians of the Indigenous perspective on issues (Langton & Kirkpatrick 1979, p. 120). Langton, who has worked on a number of Indigenous publications including *Koori Bina*, said the experience of producing those newspapers within a “hostile white environment which because it has the power and resources, has historically defined us” helped her to understand the importance of being able to control the “resources for self-expression” (1979, p. 121).

Rose’s (1996) book also catalogues many of the Indigenous publications produced by Indigenous people since 1837 and includes samples of stories from those publications. His study provides a short description of the style and attitude of each newspaper and was a particularly useful resource at the beginning of this study. According to Rose

the Indigenous print media has “played an important part in the development of Aboriginal political and social activism” (Rose 1996, p. xix). While Rose provides an excellent discussion of the evolution of Indigenous media generally, and covers the development of the broadcast and print media, his study does not consider or theorise the role the Indigenous print media may have played in establishing an Indigenous public sphere and Rose does not include personal input from the journalists who worked on those newspapers. It is primarily a very useful collection of samples of work from many of the major Indigenous publications over the past 150 years but, by its own admission, does not provide substantial analysis of the sector.

2.8 Broadcast media

With around 70 percent of Australia considered “remote”, the introduction of satellite technology and broadcasting to Australia in the 1980s resulted in greater consideration of the need for Indigenous broadcast media (Spurgeon 1989, p. 30; Molnar & Meadows 2001a, p. 7). Similarly to Indigenous Canadians however, Indigenous people in Australia were initially concerned about the impact commercial broadcast media could have on their culture, languages and communities if it was transmitted (Molnar & Meadows 2001a, p. 9; Roth & Valaskakis Gurthrie 1989, p. 221; Spurgeon 1989, p. 38). However, they also recognised the cultural value broadcast media could have if they produced their own television and radio broadcasts which could then be disseminated outside Indigenous communities to promote a wider understanding of Indigenous concerns (Ginsburg & Roth 2006, p. 147). Indigenous-produced programming could strengthen “local intergenerational and inter-community knowledge” (Ginsburg & Roth 2006, p. 147) and be embedded within the incoming non-Indigenous programming and broadcast to local communities (Molnar & Meadows 2001a, pp. 9, 34).

Indigenous broadcasting began in 1972 with programs on what was then called “public radio”. It expanded into remote regions following the launch of the *Broadcasting for Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme* (BRACS) which was developed by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DCITA 2006, p. 40). BRACS allowed remote Indigenous communities to receive ABC radio and television transmissions along with transmissions from one commercial radio and one commercial television station. BRACS also provided television and radio licenses and

the satellite and production equipment necessary to produce and broadcast Indigenous-made programs (Molnar & Meadows 2001a, pp. 12, 29, 33-35). However, the system was limited by the government's lack of understanding of Indigenous needs and by a failure to anticipate the diversity of programming Indigenous people would want to produce (Molnar & Meadows 2001a, pp. 12, 34). An example of this was that the satellite dishes could not transmit throughout some large and widespread Indigenous communities. Funding from ATSIC during the 1990s allowed equipment to be upgraded (Molnar & Meadows 2001a, pp. 34, 39). The introduction of BRACS gave Indigenous people the opportunity to incorporate media into their community life (Molnar & Meadows 2001a, p. 35). Indigenous community radio is a "valuable cultural resource" which "validates the existence of smaller communities and their cultures" (Forde et al. 2002, p. 18).

While BRACS provided a media outlet for remote communities, the special needs of rural and urban Aboriginal communities were largely overlooked (Molnar & Meadows 2001a). Although urban and rural communities had greater access to the ABC and commercial radio and television transmissions, they could not influence content or have culturally appropriate content included (Molnar & Meadows 2001a, pp. 13-14). Also, communities using BRACS had to choose between radio and television broadcasting. The flexibility of radio, with its reduced need for training and cheaper production costs, made it the preferred option for the majority of communities (Molnar & Meadows 2001a, p. 41). Indigenous radio allowed Indigenous people to set their own communications agendas rather than having to work within the frameworks of non-Indigenous organisations (Molnar & Meadows 2001a, p. 29). The government-funded statutory body, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), managed and funded the Indigenous Broadcasting Program (IBP) from 1990-2004 when the Federal Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA) took over. One of the changes implemented since then has been the replacement of BRACS with Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services (RIBS). RIBS are:

... Indigenous broadcasters licensed under the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 to provide community broadcasting services in remote communities, enabling communities to have access to broadcasting services similar to those available to Australian citizens generally (DCITA 2007, p. 10).

The operational and maintenance management of RIBS are carried out by Remote Indigenous Media Organisations (RIMOs). RIMOs such as the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA), Ngaanyatjarra (NG) Media, Pilbara and Kimberly Aboriginal Media (PAKAM), Pitjantjara Yankunytjatjara (PY) Media, Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association (TEABBA), Warlpiri Media (PAW) (Community Broadcasting Foundation Ltd 2008) are now responsible for “training, production of content and support for local video production, provision of radio services” and topping up the government allowances paid to employees with wages connected to RIBS in their area (DCITA 2007, p. 9).

Some of the benefits for the establishment of Indigenous radio included the ability of Indigenous Australians to re-establish communication links that had been decimated by colonisation (Molnar & Meadows 2001a, p. 30). Another important consideration particularly for remote Indigenous communities was that radio enabled broadcasts to be made in traditional languages (Molnar & Meadows 2001a, p. 31). Radio is a very personal medium that can use traditional languages, serve as a tool for empowerment and it can allow Indigenous people to “shape and control their social, cultural and political agendas by producing and controlling their own programs” (ATSIC 1999; Molnar & Meadows 2001a, p. 30). However, producing Indigenous content required the development of unique editing styles to ensure the material was culturally appropriate. Innovative television editing styles were therefore developed that worked within an appropriate cultural framework. To protect against culturally sensitive material being broadcast outside a local area, this content might have to be removed (Molnar & Meadows 2001a, p. 51). However, the medium presented elders with the ability to record their stories in both their traditional languages and in Kriol (a mixture of traditional language, and English) and provided an opportunity to protect and preserve their history and cultural knowledge (Molnar & Meadows 2001a, p. 53).

Much of the Indigenous broadcasting that occurs in Australia happens within the general community broadcasting framework, generally recognised as the “third-tier” of Australian broadcasting (behind commercial and public broadcasters). Forde, Meadows and Foxwell describe community radio as “representing, maintaining and reproducing local cultures” and say the initial reasons behind the creation of a community radio network was to provide “democratic representation of Australia’s

cultural diversity” (2002, pp. 13, 15). Planning a community radio station is also a “process of cultural empowerment and or cultural citizenship” (Forde, Meadows & Foxwell 2002, pp. 17-18). They further argue this empowerment comes from engaging with other community members about issues of common interest and linking this dialogue to the public sphere. Community radio adds a “community dimension” to the public sphere (Forde et al. 2002, pp. 17-18). Indigenous people can produce programming on a range of topics of interest to them that extend beyond serious news or documentaries and include cooking programs, drama and comedy (Ginsburg & Roth 2006, p. 151).

Other developments in Indigenous broadcasting that have taken content beyond the boundaries of the Indigenous public sphere include the establishment of Indigenous units within the national public broadcasters; the Special Broadcasting Services (SBS) which was designed specifically to service ethnically diverse communities and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), Australia’s publically-funded national broadcaster. The establishment of units such as these provide opportunities for Indigenous people to work as “producers, directors, actors and editors” (Ginsburg & Roth 2006, p. 149). This not only provides training and work experience but also opens up issues of concern to Indigenous people to mainstream audiences. Similarly, the production of DVD and video productions of Indigenous programming widens Indigenous and mainstream access to Indigenous productions (Ginsburg & Roth 2006, p 149).

The level of research into Indigenous broadcast media highlights the lack of material available about the Indigenous print media, particularly any research which might consider the Indigenous press’s role within the larger media landscape and particularly within any potential Indigenous public sphere processes (Rose 1996, p. xviii). Given the problems with mainstream media coverage of Indigenous people and the issues highlighted here, the need to gain a better understanding of whether the Indigenous print media is successful at providing Indigenous people with an opportunity to participate democratically and to be informed is important (Avison & Meadows 2000, pp. 348-349). Information about the differences in the journalistic practices between the mainstream and Indigenous print media may also provide hints

as to how mainstream media can provide Indigenous Australians with more appropriate coverage (Johnson, Slawski & Bowman 1976; Forde 1999; Schultz 1998).

2.9 Chapter summary

In summary, democratic society demands the participation of a range of voices in the formation of public opinion, social and political policy and agendas. An appraisal of the existing literature relating to these topics indicates mainstream media are the foremost institution responsible for facilitating the exchange between the various factions that make up a democratic society. For democracy to truly exist, all groups must be allowed access to these media. The literature has suggested mainstream media should inform citizens in a fair, balanced and objective manner but it has also shown that in reality mainstream media tend to be biased towards their own target audiences. This bias can be partly attributed to the fact that journalists and editors who write for mainstream media are most likely to be part of the dominant group in society e.g. of Anglo/Irish descent, male and middle class. One of the consequences of this bias and lack of access is that rather than being participants, mainstream media audiences have been relegated to being passive observers and Indigenous Australians have been principally excluded. This impacts not only on their sense of identity, but overall, produces a skewed view of how the majority of Australians imagine contemporary society. Often, the only contact Australians have with minority or marginalised groups, such as Indigenous Australians, is through mainstream media images and reports.

The research examined here suggests alternative media can resolve this to a degree by presenting contrasting and more in-depth coverage of contemporary topics under discussion and by including the voices of grassroots people. This is an important factor for Indigenous Australians whose culture, identity, languages and communities were largely decimated by colonisation and it is thus an important consideration for this study. Have Indigenous print media helped to counter Indigenous Australians' lack of access to mainstream media by providing an opportunity to correct stereotypical or inaccurate representations that may appear in mainstream media? Can alternative media, in the form of Indigenous print media, "even up" this imbalance by providing an opportunity to present their perspectives?

The literature discussed in this chapter suggests some questions this thesis might consider. These might include how well Indigenous print media inform their audience and facilitate the inclusion of Indigenous voices in the democratic process; or the impact Indigenous print media have had on rebuilding, preserving and protecting Indigenous identity, on encouraging democratic participation and bringing about social change. Their role can perhaps best be understood if we consider it alongside the ideas embodied in Jurgen Habermas' notion of the public sphere, and built on by Eley, Garnham, Poodle and Dahlgren. Public sphere theory—and other concepts which have added to and broadened it—has been drawn upon by many scholars in the community and alternative media research field, but continues to provide a salient framework through which to evaluate and understand Indigenous print media.

Chapter 3: Exploring the Public Sphere

In 1989, the English translation of Jürgen Habermas's book "The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere", focusing particularly on the bourgeois public sphere, changed how many academics and researchers thought about the way citizens and governments communicated with each other. Since his ideas were first published, our understanding of the public sphere has evolved and researchers such as Nancy Fraser (1992) have expanded on Habermas's initial ideas and argued that rather than one public sphere, there are now, and have always been, many public spheres.

The previous chapter investigated the role media play in influencing how we understand the world around us. Indeed, research suggests the mainstream media is not equally accessible to all groups and Indigenous Australians have historically been excluded from the mainstream media in Australia and globally (Meadows 1999, p. 40, 2001b; Bullimore 1999, p. 75). This chapter focuses more specifically on the notion of the public sphere. It examines the democratic role of the public sphere from both an historic and contemporary perspective. Public sphere theory provides an appropriate theoretical framework for this thesis because it offers a rationale for how and why individuals and groups in society come together to participate and negotiate with the state and the role media play within these interactions. While Habermas' 1969 theory regarding the 19th century bourgeois public sphere is the "classic" public sphere theory, as scholarly understanding and uses of the public sphere framework have evolved the notion of an elitist bourgeois public sphere has given way to, at least on the surface, recognition of the existence of a more democratic contemporary political public sphere. Later theorisations of the public sphere also suggest that in contemporary society, there is and perhaps always have been a range of public spheres (Avison 1996; Fraser 1992; Squires 2002). I suggest that one of these competing public spheres might be an Indigenous public sphere or spheres. The idea of the potential existence of multiple public spheres is central to this thesis. Therefore, to gain a clearer understanding of how counter-public spheres might operate and to define the role of their media, an examination of counter-public spheres in Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the United States will be undertaken. Since a key area of concern for this thesis is how communication between the dominant and counter-public spheres occurs, communication processes between public spheres will be considered.

3.1 The evolution of the public sphere

Habermas' notion of the public sphere provides a pertinent framework through which to consider the potential existence of an Indigenous public sphere, and further, the role the Indigenous print media may have had in the creation, development and evolution of such a sphere.

Habermas' initial theory relates to the 19th century bourgeois public sphere and its function in democratic society. The bourgeois public sphere was the space between the state and society, divided into public and private realms, where issues of common concern were debated (Habermas 1989, pp. 27, 30). It was in this space that public opinion was formed (Eley 1999, p. 290). Bourgeois public opinion created in the public sphere was a "form of common sense" and became the impetus for social change (Habermas 1989, pp. 31, 120). The public opinion formed in the bourgeois public sphere was "actively created by people" which contrasts with the contemporary version of public opinion that is more likely to be generated by market research or opinion (Postone 1999, p. 164).

Yet this was not an inclusive discussion and only a few citizens were invited to join the conversation that ultimately led to the creation of public opinion and social change. Entry to the bourgeois public sphere was limited to property owning, educated men. Those who were not educated or did not own property were "not citizens at all" and were therefore represented by the educated, property owners (Habermas 1989, pp. 33, 87, 111). As with the contemporary dominant public sphere, the press were the "critical organ of a public engaged in critical political debate: as the fourth estate, during this time" (Habermas 1989, p. 60). While the citizenry played an integral part in forming public opinion, the press, as in contemporary society, mediated between the state and the citizenry.

The status quo in society began to change towards the mid-nineteenth century and the atmosphere within the bourgeois public sphere changed along with it. "Propertyless" men and women began to demand their right to vote and to participate democratically (Habermas 1989, p. 127). Membership of the bourgeois public sphere changed to "private persons of the public sphere rather than a public of private persons..." (Habermas 1989, p. 128). In this shifting environment public opinion became diffused

and its reign became “the reign of many and the mediocre” (Habermas 1989, pp. 132-134). Rather than public opinion protecting the citizenry from the state and police, it became a power that protected those with conflicting opinions. Under these news conditions, conflicts that had been private became public and the public sphere became “an arena of competing interests” (Habermas 1989, pp. 132-134).

The development of large enterprises and big business further altered the environment of the public sphere. Private citizens held shares in large corporations but they no longer had the influence and power of the property owners or later wage earners of the bourgeois public sphere (Habermas 1989, p. 152). Individual interests gave way to group interests and while the bourgeois family had been responsible for their own health, education and shelter these responsibilities passed to the state (Habermas 1989, p. 155). The private citizen’s control over the state now came only from their ability to be heard in the dominant public sphere.

The role of the press also changed under these new conditions. The media that had been an arena of political debate became the mass media and “a sphere of cultural consumption” (Habermas 1989, p. 162). Citizens no longer participated in informal critical discussions but instead were offered pre-packaged, staged debates (Habermas 1989, p. 164). The topics for discussion were now chosen by the media and the organisations that sought to influence them (Habermas 1989, pp. 164, 169). Citizens became consumers of information pushed to them by mass media and the corporate world. The media that had once circulated the concerns of the public no longer listened and instead generated debates proffered by the corporate world that suited their own agendas. It is within this environment, aptly described by Habermas, that we see groups such as Indigenous people and other minority groups vainly attempting to gain access to the public sphere so their voices can be heard and their interests represented.

3.2 Critiquing Habermas: Alternative perspectives and counterpublic spheres

Habermas’s original theory has provided the basis for a multitude of scholarly studies over the past 40 years, but it has not been without critique. Gestrich argues that rather than the “economic forces” Habermas attributes to the existence of the political public sphere, “early modern states and their administrations” were the driving force behind

the emergence of political public spheres because they used media and other communication to promote their own agendas (2006, p. 419). Gestrich suggests the European postal service played an early but essential role in circulating information that was necessary for public and private discussion of events and ideas “beyond the local community” (2006, p. 420). Similarly from the 1600s, weekly newspapers were used to disseminate information that on the one hand could be censored by the state and on the other could be used to circulate state sanctioned propaganda to the people (Gestrich 2006, p. 421). Gestrich cites the need to circulate military news and religious information as key elements in the emergence of the political public sphere (Gestrich 2006, p. 422). Gestrich therefore rebuts Habermas’ contention that the public sphere was a new concept. Instead he argues society had been “connected through communication via printed media and both interested in political matters and able to debate them” since the seventeenth century (2006, p. 424) and that newspapers played a fundamental and inextricable part in the formation of the political public sphere (Gestrich 2006, p. 427). It is the role played by media, identified by both Habermas and Gestrich, in connecting the state to society and encouraging political debate that is of particular interest to this thesis.

Eley also criticised Habermas’s idealisation of the bourgeois public sphere as the model against which future public spheres should be measured and particularly for his lack of acknowledgement of the existence of competing publics throughout history (1999, pp. 292, 306). Similarly, Fraser challenged Habermas’ failure to recognise the existence of alternative public spheres and argued counterpublics had always existed and there was always conflict between them (Fraser 1992, p. 116). Within his original theory, Habermas had not accounted for the spaces used by marginal groups or competing publics within society to discuss issues of concern to them.

Eley argued the bourgeois public sphere “blocked and repressed” other forms of democratic participation and involvement and that Habermas had missed the diversity and conflict that existed between opposing interests (Eley 1999). Furthermore, Fraser contended the bourgeoisie were “never the public” and there were always a host of other “counter publics”, such as women and the working class, existing in conflict with the bourgeoisie (Fraser 1992, p. 116). Hence Habermas’s original discussion of the public sphere not only failed to consider the impact that the exclusive nature of the

public sphere had on minority and marginalised groups, but also overlooked the existence of counterpublic spheres established by those groups in order to challenge the dominant view and authority.

Acknowledgement of the existence of a range of counterpublics operating in competition with and in opposition to the bourgeois public sphere requires discussion about how these contending spheres might interact and co-exist. Garnham argues that for a public sphere to be “democratically legitimate” it must be open to all citizens and only then can general consensus occur (2000, p. 169). Similarly, in societies that are in fact a mass of competing groups with their own interests, all must be treated equally and none can be afforded special status (Poodle 1989, p. 6). If one group is disregarded or excluded, the opportunity for diverse views regarding what is right and truthful is denied (Poodle 1989, p. 6). In fact, Poodle argues those who communicate in alternative forms such as dance, ritual, and music will be discounted from the debate. The only accepted form of discourse or “social interaction” is through speech and everything outside of speech will be suppressed (1989, p. 19). Similarly, the differences between groups may be so wide that agreement can never be reached and unless one or more group’s values and views are suppressed in preference for the dominant view, it may be impossible to reach consensus (Poodle 1989, pp. 19-20). This is a particularly salient point when considering the ability of Australia’s Indigenous people to participate democratically. Indigenous communication methods and styles may not conform to mainstream standards or methods and Indigenous views on some issues, such as sovereignty, are unlikely to infiltrate/permeate the dominant view in Australian society (Ivanitz 2001, pp. 130-131). Therefore, when the existence of multiple, conflicting groups is contrasted against the democratic need for all to have an opportunity to debate issues of concern to them in ways that are meaningful and culturally appropriate, it raises questions about how society can produce a more representative, democratic sphere that allows those with “conflicting interests” and these “competing public spheres” to communicate effectively, while still producing democratic outcomes as a result of public sphere discourse.

Not only must we decide whether multiple public spheres exists, but we must also understand how these multiple public spheres interact with each other and the dominant public sphere. For instance, Garnham questions the impact multiple public

spheres could have on society if they were allowed to extend the scope of what remains private in an attempt to protect their own independent identity and culture from the erosion that could occur during critical discourse within the dominant public sphere (Garnham 2000, pp. 187-188). He also questions the effect on society should these “individual publics” fail to live up to their responsibilities or accept their obligations as part of the wider polity. He suggests while individual publics should have their own values, culture and attitudes, they must also accept the risks and duties that entry into the “common arena for critical debate and decision making brings” (Garnham 2000, pp. 197-188). A distinction must also be made between these individual public spheres and the political public sphere where the aim is to reach agreement that allows “concerted action within the unified polity” to take place (Garnham 2000, pp. 187-188). The existence of multiple public spheres therefore creates its own democratic challenges for society and the forming of public opinion.

While multiple public spheres may present challenges with regard to mutual obligations and consensus, they also provide the opportunity for diverse voices to participate in the formation of ideas and public opinion. Dahlgren views the emergence of multiple publics as the “dramatic flowering of new political and social movements” (1991, p. 13). Similarly, Fraser relates the emergence of these diverse groups and counterpublics within the wider public sphere to Habermas’s omission of women, gays, people of “colour” and workers from the bourgeois public sphere. She argues they were unheard and could not speak in voices that the dominant group could understand (Fraser 1992, pp. 119, 123). Yet, if there is more than one public sphere, then more than one “concept of reason” can exist and rather than the exclusive bourgeois public sphere, it is this inclusive model of the public sphere that should be held as the “standard by which others are measured” (Poodle 1989, pp. 18-19). The singular bourgeois public sphere not only excluded the voices of marginalised and minorities groups but included no independent space where they could debate amongst themselves about issues of particular concern to them (Fraser 1992, p. 123). Therefore, within singular public spheres subordinate groups are either suppressed, unheard, or subjected to an “empty kind of tolerance” where “everything is permitted but nothing listened to” (Poodle 1989, p. 20; Fraser 1992, p. 119). These ideas have particular relevance for this study because Indigenous peoples’ perspectives have largely been ignored and their culture disregarded within the dominant public sphere

comprised of the mass/mainstream media (O'Donoghue 1993, p. 61; Ewart 2002). Likewise, Eley's (1999) and Fraser's (1992) ideas that marginalised groups in society create separated public spheres through which to challenge the dominant public sphere are particularly important for this study. Have Indigenous Australians formed their own space through which to debate issues that matter to them? If an Indigenous public sphere exists what function has the Indigenous print media had in its interaction with the dominant public sphere, and how have Indigenous print media illustrated whether their members upheld their obligations when negotiating and interacting within the dominant public sphere?

3.3 Towards a greater understanding of the public sphere

Clearly then public sphere theory has undergone significant change since Habermas first presented his account of its history. Public sphere theory, like our understanding of history, is not static but develops based on changing values and societal understanding from both a research and political perspective. Habermas himself has reconsidered his original work and responded to his critics by acknowledging he was "wrong to speak of one public" and recognises that the existence of multiple public spheres addresses communication processes existing outside of the dominant public sphere (Habermas 1992, p. 425). Habermas argues the "modern public sphere comprises of several arenas in which, through printed materials dealing with matters of culture, information, and entertainment, a conflict of opinions is fought out more or less discursively" (1992, p. 430). Here Habermas recognises the existence of counterpublics and the continuing importance of print media to mediate between the state and citizenry and to circulate information regarding culture and entertainment.

Ongoing critical debate surrounding public sphere theory serves to highlight not only our increased knowledge but also the limitations of our understanding. Research emphasises the problems that continue to exist within democratic frameworks and as Dahlgren suggests, elucidate the possibilities for an improved social world and "what should or could be" (Dahlgren 1991, p. 8). He warns against harbouring romantic ideas about a public sphere where citizens debate on a one-to-one basis (1991, pp. 2, 8-9). A more contemporary view of a democratic, public space allows all citizens affected by political decisions and social structure to have their say (Benhabib 1992, p. 105). Therefore rather than one static public sphere, a democratic public space

might be created whenever people begin to debate social or political issues that affect them and there may be as many public spheres operating at any one time as there are opinions (Benhabib 1992, p. 105). Consequently, our understanding of contemporary public sphere(s) and their roles and functions develops in relation to ongoing study and debate.

As our understanding of the dominant public sphere continues to evolve, so too our understanding of the role and functions of counterpublics will develop further. Fraser refers to the publics created by emerging groups such as women, gays, people of colour and workers as “subaltern” counterpublics. She argues these subaltern counterpublics have a dual character and are on one hand places of “withdrawal and regroupment” and on the other hand “bases and training grounds”. She argues it is this dual character that gives them their “emancipatory potential” that enables them to at least partially redress the power imbalance that favours the dominant group (Fraser 1992, p. 124). Fraser, like Garnham who argues multiple groups must seek general agreement on issues of common concern (2000, p. 188), recognises the need for these multiple groups to come together to interact discursively (1992, p. 124). This space is where “cultural and ideological contests or negotiations take place” (Eley 1999, p. 306). Discussions across “lines of cultural diversity” can only occur in societies where bracketing does not exist (Fraser 1992, pp. 126-127). Accordingly, counterpublics are more than spaces for discussion. They are spaces to strategise, train members and work together and to amplify their success in challenging dominant public sphere attitudes and ideologies. Multiple groups must create spaces in which to negotiate and find common ground. Part of this process may include the creation of independent media.

3.4 Indigenous media and their role in building an Indigenous public sphere

The potential for the development of an Indigenous public sphere in Australia can be likened in some ways to the development of the Aboriginal public sphere in Canada and with the experiences of New Zealand and South Africa’s Indigenous people. However, while there are similarities between Australia and these other countries, there are also significant differences. Australia’s Indigenous peoples have never negotiated a treaty; their ability to achieve land rights was for centuries deterred by

the existence of the doctrine of terra nullius and each tribe or clan group has its own individual cultural characteristics (Reynolds 1996, pp. x-xii). These differences alone create the potential for the development of a very distinct Australian Indigenous public sphere. If we are to understand how information regarding issues that are of concern to Indigenous people is circulated via the Indigenous print media *or* mainstream media, we must first have some idea about how an Indigenous public sphere might work and how Indigenous and mainstream media are utilised within that space. A better understanding of this process could offer explanations as to why issues of concern to Indigenous people are not widely covered by the mainstream media and in turn, why Indigenous people often claim to be “left out of the loop” with regard to the formulation of government policy that affects them. These issues form a large part of why this study is important.

The experiences of Indigenous people in Canada and South Africa along with African-Americans, because of their shared experiences of racism, colonisation and marginalisation, provide parallels between the experiences of Indigenous Australians and the African American public sphere (Jacobs 2000; Squires 1999, 2002), the Canadian Indigenous public sphere (Avison 1996) and New Zealand’s Maori (Stuart 2005, 2003). These studies provide signposts that may help to determine whether an Indigenous public sphere could exist in Australia and to highlight the role the Indigenous print media might play within an Indigenous public sphere. While there has been research into these alternative public spheres in Canada, the United States and New Zealand, there is still a marked lack of data regarding how these alternative public spheres operate and how they are developing.

Hartley and McKee’s (2000) Australian study used a survey of mainstream media and a forum involving both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to try to describe the indigenisation of the Australian public sphere. While the title of their book described it as a study of the Indigenous public sphere, it was in fact a study of how Indigenous people are presented by mainstream media in Australia and therefore has a different scope to the research being undertaken as part of this thesis. The main thrust of this study is to consider how Indigenous people *themselves* participate in the Indigenous media and how this has influenced Indigenous public sphere processes. While Hartley and McKee’s study claims to create “a map of the narrative universe of indigeneity as

it has been formed and reformed in a wide range of writing and storytelling during the 1990s”, it did not include Indigenous print or broadcast media and was limited to stories that appeared in mainstream media during National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Day of Celebration (NAIDOC)² week over a three-year period (Hartley & McKee 2000, pp. 3, 145, 211).

It is difficult to find agreement on the shape of a possible Indigenous public sphere. Hartley and McKee theorise it is a:

...strange looking object – certainly not spherical. It precedes any state or nation whose “public sphere” it may be and it may have more affinity with developments in the farthest reaches of the northern hemisphere than with the ‘Australian’ public sphere as currently constituted (2000, p.68)

They argue the political public sphere is connected to the cultural semiosphere and both are totally encompassed within the “mediasphere” similar to the layers of a “Russian doll” (Hartley & McKee 2000, pp. 68, 71-73, 210-211). Interestingly, Hartley and McKee contend, to date, the Indigenous public sphere has not been under the control of Indigenous people (2000, p. 3). However, it is certain, prior to colonisation, that some version of an Indigenous public sphere would have existed and while this might not have taken the form of a public sphere as we understand it today, without doubt Aboriginal people came together in clans and groups to discuss issues of common concern to them (Avison & Meadows 2000, pp. 353-354). In contrast to Hartley and McKee, Avison and Meadows describe the shape of the Indigenous public sphere in Australia as being part of a:

...series of parallel and overlapping public spheres – spaces where participants with similar cultural backgrounds engage in activities concerning issues and interests of importance to them (Avison & Meadows 2000, p. 348).

Along with the concept of multiple, overlapping public spheres, Meadows argues that at any one time all citizens may be members of a number of different public spheres and participating in discussions about issues of concern to them (2005, pp. 37-38). Tafler provides an example of this in action with his analysis of the Rolling Thunder programme. He found it was difficult to reconcile Indigenous cultural protocols and practices with a reliance on government funding and value frameworks (Tafler 2005,

² NAIDOC stands for the National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee. NAIDOC celebrations take place annually to recognise the history and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. <http://www.naidoc.org.au/contactUs/faq.aspx>

p. 156). In essence, the cultural protocols of this Indigenous community did not naturally fit with the bureaucracy of Australian government practises. Members of the Anangu community needed to comply with the protocols of both their local community public sphere and the broader political public sphere. This is an example of what Meadow's described as "parallel and overlapping" public spheres. The Rolling Thunder programme implemented by the Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara and Ngaanjatjara peoples (collectively known as the Anangu) was established as a response to community (both Indigenous and mainstream) criticism of the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands Council's (AP Council) inadequate communication. The aim of the Rolling Thunder programme was to promote debate within the community about "governance directives" and to resolve conflicts (Tafler 2005, p. 162).

One of the challenges for the AP Council was the clash between the cultural needs of the community, the needs of the Council and the demands of the government, with community organisations funded by government. Conflicts of interest between familial control of media, land care, land management and community interest combined with the need to interact with government created conflict between the AP Council and the community (Tafler 2005, p. 157). Tafler found new media, such as community radio, opened up community debate and Anangu public sphere processes and the Rolling Thunder campaign changed the way Anangu communities communicated. New technologies were blended with traditional oral communication methods to disperse information throughout the Anangu public sphere (Tafler 2005, p. 160). This resulted in a smaller, independent Anangu public sphere that was able to connect with the dominant public sphere without relinquishing all traditional methods of communication. Tafler suggests this smaller "more, intimate public sphere" had a greater chance of survival in a community that is not driven by "time-managed economy" but he acknowledged Indigenous society had also evolved and previously distinct, isolated communities were now part of the wider community and must "adapt its governing traditions to the demands and constraints of the outside" (2005, p. 160). Information paths also changed and traditionally vertical communication flows from "privileged groups and families" to the community now flowed horizontally out to the community (Tafler 2005, pp. 163-165). Another benefit was the creation of opportunities for leadership roles for young people. People who once had to leave the community to be educated were now encouraged (by a "new generation of leaders in

the 1970s”) to take up leadership positions (Tafler 2005, p. 165). Consequently the *Rolling Thunder* campaign helped develop Anangu public sphere processes and widened access, altered the way information was disseminated and rejuvenated community leadership allowing for more comfortable interaction with the wider, dominant public sphere. Again, the way information flows throughout the Indigenous public sphere and the role media can have play in identifying Indigenous leadership are important areas of research for this study.

3.4.1 Existing studies of marginal public spheres

Avison, in her unpublished thesis, provides an excellent discussion of the early Aboriginal public spheres that existed in Canada. She claims the deliberations that have taken place within the Aboriginal public sphere in Canada have produced “public opinion that truly reflects the various interests of the participants and the collective good for the community”. In fact, the form exhibited by the early Canadian Aboriginal public sphere conforms to Habermas’ principles of the public sphere better than the bourgeois public sphere did (Avison 1996, pp. 25, 27). An important point to recognise when studying Aboriginal public spheres is that they must accommodate communicative styles such as storytelling, art and dance (Avison 1996, p. 26; Molnar & Meadows 2001a, p.50). Certainly it is likely an Indigenous public sphere in Australia would include communicative styles that extend beyond the processes offered by mass or independent media.

Similarly, the colonial history of Australia is likely to have impacted on Indigenous public sphere processes. Any pre-colonial, Australian Indigenous public sphere would certainly have been affected by the social disruption that can be directly attributed to the settlement of Australia (Ivanitz 2001, p. 126; Avison & Meadows 2000, p. 354). Avison suggests the early Canadian Aboriginal public spheres went into decline as a result of the influences of European settlers and the Canadian state, leaving Canadian Aboriginal people marginalised and disenfranchised (1996, p. 27; Rose 1996, p. 27). Therefore, while Australian Indigenous people may not have utilised contemporary or European forms of communication prior to colonisation; they certainly would have used their own traditional forms of communication to converse regarding issues of political and social concern to them. In spite of the impact of colonisation on Australia’s Indigenous people, in 1837 *The Flinders Island Chronicle*, the first

Aboriginal written publication was produced by three Indigenous men living in the Flinders Island mission off Tasmania (Rose 1996). However, while this newspaper gives a heartbreaking insight into the lives of Aboriginal people incarcerated under the mission (“reserve”) system, as it was produced under the directions of the mission protector George Augustus Robinson and is therefore difficult to judge whether it offers clear evidence of the existence of an Indigenous public sphere that utilised traditional western forms of communication. The next Indigenous publication appeared in the 1930s and the production of a range of Indigenous-owned and produced publications since that time suggests Indigenous people have maintained at least some control over the Indigenous media and perhaps therefore over an Indigenous public sphere, even though they could not control how the *mainstream* public sphere represented them.

While the history of African-American people in the United States was significantly different from that of Aboriginal Canadians and Indigenous Australians, there is a commonality in the need to produce communication tools that allowed people to speak in their own voices and put forward their own messages. Jacobs writes that rather than aiming to replace mainstream media, the African-American press was created to encourage conversation and “open the possibility to new participants and new venues”. He argues that regardless of how many publics are involved, the point of civilised society is to “open up ongoing dialogue to new narratives and new points of difference and to expand the substantive content of existing solidarities” (Jacobs 2000, p. 5). Jacobs explains that the production of a “national black press” was one of the most important goals of African-American civil rights workers and more than 40 African American newspapers were produced prior to the Civil War. African-American leaders recognised that a strong, independent and national black press would provide a space to: “debate and self-improvement”, to “monitor the mainstream press” and to raise awareness in white society of issues affecting the Black community (Jacobs 2000, p. 5). According to Jacobs, the national black press was never intended to replace the mainstream media, but its goal was to open up the conversation to include black voices and to provide a space in which to strategise and correct inaccuracies promoted by mainstream media (2000, p. 5). The African-American press was most prominent from 1900-1950s “during a period of forced residential segregation and mainstream press neglect” (Jacobs 2000, p. 5). During this

time, the only way African-American voices were likely to be heard in the media was through the black press (Jacobs 2000, p. 5).

Squires' (1999; 2002) study of Black public spheres in the United States provides a useful framework through which to examine the Indigenous public sphere in Australia. Squires' original theory was presented in her 1999 (pp. 31-37) unpublished doctoral thesis and included four types of counterpublic response – various phases she labelled 'enclave', 'oscillating', 'counterpublic' and 'parallel'. However, in Squires' 2002 published version of her model, she has adjusted the model slightly. Her 2002 (pp. 6-12) model comprises of 'enclave', 'counterpublic' and 'satellite' phases in the Black Public Sphere. This thesis uses Squires' (1999) original four-phased model because this best describes the Indigenous public sphere within an Australian context. Indeed, the 'oscillating' phase of the public sphere--which Squires later excluded--sufficiently describes much of the format and activity of the Indigenous public sphere.

One of Squires' key aims was to create a vocabulary that could be applied to counterpublics to offer a deeper understanding of individual public sphere nuances and to allow for comparison across counterpublics (2002, p. 448). Squires argues that when analysing counterpublics, it is important not to solely focus on group identity but to consider how counterpublic sphere "constituents" interact and intersect with each other and why some counterpublics are more successful than others (Squires 2002, p. 447). Rather than concentrating on actions such as protests and demonstrations Squires' study centres on counterpublic sphere responses to "political, economic, social, and cultural conditions" (2002, p. 448). Given Indigenous people's history in Australia, a consideration of how Indigenous public sphere constituents have responded from a political, social, economical and material perspective is a valuable task to undertake. Squires further suggests counterpublic responses may be generated from both internal and external stimuli and activity (2002, p. 448). Squires' vocabulary will therefore be used as a tool to compare Australian Indigenous public sphere responses to the Black public sphere responses she identifies.

The Native American community is another example from the United States that has produced and used a wide range of their own media as part of their public sphere processes. The colonial experiences of Native American peoples are perhaps more closely linked to those of Indigenous Australians. The first Native American

newspaper was published in 1828 (Molnar & Meadows 2001a, p. 149). Similarly to African American media, Native American people have often been misrepresented by mainstream media and Native American newspapers prepared communities for “the surrender of tribal lands and the need to cope with Anglo society” (Molnar & Meadows 2001a, p. 150). They sought to counteract the “not-so-benign neglect” and cynical mainstream media coverage about “Indian” affairs (Murphy & Murphy 1981, p. 3). Later publications provided information not readily available in mainstream media publications (Molnar & Meadows 2001a, p. 151). Therefore, newspapers targeted both Native American (to provide education relating to “survival”) and mainstream audiences (to break down “misunderstandings and biases”) (Murphy & Murphy 1981, p. 12). They also provided a communication link between different Native American communities (Murphy & Murphy 1981, p. 15). According to Molnar and Meadows there are now hundreds of Native American newspapers and an underground press that “challeng[es] tribal policy that might control editorial policy of a tribal government-supported newspaper” (2001, pp. 151-152). Important functions of Native American newspapers are to cover tribal traditions and heritage and to inform their audience about council meetings and attempts to build and protect Native American heritage. Newspapers help to protect and teach tribal languages and to protect Native American identity and build pride (Murphy & Murphy 1981, p. 73). Clearly then, Indigenous newspapers from Canada and the United States, and to some extent the African American print media fulfil a range of objectives for their target communities within their own public spheres and as tools to reach out to the dominant or political public sphere.

In Australia, Hartley and McKee have suggested the historical lack of a national organisation within the Australian Indigenous polity could impact on the potential existence of an Indigenous public sphere (2000, p. 68). The political organisation of the broader Indigenous public sphere and the impact this has on the existence and functions of the Indigenous public sphere is an issue for consideration within this thesis, but the similarity between Canadian Aboriginal communities and Australian Indigenous communities is worth further discussion. Just as Australian Indigenous communities exist on many levels, Avison argues Canadian Aboriginal communities also exist on a variety of levels ranging from clan to community and reserve, through provincial and territorial levels, to regional, national and international levels. She

argues that any discussion of Aboriginal issues at a national or international level is still part of the Aboriginal public sphere (Avison 1996, p. 26). She makes the point that it is a mistake to:

...identify public spheres that are recent developments as simply variations of pre-existing models, and demonstrates a considerable historical short-sightedness and ethnocentrism (1996, p. 87).

Rather we must consider Indigenous public spheres as unique and not assume they will conform to the functions, roles, behaviours or characteristics of other public spheres. There may be similarities but there may equally be significant distinctions. Avison argues the Aboriginal model of the public spheres should be recognised as *distinct* spheres in their own right rather than “nondominant variant(s) of the mainstream public sphere” (1996, p. 26). Equally, while the Canadian Aboriginal public sphere is influenced by the dominant public sphere and society, it has a “contestatory relationship with the Canadian public sphere”. The Aboriginal public sphere allows people who have been “subordinated and ignored” within the dominant public sphere to come together to develop their own identities and discourses (Avison 1996, p. 26). Therefore, each marginal public sphere may have its own individual, distinct characteristics while also sharing similarities with both the dominant and other marginal public spheres.

Jacobs argues these separate, alternative public spheres offer a space where groups that have faced exclusion, inequality and symbolic disadvantage in the mainstream public sphere, can rewrite the narratives to include different heroes (2000, p. 27). These challenges have of course been experienced by Canadian Aboriginal people, African-American people and Native American people and Jacob’s argument could therefore be applied to each of these groups and possibly Indigenous Australians. These spaces allow groups to formulate their own interests and to nurture new leaders and arguments with which to “engage” white society in the hope of attracting their attention and bringing about changes in public opinion (Jacobs 2000, p. 28). The public spheres established by marginalised groups may provide an opportunity to promote their own cultural “heroes” and to tell stories from their own perspectives. They may both engage with white society and sustain and develop their own community leadership to generate public opinion in their favour.

New Zealand's Maori, similarly to Canada's Indigenous peoples, share much in common with Australia's Indigenous people. Like Indigenous Australians, Maori are often excluded or "isolated" from the dominant public sphere and New Zealand mainstream media use newsgathering and writing practices grounded in "European-based techniques and approaches" making interaction with the Maori public sphere difficult (Stuart 2005, p. 1). Opinions voiced by individuals are frequently presented as the opinion of all Maori. However, there are a range of diverse attitudes, values and opinions within the Maori community and no one Maori can speak for the whole Maori nation (Stuart 2005, pp. 15-16). New Zealand mainstream media's predilection for suggesting a common "world view and ideology" segregates Maori from mainstream society. Those who are outspoken are labelled as "Maori activists" or "Maori MPs" and are placed into the "other" category. Placing Maori within a separate category from the rest of society creates a "them" and "us" dichotomy and excludes Maori from the decision-making process within the wider political public sphere (Stuart 2005, p. 17).

The need to protect their culture and heritage sets the Maori public sphere apart from the Habermasian public sphere (and the political public sphere). Maori (like Indigenous Canadians and Australians) have been pressured to assimilate into mainstream New Zealand society, resulting in an increased drive to protect their traditional cultural identity. Prior to colonisation, Maori culture and social and political practices were diverse and distinct from Pakeha³ culture and practices. Cultural differences between Pakeha and Maori New Zealanders have made interactions between Maori and mainstream media difficult. For instance, traditional Maori culture focuses on "face-to-face" communication and formal and informal cultural proceedings (Stuart 2005, pp. 18-21). Similarly, the Maori community decision-making process leads to conflicts between Maori and mainstream journalists. Mainstream media coverage of issues that have been resolved at a community level can cause conflict because resolved disagreements are reopened for discussion in the dominant public sphere (Stuart 2005, pp. 21-23). Therefore mainstream or Pakeha practices often do not conform or connect with Maori cultural practices.

³ Pakeha. Non-Indigenous New Zealanders, particularly people of European descent.

Maori journalists and media therefore have an advantage over Pakeha media. Maori journalists understand Maori public sphere processes and can operate within and between these two different cultural and political arenas. They can discern which information can be included in a news story and when culturally sensitive should be withheld. On the other hand though, Stuart points out Maori journalists also facilitate changes in the Maori political public sphere by adopting mainstream media methodologies that challenge Maori leaders and hold ideas, actions and decisions up to greater public scrutiny (Stuart 2005, p. 23). Therefore, the inclusion of Maori journalists within mainstream media organisations not only provides access to Maori public sphere processes but their greater cultural awareness can help to negotiate issues of conflict more successfully. The protection of cultural identity and heritage could also be a key function of an Indigenous public sphere in Australia and this notion will be explored within this study.

3.5 Chapter summary

The literature surveyed here has shown that public sphere theory is not static and continues to evolve, especially as it relates to marginalised groups. Despite the limitations of Habermas's original public sphere theory, research highlights how debate driven by mass media can influence public opinion and subsequently lead to changes in social policy. This suggests the public sphere provides a valid theoretical framework through which to analyse the Indigenous print media. As this chapter has shown, Indigenous Australians are marginalised within Australian society and have limited access to mainstream media and the public sphere discussions that can influence policy change. Fraser and Eley's theories suggest the response of minority and marginal groups has been to create their own counterpublic spheres. This is an important point in public sphere theory because it provides support for the idea that an Indigenous public sphere(s) could exist. Therefore, the work of scholars such as Fraser and Eley also forms an important part of the theoretical framework for this thesis. Essentially, then, public sphere theory, particularly its branches which relate to marginalised or counterpublic public spheres and their use of independent media, provides the context through which to study an Indigenous public sphere(s) and its media. The discussions regarding the Indigenous Canadian, Native American, Maori and African American counterpublic spheres provide models that explain why such counterpublic spheres exist—their roles, motivations for producing their own media

and their successes and difficulties. The analysis scholars such as Avison, Jacobs, Stuart, Murphy, Meadows and Molnar have conducted provide points of reference for this study to explore, particularly in relation to both alternative public spheres and their own distinct media. Indigenous people in Australia make up a very small part of the polity and as such have little or no power within the dominant or mainstream political public sphere. For Indigenous people to be able to influence public opinion and public policy it is essential for them to create a safe space through which to consider strategies to both protect their own culture and identity but also to challenge and change dominant views and ideas about them as a group. Fundamental questions for this thesis are whether and how Indigenous print media have:

- helped to facilitate Indigenous public sphere discussions,
- influenced public policy,
- helped to establish, protect and maintain cultural identity and heritage,
- provided links throughout the Indigenous community,
- provided a bridge between Indigenous public sphere(s) and the dominant public spheres.

Research covered in this literature review has illustrated the need to further clarify the shape and structure an Indigenous public sphere might have. For instance, Hartley and McKee view the Indigenous public sphere as similar to a Russian doll (2000, pp. 68, 71-73, 210-211), encompassed entirely within a broader sphere, while Meadows and Avison see it as a series of parallel, interlocking spheres (2000, p. 348). These ideas provide an important starting point for this thesis to build on. Understanding the structure of an Indigenous public sphere(s) may help to provide answers as to how such a sphere can interact with the dominant public sphere, and this is an important focus for this thesis. If the structures of the two spaces are diametrically different, this may provide some explanation for why Indigenous people are still largely excluded from public debates, even on issues that relate directly to them. Understanding of these differences may provide clues as to how to facilitate negotiations and successful communication between the two.

Another point to be examined further relates to control of the Indigenous public sphere. Hartley and McKee suggested the Indigenous public sphere was not under the

control of Indigenous people. Yet, if Indigenous people are not in control of their own public sphere, then who is? Who is controlling their media and how does this impact on public sphere processes? Identifying who is or has promoted the messages being circulated via the Indigenous print media should help to clarify who controls the Indigenous public sphere. Again, the theories relating to counterpublic control, and specifically Indigenous public sphere control play a foundation role for this study to build on.

While Habermas, Fraser and Eley provide the backbone to the theoretical framework for this study, the ideas raised by Stuart, Avison, Meadows, Molnar, Murphy and Jacobs provide the flesh for this study which is specifically concerned with *Indigenous* public sphere processes.

Chapter 4: News Values and Sources

News values are a key component of contemporary journalistic practice and determine whether or not journalists will cover certain stories. Journalists may learn the news value preferences of their media organisation through a variety of processes, trial and error, “newsroom socialisation” or perhaps during their training as either university journalism students or newsroom cadets. The value journalists place on particular sources is learned via the same processes. This chapter is broken into two sections, focusing initially on news values and then on news sources. Such a discussion is essential to a comprehensive understanding of the processes journalists undergo in their professional work, and as such informs this study’s analysis of the journalistic practices of Indigenous media journalists. I also consider how the representation of minority groups, including Indigenous people, is influenced by the professional news values which dominate much of our daily news media. The research investigated as part of this chapter suggests mainstream and alternative media journalists work in different ways. They use different criteria to decide which stories to cover and they speak to different people when compiling those stories. The examination of news value and source choices in this chapter illustrates why both spheres of media are important in creating more inclusive and democratic debate in the political public sphere.

4.1 News values

4.1.1 Ideology, the journalist and news values

The news production process is significantly affected by ideology. The information journalists choose to include in news stories is deliberately, and often quite subjectively, chosen as part of the newsgathering process (Fishman 1980, p. 14). Therefore, rather than being a response to spontaneous events, news content is determined at an ideological level by the choices journalists and editors make during their work day and these in turn may be impacted upon by the organisations for which they work.

Ideology impacts upon news production in two ways, through the news production process and in the way the audience interacts with the news they consume. Firstly, the

news production process influences the choices journalists make regarding the stories they produce and the sources they choose to interview. This is affected, in turn, by the journalist's perception of their audience (Tuchman 1978, pp. 1-2, 183-184; Anderson 1997, p. 117). Chibnall suggests the framework journalists use to categorise news has two components. The first component is to classify stories (human interest, celebrity stories, crime stories etc.) and the second is used to decide the ideological worth of news stories (Chibnall 1977, p. 12). Ideology is involved in this process because the judgements journalists make regarding ideological worth are governed by their own belief systems. Similarly, Sylvie and Sonia Huang's study found editor's news decisions were influenced by their social, journalistic and organisational value systems all influenced their news decisions (2008, p. 73). Therefore, while on the surface journalists may appear to be providing an objective, balanced coverage of events, in fact the decisions they make regarding the information we receive are affected by individual and organisational ideological influences.

This is important in the context of this thesis because the choices journalists make, and the way they choose to portray issues, influence the content of the public sphere. For instance, mainstream media descriptions of asylum seekers or refugees as "illegal immigrants" (Kingston 1991, p. 1; *The Age* 10 Nov. 1992, p. 13) cues the reader to perceive asylum seekers or refugees as behaving "illegally". In truth, under Article 14 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations 1948), to which Australia is a signatory, refugees have a legal right to come to Australia to seek asylum. Yet because the term "illegal immigrants" has appeared so frequently in the Australian mainstream media many Australians now believe the entry of asylum seekers is unlawful (Burnside QC 2003). Terms such as "illegal immigrant" therefore become part of the ideological framework of society. They become ideological truths that are difficult to dislodge. To dispel these "truths" Chibnall argues these cues or signifiers must be removed or rejected (1977, p. 12). Given the influence mainstream media have on the public's understanding of Indigenous issues, and therefore the mainstream perceptions of Indigenous people, the way media and journalists create or perpetuate ideological truths is an important aspect of consideration for this study.

Of course news audiences do not passively absorb information pushed at them by news organisations. The receivers' own ideological frameworks impact on the way

they filter, or understand, the news. Bovitz, Druckman and Lupia argue media can only influence their audience's beliefs when there are "interrelated decisions by reporters, editors, owners, and consumers" (2002, p. 129). When people consume news, they also apply their understanding of the majority position on the topic being discussed and if the information provided by the media conforms to their existing understanding of the subject under discussion they are more likely to accept what is being said as truth (Noelle-Neumann 1974). Therefore, audiences are more likely to be influenced by the content of a news report if they have little or no personal experience or knowledge of the topic being covered (Anderson 1997, p. 201). As an example of this in action, McCallum and Blood's (2007) study of how individuals talk about Indigenous issues indicates media coverage does not necessarily lead to better understanding (p. 12). McCallum's analysis of Australian newspapers from January 2000-June 2006 found Indigenous violence was a regular feature and Indigenous Australians were usually framed as a:

- threat to the existing order; a source of conflict and problematic;
- authentic Australians; available for cultural appropriation and a source of pride for all Australians;
- privileged compared with 'mainstream' Australians;
- Indigenous health as an individual failure;
- Australia's shame;
- victims of the failure of the Australian welfare state;
- non-Indigenous Australians and simultaneously racist and tolerant (2007, p. 3).

Furthermore, she found news stories about Indigenous violence juxtaposed against stories about corruption and questions about the integrity of Indigenous leaders while news stories about topics such as "reconciliation, social justice or Indigenous rights" were rare (2007, pp. 1, 9). In contrast McCallum and Blood, through a series of individual (37) and group interviews (13) of mostly non-Indigenous people, analysed "local talk" about "race, racism and political issues relating to Indigenous peoples and politics" and found media coverage did not lead to better community understanding of Indigenous people or issues that affect them (2007, pp. 5,12). Despite most of the participants having no "first-hand experience with remote Indigenous communities"

and using narratives other than media representations to inform their understanding (“stereotypes, myths, collective memories and experiential knowledge”), both in the analysed conversations and media representations, Indigenous people were considered “problematic” (2007, pp. 10, 13). Consequently, while media representations may not be our only source of information, if news is driven by sensationalist or conflict driven reportage and we have limited personal experience to counter it with, our understanding of issues in society is undermined.

4.1.2 Ideological role of news values

The key strategy used by journalists to determine which stories are newsworthy and should therefore be covered is the application of news values. News values help journalists to decide which stories to write and editors to decide which stories to publish (Conley 1997, p. 58; Gans 1979). While journalists admit these values exist, most are unable to explain what they are or how they are applied (Chibnall 1977, p. 13; Gans 1979, p. 40). Journalist’s knowledge of news values, whether mainstream or alternative, occurs through a process of “professional socialization” (Breed 1955). Journalists work for individual organisations that are in turn connected into the media networks and are expected to conform to a set of professional norms (Nossek 2004, p. 346). Journalists (and in turn editors) become “gatekeepers” who learn to judge which stories will be written and published and which will not (White 1950, p. 384). However, White found that many of the decisions about what is and what is not newsworthy were “highly subjective” (1950, p. 386). Similarly, Nossek argues news values are driven by the “cultural-domestic” environment that the journalist exists in (2004, p. 346). Consequently, individual journalist’s professional values are balanced with their “historical and cultural traditions and defined by their political, economic and social environment” (Nossek 2004, p. 348). This has implications for this study because the “gate keeper” roles played by journalists’ influence which topics are discussed within the public sphere. McCombs and Shaw (1972) found that while media coverage may not directly influence the way we feel about different topics and problems within society, journalists do influence which topics are discussed. In other words, media can significantly influence which topics and problems reach the political agenda for discussion (McCombs and Shaw 1972, p. 177). Oliver and Maney argue the news media are inextricably linked to politics and therefore to protests and news values, news routines and institutional politics and political cycles all influence

the coverage protests are given by media organisations (2000, p. 424). Since the aim of most protests is to generate public opinion (Oliver 2000, p. 465) and public opinion is (as has already been discussed) influenced by media coverage, the “gate-keeper” role played by media has far reaching implications for those wanting to influence the political agenda. McCombs and Shaw found that while there is no “explicit, commonly agreed-upon definition of news, there is a professional norm regarding major news stories from day to day” and there is “consensus on news values” (1972, p. 184). While the particular style or audience a news production is targeting will determine the order or range of news values being used, news values exist implicitly in all news organisations. They become part of the “conventions of the craft of journalism which constrain not only what types of reality the reporter can accommodate in his accounts but also what kind of sense he can make of acceptable events” (Chibnall 1977, p. 13). Consequently, news production is not a “passive record of perceptions” but a process that creates a particular view of the world we live in and if that process is changed, then the view of the world that is created will also change (Fishman 1980). Lewis argues a consequence of this reliance on news values to dictate what is newsworthy is that stories with little more than entertainment value and that perform no valid informative function, are labelled news because they conform to a range of news values (2006, p. 311). Furthermore, he suggests the clamour to break news stories “that are hardly matters of great urgency” serves no public purpose and has led to a situation where “form has superseded content” (2006, p. 311). Therefore, the rush to get news to the public first may override any requirement to produce content that genuinely informs the citizenry. When teamed with the blocking of political comment in the form of protests unless it conforms with the journalistic process or political environment significantly impacts on the voices participating in the democratic conversation. This has significant bearing on groups whose beliefs or attitudes fall outside of the dominantly accepted norm and indeed undermines the media’s ability to produce news that is informative and of significant public value.

4.1.3 Story selection and news values

While different researchers have generated different categories of news values, there is agreement that news values implicitly guide news selection decisions. For instance, Gans argues there are two types of news values: topical and enduring values that

persist over years, topics and news stories. The enduring news values identified by Gans were: Ethnocentrism, Altruistic Democracy, Responsible Capitalism, Small-town Pastoralism, Individualism and Modernism (Gans 1979, pp. 42-52). Chibnall labels mainstream news values as dramatisation, personalisation, simplification, titillation, conventionalism, structured access, novelty and immediacy (Chibnall 1977, p. 23). Similarly, Conley defines standard mainstream news values as featuring impact, conflict, timeliness, proximity, prominence, currency, human interest and the unusual (Conley 1997, p. 58). Mainstream “news is about what is new, what has just happened” (Chibnall 1977, p. 23) and mainstream journalists must often compete to get stories published first (Anderson 1997, p. 120). Galtung and Ruge argue what is considered to be news often revolves around elites or is “elite-centered”; elites as in nations and as in individuals and negative news takes precedence over positive news (1965, pp. 68-69). Anderson suggests negativity is a prominent mainstream news value because mainstream media prefers to publish “bad news” stories (1997, p. 120). Journalists learn to write stories about issues that they and their editors believe will sell newspapers and in mainstream publications, this is likely to mean stories about “sex, violence, the unusual and the sensational” (Manning 2001, p. 61). Manning describes news values as similar to radio frequencies, journalists choose stories they believe will be ‘tuned into’ by their audiences (Manning 2001, p. 61). Interestingly, mainstream news values appear to be universal, with similarities in what is considered newsworthy occurring in news rooms across Europe, the United Kingdom, the United States and other western countries (Manning 2001, p. 61). In fact, Manning suggests news values relating to crime, sex, law and order are “favourites among news editors” regardless of their cultural or ethnic origins (2001, p. 61). And the more news values a story includes, the more likely it is to be considered newsworthy by journalists and editors (1965, p. 71). Miller and Williams go so far as to say if a story is perceived as newsworthy by journalists because it conforms to prescribed news values, the journalist is “powerless to prevent themselves writing it” (1993, p. 136). Galtung and Ruge suggest the decisions about “what is news” form part of a chain reaction, with each member of the chain judging the news event based on the same criteria but with every step, the final and cumulative outcome bears little resemblance to “what really happened” (1965, p. 71).

News values dictate not only which stories we read, but also how much detail we receive about specific issues. In fact, journalists' reliance on news values can result in an over-emphasis of the more dramatic elements of issues that end up on the news agenda and this can impact on the way audiences understand and perceive social issues (Chibnall 1977, p. 23). At the same time, mainstream journalists' news values may mean issues are presented in "black and white" terms without any discussion of the shades of grey that invariably form part of any issue or event. This results in news stories that do not extend beyond a clichéd and assumptive examination of topics (Chibnall 1977, pp. 23-29). "We receive our news extensively pre-digested, coded and packaged in conventional parcels" (Chibnall 1977, p. 35). Furthermore, Aday suggests journalists package stories so that two sources are placed in opposition to each other and the reader is left to "reconcile the two arguments" (2006, p. 769). When the reader is presented with many stories about the same topic, in what Vasterman calls a "media storm", media coverage can amplify the public's understanding of a topic to the point where it becomes perceived as a social problem (2005, p. 517). Aday argues the media's ability to influence the public's perception of an issue is heightened when there are many media messages on the same topic and the audience has limited knowledge of the topic and little involvement (2006, p. 769). This influence is particularly pertinent when considering issues such as child sexual abuse, domestic violence and alcoholism when connected to Indigenous communities. Media coverage can be hyped and distorted to such a level that ALL Indigenous people are tainted. Furthermore, Peter found that media's reliance on elite sources (Fishman 1980; Galtung and Ruge 1965) leads to people's understanding being overly influenced by "elite opinion about the issue" (Peter 2003, p. 699).

4.2 Alternative news values

Coverage of Indigenous issues often does not include the voices of those working at a grassroots level and so the portrayal is told only through the voices of people such as politicians and academics. The views of high profile citizens, who have prominent news value, can therefore significantly influence (and distort) the way other citizens view issues. While credible, informed commentary is undoubtedly newsworthy and important when presenting information about events or topics, this is perhaps where alternative media can provide not only different perspectives but also allow those who have not been able to contribute an opportunity to respond. For instance, Traber

suggests alternative (and specifically grassroots media) espouse news values that are “a reversal of the news values of conventional journalism” (1985, p. 2). For example, while timeliness is the foundation news value for most mainstream media news stories, alternative media stories about events that have passed or issues that are continuing are still likely to be published by alternative journalists. Likewise, Traber contends mainstream media’s use of the “inverted pyramid” can be inappropriate for alternative media journalists because they have to weave parochial language and their own observations into their stories. Similarly, “conflict” (a highly valued mainstream news value) is likely to be replaced by empathy and affinity by alternative journalists (Traber 1985, p. 4). The situation may involve conflict, but the journalist’s response will be to try to develop an emotional connection with the participants and to communicate with understanding and compassion. Traber (1985, p. 4) concludes: “The journalist’s empathy for, and affinity with, people and their plight is at the core of alternative journalism”. This contrasts with mainstream media conventions where journalists are more likely to seek to present the story from an objective framework and are likely to consider subjective material and sources as lacking credibility (Anderson 1997, p. 69; Lewes 2000). Therefore, rather than standing back from the event or problem and seeking to present objective information that allows readers to form their own opinion after weighing up the information presented, alternative journalists may see themselves as “champions of the poor and exploited, as the voice of the voiceless, in a way as the conscience of society” (Traber 1985, p. 3).

Like Traber, Atton argues alternative media “deals with the opinions of small minorities” and “expresses attitudes hostile to widely-held beliefs” and generally “espouses views or deals with subjects not given regular coverage by publications generally available at newsagents” (Atton 1999, p. 1; Atton 2002, p. 1). Alternative media are more likely to cover “emerging issues” and in fact “it is in the nature of such media to have these emerging issues at their very heart, since it is in the nature of activism to respond to social issues as they emerge” (Atton 2002, p. 12). This notion of focussing on emerging issues contrasts completely with mainstream media whose emphasis tends to be on issues where the conclusion and outcome can be predicted and that fall within the realms of the journalist’s own experience and understanding. Therefore, rather than focusing on producing objective information, alternative journalists may deal with emerging issues, or topics that have received limited

mainstream coverage and are the concern of minority groups. Alternative journalism may be subjective and biased towards their target community's needs.

Other research into alternative media news values has confirmed Traber and Atton's arguments and highlights the synergies between alternative news values, and the news values that may be at play in the Indigenous news media. For instance, Forde's 1996-97 Australian study of alternative journalists found they considered "context, political motivation, empowerment, scooping the mainstream, and to a lesser extent, shock and humour central to their story selection process" (Weaver & Wilhoit 1996, pp. 217-218; Forde 1997, pp. 71-72; Forde 1999). Similarly, Johnstone et al's 1976 US study found alternative media tended to have a great deal of freedom to decide which stories they covered and the most significant constraint regarding story selection was financial and resource limitations (Johnstone et al. 1976, p. 166). Yet, while alternative journalists may choose to select stories based on different news values to mainstream journalists, Johnstone et al. found this did not suggest they had an inferior "nose for news" or "street sense". In just the same way that mainstream journalists are encouraged to produce balanced and fair stories, they found alternative journalists aim to apply "standard news-gathering conventions to their work" (Johnstone et al. 1976, p. 167). Therefore alternative journalists are likely to include alternative perspectives on an issue, to try to provide more background or contextual information and the publications they work for often allow them flexibility to choose the stories they work on. However, they may take a more subjective stance although this may not necessarily result in work less balanced or unfair.

4.2.1 News values and minority groups

Journalists' choices regarding which stories have news value may influence our understanding of minority groups in society. Cottle contends mainstream media representations of minority or ethnic groups tend to revolve around "conflict, drama, controversy, violence and [the] deviant" (2000, p. 21). He questions whether this preference for negative news values by mainstream journalists leads to a "disproportionate number of stories about ethnic minorities framed in such ways" (2000, p. 21). Bell takes this idea further and contends mainstream media news values are inclined to discourage discussion about how and why racism occurs and the impact it has on society. Consequently, racism can become "accepted as natural and

inevitable” by media (Bell 1997, p. 43). While on the surface mainstream news media may aim to be liberal and populist, they can be guilty of reproducing the “assumptions and vocabulary of race discourse and its apparent ‘naturalness’” (Bell 1997, p. 43). Mainstream media news values can therefore perpetuate racist values within society by avoiding in-depth discussions regarding racism and by repeating and reproducing stereotypes and generalisations. Of course alternative media coverage of the minority groups that are their primary audience are just as likely to be one-sided and discriminatory in their story selection.

Journalists use their understanding of audience expectations to judge which stories they will produce. The lack of research into ethnic minority audiences and media representations of their communities and issues means journalists’ access to information regarding this section of their audience’s needs is very limited. Cottle blames this lack of research on “institutional logic and academic inertia” and argues it has led to little understanding of what “ethnic minorities themselves might think, want, or say about media representations, the media’s involvement with their everyday lives, or their media hopes for the future” (2000, p. 23). Equally, Manning found “diminishing coverage of “other” cultures and countries in anything but a news bite, snapshot fashion, based upon low expectations of audience interest” (2001, p. 62). The assumption that audiences do not want to read about cultures that fall outside the dominant group leads to disenchantment with “non-domestic reporting” and results in media coverage that fails to educate its audience (Manning 2001, p. 62). The lack of coverage of issues of concern to minority and ethnic groups, also results in the disengagement of these groups from the mainstream of society.

4.2.2 The representation of Indigenous affairs

As has been discussed in early chapters the term “alternative” encompasses a broad range of media including community media, and Indigenous media clearly falls into this category (Forde 1997). Therefore, in fitting more naturally into the alternative media sphere it is likely Indigenous publications will use different news values because of their unique objectives and needs. For instance, Robie in his “Four Worlds” model of news values argues Australian Indigenous media apply “Fourth World” news values. Robie developed his model while working in Papua New Guinea and Fourth World communities are defined as Indigenous communities that are

geographically situated within the borders of an imperialist nation (Russell in Robie 2006, p. 72). In order to gain equal access to the political activity occurring in the imperialist nation, Indigenous people must rely at least in part on their own media and for this reason will adopt different news values to “First World” media (Robie 2006, p. 72). He categorises these differing news values as focusing on “independent [political] voice”, “language”, “culture”, “education” and “solidarity” (Robie 2006, p. 73). Traber argues grassroots media may be driven by the need of colonised peoples to “reclaim wholeness”. He contends colonialism has resulted in “dual culture, a dual economy and a dual policy”. The provision of their own media is not only a “colonised” community’s attempt to assert its own individualism but also an oppositional response to the “pepsicola-cultures of the elite” (Traber 1985, p. 3). While grassroots journalists *may* utilise help offered by professional journalists, their primary aim is to gain sufficient skills to produce their own media (Traber 1985, p. 3). We can deduce, then, that colonialism is likely to have had a reasonable impact on Indigenous media news values.

There are several other issues that need to be considered in a proper discussion of news values in Indigenous publications. Consider, for example, the impact that cultural background might have on news value choices. Similarly, journalists’ connectedness to a target community may affect the news value choices and how they practise journalism. In his discussion of the underground press, Lewes described how editors and journalists of underground newspapers considered their publications “belonged” to the community (2000, p. 381). This is particularly relevant when considering Indigenous or ethnic news values. Scott’s (1996) discussion of Indigenous journalists argues cultural protocol can play a big part in which news practices and stories are deemed appropriate. Stories that appear to be “useful” from a mainstream point of view may not be deemed useful from an Indigenous community perspective. Scott found Indigenous journalists might be reluctant to ask questions of people they did not know or who were in a position of authority within their community. This can have significant bearing on the sort of news broadcast and the way it is gathered. Scott describes how for one Aboriginal student:

...news was about successful turtle hunts, local football scores and ‘talks’ with other locals about issues that would help pull the community together rather than encourage divisions. This was not to deny that political issues were

discussed, but it was nearly always done in a style that was not based upon Western models of confrontation...The conflict approach, around which so much Western journalism thrives was avoided – however, it was clearly understood by many of the students who simply chose not to embrace such a framework (Scott 1996, p. 32).

Cultural background may also explain why issues and concerns of minority groups receive limited mainstream media coverage. This is especially true of Indigenous issues which, according to Meadows, receive little coverage within the mainstream media. Non-Indigenous journalists' lack of understanding of Indigenous culture and perspectives, that is, their own "non-Indigenous" cultural background, may explain why mainstream coverage of Indigenous topics is criticised by Indigenous audiences. Meadows' research found mainstream news stories tended to produce representations of Aboriginal Australians that fitted into white Australia's preferred reality rather than presenting the truth. Mainstream media journalists' preference for writing stories about crime-ridden communities serves only to widen the gap between mainstream and Indigenous Australia and leads to a lack of faith in mainstream media by Indigenous Australians (Meadows 1987, p. 87; Meadows 1988, p. 141). Both Anderson and Meadows found there was a tendency to produce negative and/or sensationalist stories about Indigenous Australians (Anderson 1997, p. 120; Meadows 1987, pp. 92, 93). Meadows and Ewart blame the mainstream media's poor representation of Indigenous people on journalists' lack of contact with Indigenous people and on newsroom practices and hierarchy (2001, pp. 115, 119). They argue mainstream journalists will always aim to produce stories they are sure will be published by their editors and therefore until editors alter their preconceived ideas and attitudes towards Indigenous issues, mainstream media journalists will continue to produce stories they believe will conform to the news desk's preferred news values (Meadows & Ewart 2001, p.119). In the same way Indigenous journalists' news value choices are directed by their cultural knowledge and awareness, mainstream media journalists' choices may be dictated by their own lack of knowledge and awareness in the reportage of Indigenous issues

While deadlines, newsroom socialisation and various other factors may contribute to the choices mainstream media journalists make, there is also evidence to suggest racism plays a part in why some groups in society are largely ignored by mainstream media outlets. Corea argues racism is as "integral a dimension of US culture as

advertising” and anyone who believes racism disappeared with the civil rights movement is in denial and suffering from either “hypocrisy or wilful blindness to everyday realities” (1995, p. 345). Similarly, Berkowicz contends the stereotypes permeated by the media “have been implicated in the phenomenon of modern racism” (1997, p. 380). To ignore that racism exists in Australia or that it is insidiously permitted to flourish in the media would leave us equally blind to reality. Indigenous Australians make up around two percent of Australia’s total population and for many people their only contact with people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage is through the media (Bullimore 1999, p. 72). The media not only “plays a primary role in informing Australians about issues that affect Aboriginal Australians” but “it also plays a central role in the construction of social discourse on what and who is seen to be Aboriginal” (1999, p. 73). Davies and Hartley remind us that “colonised populations are managed ‘by controlling knowledge about them and speaking on their behalf’” (Hartley in Davies 1997, p. 5).

Deadlines are an integral part of the journalist’s work process and can determine whether a story will be covered. This is especially true for daily newspaper reporters—to make a story timely for the next day’s newspaper sources have to be identified, interviewed and the story produced and submitted by deadline (Dunn 1969, p. 27). Consequently, mainstream media journalists may disregard Indigenous stories because Indigenous sources may be difficult to reach because of their remote locations, or because they may not be familiar with the “urgency” of mainstream journalistic practice. Similarly, mainstream journalists may be unaware of the right person to speak to from the Indigenous community’s perspective (Malezer 2005). All of these factors may make it difficult for mainstream journalists to access Indigenous people for comment but without a range of Indigenous comment in news stories the content may be misrepresentative and inaccurate (Meadows and Ewart 2001, pp. 121, 127). Mainstream journalists are driven by deadlines and the cultural protocols they must follow to access some Indigenous people may result in the publication of some stories without Indigenous comment. To fully consider this issue of news story selection I will turn now to a discussion of sources, who form an integral part of the news selection process and can indicate a great deal about the news values at play in various media.

4.3 Sources

4.3.1 Journalists' source choices

Mainstream journalists have a clear preference for official sources. Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke and Roberts argue politicians, party leaders, senior figures from the law and order arena are often viewed by media as at the top of the credibility scale (1978, p. 58). Furthermore, Sigal's 1973 research found 53.8 per cent of sources in the stories he surveyed were American official sources (pp. 124-125). Mainstream media prefer to use official and authoritative sources for several reasons, the institutions are by their very nature powerful and therefore automatically rate as newsworthy; the speakers or sources within these organisations already have a large degree of "legitimacy in the eyes of journalists by virtue of their status as representatives of 'the people' (government's, MPs, police, etc.) or of strategically important sections of society (trade unions, industry, the City, etc.); and because they are perceived as experts in their fields contributing expertise and authoritative knowledge (Hall et al. 1978, p.58). McChesney similarly argues (2003) that one of the contemporary mainstream news media's greatest flaws is its over-reliance on official and elite sources, which he argues essentially makes mainstream news journalists "stenographers for the government" (2003, pp 302-305). Fishman also found elite sources are viewed as "socially authorised and socially sanctioned knowers". Elite sources such as bureaucrats and officials therefore have access to information journalists need, but also the audience expects people in those roles (if they are doing their jobs well) to have that information. Therefore, journalists may feel duty bound to let the public know if these authorised knowers are not doing their job (Fishman 1980, pp. 94-95). In summary then mainstream media journalists prefer to deal with "elite" sources or "authorised knowers" who occupy positions of power and knowledge.

Alternative media source choices vary quite considerably from those preferred by mainstream media organisations. Forde's 1999 study of the alternative media found alternative media workers, rather than going to bureaucrats and elite sources, often used the mainstream media itself to generate news story ideas. Alternative publications' chiefs-of-staff, editors, press releases, people on the street and grassroots community people were other sources of news story ideas within the alternative press (Forde 1999, p. 69). Johnstone et al's 1976 alternative media study in the United

States found alternative media journalists tended to rely on different sources of news than mainstream media journalists. The authors found alternative journalists used their own contacts, conversations with ordinary people and the organisers of left-wing organisations to find story ideas. Alternative journalists may even ignore prominent sources because of their community focus. Politicians are “secondary actors; the ordinary people are the primary ones” (Traber 1985, p. 2). However these choices may also be influenced by the fact that alternative media journalists are often not invited to press conferences and do not have access to information provided to mainstream journalists (Johnstone et al. 1976, p. 167). Consequently, alternative media sources of news can be quite different to those favoured by mainstream journalists and grassroots people are often preferred to elite or expert sources.

A downside to the mainstream media’s preference for elite or official sources is identified by Ewart who suggests the result is a “lack of ordinary voices in the news” (2002, p. 65). Ordinary people and minority groups may therefore find it difficult to access the mainstream media and are unable to present their unique perspective on matters of concern to them. Ewart’s 2002 public journalism project with *The Courier-Mail* journalists in Brisbane found less than “one in four” of the 62 sources used were from “ordinary members of the public” (p. 27). Similarly, Ewart found little more than 10 percent of these sources were Indigenous which impacts upon our understanding of issues such as reconciliation and land rights (2002, p. 74). Ewart argues this is particularly disturbing given the range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and community groups that were available for *The Courier-Mail* journalists to approach for comment. The result of this was that the debate on reconciliation covered by the study lacked any real Indigenous perspective and “did nothing to challenge existing ideas circulating within the public sphere about the authority of Indigenous people to talk about reconciliation or, just as significantly, land rights” (Ewart 2002, p. 74). Similarly, Meadows and Ewart’s 2001 mainstream media study found non-Indigenous voices outnumbered Indigenous voices at a ratio of 4-1 (2001, p. 125). The lack of mainstream media debate on issues of concern to reconciliation was also highlighted in my own 2000 study of media coverage of the national event Corroboree 2000. I found mainstream media tended to rely on commentary pieces from official and elite sources and to paint some Indigenous leaders as problematic activists (Burrows 2000, p. 184). Prior research suggests, then,

that even when mainstream media journalists have easy access to a wide range of sources, and the subject logically demands comment from sources belonging to a particular group, mainstream journalists may still not include comment if the source falls outside the group of “authorised knowers”. Research by Ewart, Meadows and Burrows suggests this can result in a narrower debate about some issues and especially those relating to minority groups such as Indigenous people. While sources need to be as credible and relevant as possible, a range of stakeholders need to be canvassed to debate topics more completely.

4.4 Chapter summary

This discussion of news values and sources has illustrated that news stories are much more than just a construction of facts and comment. Stories we see in the media have the power to influence how we view different groups in society or understand issues in the public sphere. Journalists, as the producers of these stories can help to create, maintain or demolish “ideological truths” and this is especially true when the reader knows little about the topic, and many non-Indigenous Australians are lacking in their knowledge about Indigenous people, culture and history. Since Indigenous people make up only two percent of the Australian population (although in some areas, such as the Northern Territory, more than a third of the population is Indigenous), many Australians have little or no real knowledge of Indigenous culture or problems facing the Indigenous community and therefore stories about them are likely to be received by mainstream audiences as true representations of matters concerning them. How alternative media, and particularly Indigenous media, can address this problem is a key issue for this thesis.

This chapter has also highlighted the differences between alternative and mainstream news value categories. While mainstream media journalists are likely to be driven by the need to produce timely and objective stories, alternative journalists are likely to be more focused on emerging issues, providing wider understanding of issues and addressing the specific concerns of their community. Since mainstream media is concerned with the wider Australian community, alternative publications focus more intently on minority or marginal communities and on filling in the grey areas left by mainstream media coverage of issues of concern to those communities. These are important points for this thesis. A key focus for this study is how Indigenous print

media have helped to establish an Indigenous public sphere, therefore an investigation of the news values and source choices made by journalists leads to a stronger understanding of the processes involved. This focus also enables us to directly compare the news values and journalistic practices of Indigenous media journalists with their mainstream counterparts. The findings of Atton, Forde, Anderson, Robie and other scholars in this field provide an outline of the types of news values Indigenous media journalists are likely to use and the sources they may choose. The discussion in this chapter has also highlighted the importance culture can play as to how journalists present stories and again, this is an important point for this thesis to investigate. The next chapter will bring together the ideas generated by the previous research, and will pinpoint the research questions that have emerged from this investigation. Chapter five will outline the research steps to be undertaken to answer these questions.

Chapter 5: Research Design

This study began with the recognition that very little research has been carried out that explains how and why Indigenous print media in Australia have been produced. As a journalist working with Indigenous media I was aware of the importance of these newspapers to Indigenous people but I was equally aware of the lack of change in Indigenous people's living conditions. Consequently, two primary questions motivated me to undertake this study: "How have Indigenous print media helped to facilitate discussion within and across Indigenous communities and to provide an opportunity for Indigenous people to have a democratic voice" and "Who were/are the people who wrote these newspapers and what were they seeking to achieve?" This chapter will explain the methodological and research design choices made in this study to answer these related research questions.

5.1 Research focus

The literature suggests multiple public spheres operate and overlap regularly, and specifically that an Indigenous public sphere exists. Further, we might extrapolate from previous literature already surveyed that the Indigenous print media have helped to create and develop Indigenous public sphere activities. It is a primary hypothesis of this study that an Indigenous public sphere has always existed and that the Indigenous print media have helped to create and develop Indigenous public sphere activities. Furthermore, given that news values dictate what information is published and indeed which voices are heard through mainstream media outlets, news values and sources were key areas investigated for this hypothesis. Since Indigenous people are largely excluded from mainstream media, it was further postulated that journalists working in the Indigenous print media would use different news values and sources that reflect the Indigenous media's different range of goals and functions. Along with proving the validity of both hypotheses, this study aimed to provide a clearer understanding of the democratic and community role played by Indigenous print media and their development since the 1930s through an historical analysis. Therefore, questions relating to the establishment of newspapers, their funding and closure were investigated. Journalists working in the Indigenous media were interviewed in an effort to discover *what they perceived to be* their own role and functions. The study considers whether the Indigenous print media can provide a bridge between the

Indigenous community and policymakers to bring about improvements in the lives of Indigenous Australians.

5.2 Methodological choices

This study utilises qualitative methodologies, and this decision was based on the need to investigate beyond the content of Indigenous newspapers, and to delve further into *why* and *how* the newspapers were produced. Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander suggest qualitative research “attempts to capture people’s meanings, definitions and descriptions of events” (2000, p. 9). The authors argue the aim of qualitative research is to investigate the perceptions, feelings and motives of the participants (2000, p. 9). Similarly Denzin and Lincoln define qualitative research as seeking to provide meaning and explanations of how social experiences occur (2000, p. 8). In contrast to the aims of qualitative research, they argue quantitative research focuses on the “measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes” (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, p. 9). Therefore, a content analysis would unveil details such as how many sources were used in stories in Indigenous newspapers, and percentages or statistics about the frequency of coverage of specific topics and so on. However, a content analysis would not provide background information about the newspapers, the relationship between the producers and their audiences, or audience and producer perspectives about how effective Indigenous newspapers are in areas such as building identity, empowering the community and encouraging political activity.

To elicit the answers to such questions a three-phase qualitative approach was undertaken. Denzin and Lincoln suggest using multiple methods within qualitative research is an “attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question” (2000, p. 5). Likewise, Flick argues the multiple layers of qualitative research add “rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry” (1998, p. 231). Consequently, the research design for this investigation has involved the combined use of in-depth interviewing, textual analysis of Indigenous newspapers and archival research (see Figure 1). The first stage of the in-depth interviewing phase was to canvass Indigenous newspapers to produce a list of the people involved in producing them and their primary sources. This list was then used to produce a list of potential interviewees. The final sample was limited by the availability of Indigenous

participants. The high mortality rate of Indigenous Australians, who on average die almost 20 years younger than the average non-Indigenous Australian (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2008); coupled with the choice by some not to participate limited the number of people available for interview. The second phase was initiated with the production of the survey instrument. After ethics clearance was obtained, using this survey, Indigenous media participants including writers, journalists, editors and sources, as well as public relations practitioners working in the Indigenous arena, were interviewed. In order to verify the information gathered during the in-depth interview phase, a textual analysis of the newspapers was carried out to ascertain the types of stories that were published, favoured news values and information about production methods, challenges and information about the organisations that published the newspapers. Finally, archival material held in Canberra and New South Wales libraries was investigated to provide another level of evidence and understanding of the background, role, functions and development of Indigenous newspapers. Since many early Indigenous print media participants are no longer alive, analysis of the newspapers and archival material provided information that would not have been accessible. Furthermore, historical research filled the gaps in the earlier periods of investigation to ensure publications produced during those times could be properly analysed along with the more contemporary publications which were more easily accessed.

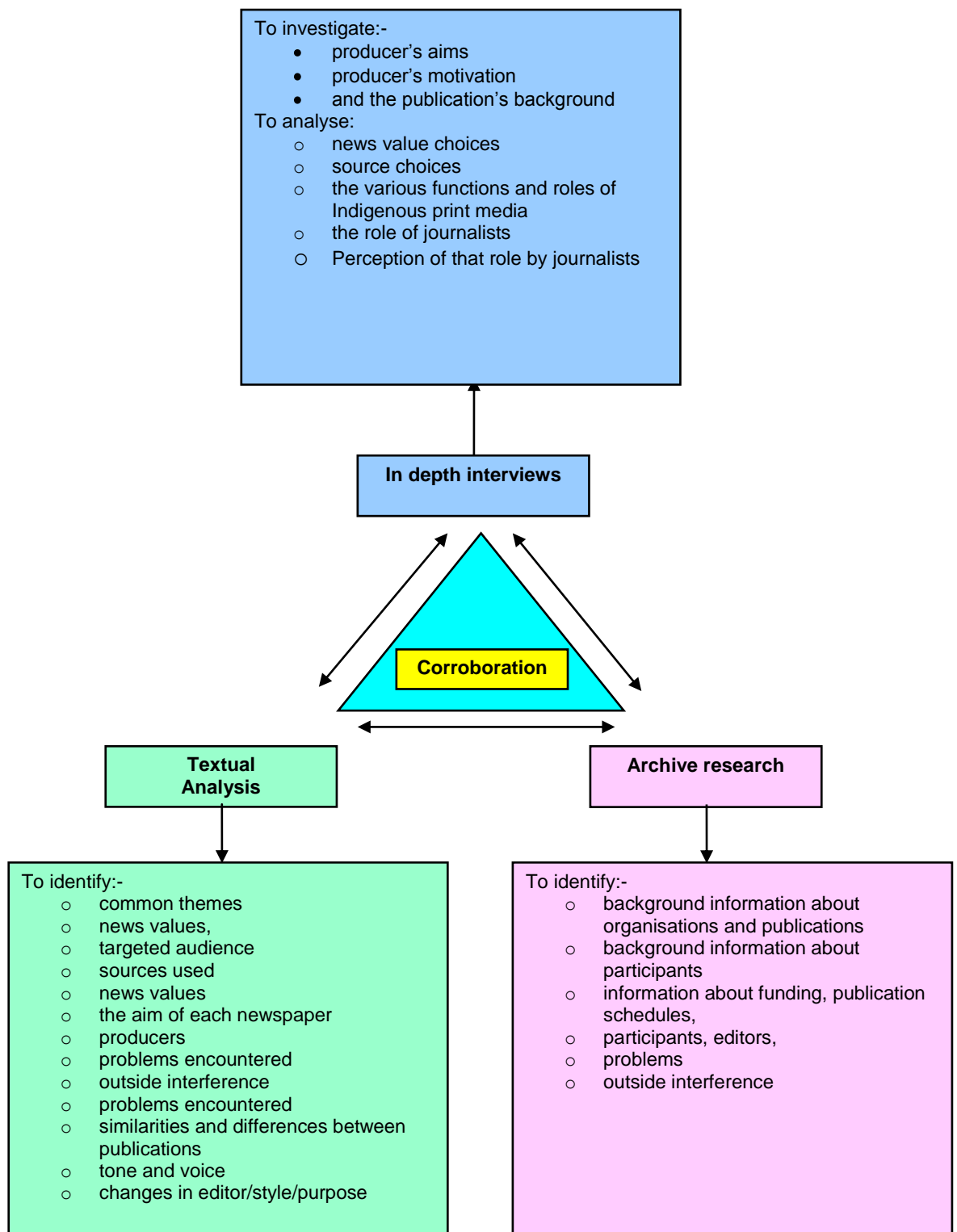


Figure 1 Diagrammatic representation of research design

5.3 Phase One - Interviews

5.3.1 Sample list

To produce a comprehensive list of Indigenous publications, an analysis of literature was undertaken (Langton and Kirkpatrick 1979; Rose 1996), followed by a search of the National Library of Australia, the State Library of NSW (Mitchell Library), the University of Queensland (Fryer Library) and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) holdings to identify other Indigenous publications. Interviewees also provided information about additional publications and these were added to the final list.

A list of potential participants for this study was then compiled. Since the Mitchell Library in NSW carries a large collection of Indigenous publications, its holdings were searched to identify the names of people who wrote for or were sources in Indigenous publications. Rather than only focusing on the journalists, this study has also included people who have been interviewed for Indigenous publications and some of those who have used Indigenous media to promote their own or their organisations' messages to the wider Indigenous community and beyond.

The development of the final list of participants was an evolving process as some of the participants were deceased, others could not be located and some chose not to participate. As interviews were carried out, participants were asked if they knew where to find other people who had been involved or for suggestions of other publications or participants.

5.3.2 Survey instrument

To provide potential comparative data between this and other studies, along with following a "tried and tested" method, some of the questions for this survey were drawn from those used by Forde (1997) to interview alternative journalists and Weaver and Wilhoit (1996) to interview American journalists. The original plan included drawing comparisons between these and other existing studies. However, the small sample size in this investigation and the overall size of the project ultimately made this impractical in any detailed sense. Survey questions were also generated by information from the literature review.

The *Indigenous Media Study* survey began with an overview of the aims and purpose of the study. This was explained to participants prior to the survey being conducted. The survey consisted of 47 questions. These were made up of multiple choice and open ended questions. Question 35 surveyed participants about alternative media functions identified from the literature review (see *Indigenous Media Survey* Appendix 4). Survey respondents were questioned about their involvement with the Indigenous print media, their perceived audience, how they chose their sources, what “makes a good story” for their publication, the background to their publication and involvement and general demographic data. In hindsight, given the small number of participants some of the questions about demographics and the role of publications etc were superfluous. The initial idea was that comparisons could be drawn with Forde’s study of alternative journalists and Weaver and Wilhoit’s studies of mainstream journalists in Australia and the United States. This was not done as these fall outside the scope of the questions being addressed in this study and the small/diverse sample size for this study made this impractical. Prior to being used the survey was piloted on two participants who have experiences as both researchers and as journalists working in the Indigenous media. Feedback from the pilot highlighted the need to simplify the wording of some questions to increase clarity.

5.3.3 Interview rationale

Researchers (Henningham 1996; Forde 1997 and Ewart 1997) have previously used interviews to gather data about journalists and media producers. In-depth interviews enable the researcher to obtain information from participants about events or issues that cannot be observed directly (Minichiello et al. 2000, p. 70). In-depth interviews may be short, long, singular or multiple. While long interviews demand greater involvement from participants, Berg argues participants are more likely to find them stimulating and rewarding if they are able to talk (in a conversational tone) with a person who is interested about something that is of interest to them (2001, p. 81). He suggests the duration of an interview depends on the amount and depth of information being sought. Likewise, different types of interviews require different levels of relationship to be formed between the interviewee and interviewer (building rapport) and this may require longer or even multiple interviews (Berg 2001, p. 82). In this study most interviews lasted longer than an hour, with some lasting more than three hours (see List of Interviews Appendix 2).

Structured in-depth interviews fit naturally into a quantitative research approach. Minichiello et al explain structured interviews use a fixed questionnaire (survey instruments). With a fixed survey or questionnaire, no changes are made to the questions asked and the interviewer tries to ask each question using the same wording and intonation. This reduces interviewer bias and provides a stronger foundation for comparative analysis. A structured interview may include a range of closed and open-ended questions presented in exactly the same order (Minichiello et al. 2000 p. 63). Consequently, the responses gathered in structured interviews can be measured to produce statistics.

In contrast to structured interviews, semi-structured interviews fit most naturally into a “qualitatively-oriented” approach (Minichiello et al. 2000, p. 65). While interviewers may still use a survey instrument or have a list of topics to be discussed, the delivery of the wording or order of the questions is not fixed. Semi-structured interviews create a more flexible interview experience (Minichiello et al. 2000, p. 65). This looser style of interviewing allows the participant more leeway in how they discuss the topics being covered. In unstructured interviews, the aim is for the interview to resemble a conversation. However, Minichiello et al argue even though an interview is unstructured, the “conversation is controlled” and “geared to the interviewer’s interests” (2000, p. 65).

Since this study required specific information to be gathered from Indigenous print media participants, a semi-structured, in-depth interview approach was adopted. Bowd (2004) suggests semi-structured in-depth interviewing shares much in common with journalistic interviewing. She argues semi-structured academic and journalistic interviews both have a “clear purpose” and gather information by posing a series of questions or focusing on key points. The approach in both cases is therefore “planned and structured” but also maintains the flexibility to respond to information as it is provided during the interview.

Similarly, adopting a semi-structured interviewing technique allows the interviewer to adapt their language and the questions to suit the specific interview conditions and individual needs of the participant (Bowd 2004, p. 117). Since many of the participants involved in this research have worked as journalists, the use of semi-structured interviewing techniques to gather information was familiar to them either

as interviewers or interviewees. Still, some participants were not trained journalists and therefore were unfamiliar with some of the jargon associated with the production of news publications. Berg contends effective communication demands the use of language that is clearly understood by the interviewee (2001, p. 77), so within the semi-structured interviews for this study the language or terms used were adapted to ensure the participant was clear about the meaning of the questions being asked.

5.3.4 The interview process

Prior to starting the interviews ethics clearance was obtained (see Appendix 7) and participants were asked to verbally consent to participating in the study. Consent forms were also sent to each participant for signature after the interview concluded. Potential interviewees were contacted by telephone to invite them to take part in the study. All potential interviewees were key people in the Indigenous print media since the 1930s, editors, journalists, publishers, and others who more loosely defined themselves as activists, or writers. The study's aims were explained and appointments were made to conduct the interviews. Since the participants were widely dispersed throughout Australia and some were difficult to reach many interviews were carried out over the telephone. Berg has argued while face-to-face interviewing is more common in qualitative research, telephone interviews are on occasions essential to combat geographic constraints. The downside to telephone interviews is the lack of non-verbal cues (Berg 2001, pp. 82-83). Yet Wilhoit and Weaver suggest that the outcomes from telephone interviewing are comparable to the those achieved during face-to-face interviews (1980). They suggest telephone interviews can actually reduce the incidence of social desirability bias where participants provide answers they believe the interview is likely to want to receive (Wilhoit & Weaver 1980). Where interviews were expected to be long and involved or the participants were aged, the interviewer travelled to meet the participants. All interviews were recorded to ensure accuracy (Minichiello et al. 2000, pp. 98-99) and were transcribed in full. The transcripts were then checked by the researcher for accuracy and to provide increased familiarity with the data (Minichiello et al. 2000, p. 100).

Building rapport with the participant is an important part of the interviewing process when carrying out in-depth interviews. A pitfall when interviewing journalists is the "common negative journalistic view of academics" (Bowd 2004, p. 118). Bowd

questions whether academics who also have journalism experience should focus on their journalistic or academic credentials to enhance their credibility. An academic who has worked as a journalist will have a clearer understanding of the pressures faced by journalists when carrying out their jobs but this familiarity could also “detract from the aims of the interview” (Bowd 2004, p.120). During the interviews for this project, the interviewer specified her work for an Indigenous newspaper to illustrate an understanding of the work journalists in this field carry out and their own specific challenges.

5.4 Phase Two - Textual analysis

Data gathered from interviews is based on individuals’ memory or interpretation of their activities, motivation and events. There is always the risk that the participant may remember events and issues based on what they would *like* to have happened rather than as an accurate representation of actual events/problems. Yet even if this is so, Minichiello et al question who really has the “power to define what counts as truth in the informant’s social world”? (2000, p.72). A key aim of this study was to understand the use of newspapers within an Indigenous public sphere by journalists, sources and organisers. Consequently, identifying the different ways *they* see their involvement, and the function of the newspapers in which *they* were involved, was a fundamental goal for this study. The use of in-depth interviews demands the interviewer accepts the information provided as the “participant’s” truth. However, to provide more rigour and validity, data that corroborated the information gathered from interviews, was sought. This corroboration was achieved through a textual analysis of Indigenous newspapers produced since 1938 and archival research. The textual analysis formed the second phase of the research method for this study and involved analysing a series of texts from the Indigenous print media.

The decision made to follow a more general, textual analysis was two-fold. Firstly, a formal content analysis would have been too large an undertaking within the scope of this study. The Indigenous print media consists of a large number of publications and a thorough content analysis of even one or two of these newspapers would have been an enormous project, particularly considering the qualitative interviews which were a vital part of the method. Equally, limiting the study to only a few newspapers would not have provided a wide view of Indigenous print media within an Indigenous public

sphere. Secondly, a content analysis would not have provided the information required to answer the research questions posed by this study. This investigation did not seek to count how many stories covered a particular topic or how many Indigenous and non-Indigenous people were interviewed. Rather it sought to understand *how* Indigenous print media illustrated the way participants understood the world around them and *why* and *how* they used newspapers to try to change their world. This study was seeking to understand how journalists participate within the Indigenous public sphere and how they helped to establish and develop the Indigenous public sphere. A primary goal of newspaper campaigns is to attempt to change the world around them (Richardson 2007, p. 116). Consequently, a broad textual analysis was performed that addressed research questions which expressed how and why Indigenous newspapers were produced and what their democratic and community role might have been.

The first and last editions of each newspaper were of specific interest since these editions tended to include information about the goals of the producers, the organisations they were connected to and the problems that led to their demise. Accessing a wide range of editions, and particularly the first and last, required travelling to the NSW State Library to view the Mitchell collection in Sydney, the National Library of Australia in Canberra, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) collection in Canberra and the University of Queensland's Indigenous newspaper collection in Brisbane, Queensland. Permission to copy the newspapers varied depending on the institution. Where possible, copies of particularly relevant editions (such as the first and last) were collected. Otherwise a verbatim transcript of important articles was created. These copies and transcripts were collected for future analysis. Each available edition of the listed newspapers was studied to gather data that addressed the range of research questions. In essence, the aim of this textual analysis was to gain an understanding of:

- important sources
- news values
- purpose of the newspapers,
- style,
- circulation,
- connection to organisations and the Indigenous community,
- skills, style, motivation and goals of producers,
- targeted audience,
- language/tone used,
- funding,
- and problems.

Along with the first and last editions, articles from other editions that specifically provided data relating to these themes were gathered. These were later coded and sorted. As more analysis was carried out it became clear the newspapers fell into four distinct eras that were labelled: the *Trailblazers*, the *Revolutionaries*, the *Professionals* and the *Land Rights* newspapers. The segregation of the newspapers into these groupings allowed comparisons to be drawn in relation to the specified themes within each group, and then across the different groups. This provided an opportunity to map the evolution of the Indigenous print media through the decades.

McKee argues the strength of textual analysis is that it allows the researcher to gain an understanding of the “changing sense-making practices in a culture” (2003, p. 48). Indigenous culture and communities have changed over the years since the early Indigenous newspapers of 1938. This textual analysis of the newspapers in groups provides an opportunity to consider “the changing sense-making practices” during these different times. Similarly, McKee argues the information included in newspapers is produced to directly relate to the targeted audience and again the targeted audience for the various newspapers changed as the society around them changed (McKee 2003, p. 48).

The downside of the use of a general textual analysis is that it can be considered subjective. However, McKee defends the use of textual analysis against claims of subjectivity by arguing that much of what is now considered to be historical fact was

gathered using methods that would not be considered scientific or replicable. He points out that “human reactions aren’t the same thing as chemical reactions” (McKee 2003, pp. 119-125). Furthermore, since a textual analysis forms *part* of the research design for this study, the data gathered works to provide new information that supports and corroborates the information gathered through in-depth interviews and archival searches.

5.5 Phase Three - Archival research

Since many of the people who have been involved with the Indigenous print media since the 1930s are deceased, the third phase of this study was an examination of archival material. One of the difficulties of carrying out archival research is that data relating to an issue or person can be housed in a range of different places (Hill 1993, pp. 8-9). Archival materials pertaining to this study were found in the State Library of New South Wales and the Canberra (Australian Capital Territory) and Darwin (Northern Territory) Australian National Archives. The State Library of New South Wales was the easiest to access and held files connected to people such as P. R. Stephenson and Pearl Gibbs. These files were searched for references to Indigenous newspapers or their producers. The papers of P. R. Stephenson provided valuable information regarding the production and circulation of *The Australian Aborigine Call* (1938). The National Archives were also searched during a visit to Canberra and files relating to ASIO⁴ surveillance of activists and journalists such as William Day, Gary Foley, John Newfong and Cheryl Buchanan were found. This information supported the claims made by Foley and Buchanan in their interviews with me. Other useful information included a range of files regarding the Aboriginal Publications Foundation. These files provided data about the production costs and practices relating to *Identity* magazine (1971-1982) and the relationships between editorial staff. Copies were obtained of files that contained substantial useful information and verbatim typed transcripts were made of documents from other files. These were collected for later coding and analysis. Some National Archive materials are also available online.

⁴ Australian Security Intelligence Organisation—Australia’s primary surveillance/spy agency

5.6 Data Analysis

Transcripts from interviews, newspaper articles and archival research were coded through the qualitative analytical software program, Nvivo. The Nvivo software was designed to assist qualitative researchers to classify and sort qualitative data. However, as Weistzman points out, qualitative data analysis software (QDA) such as Nvivo cannot analyse the data for researchers, rather QDA software is a tool to assist the researcher to sort, classify and arrange their data (2000, p. 806). In this project, interview transcripts, transcripts from archival research and newspaper analysis were coded and sorted into themes using Nvivo. The information was initially classified into trees (major themes or topics), and then the data in each tree was broken down into linked branches and twigs (sub-themes or sub-topics).

Sorting the data through Nvivo in this fashion brought all the information regarding specific questions, newspapers, people and ideas together. It provided the opportunity to compare and contrast different perspectives on various topics and to explore relationships between different concepts such as the role of the Indigenous print media and its strengths and weaknesses. Each text document was coded by highlighting segments of text and categorising it to a particular theme/topic such as “Protection Acts”. Nvivo allows the researcher to search specific or all texts for data relating to a topic. This provided a valuable analysis tool and enabled me to view large quantities of data from many different perspectives. Appendix 5 shows the complexity of the data gathered, and the way NVivo was able to assist me to organise the data and subsequent findings.

5.7 Chapter summary

A three-phase methodological approach was undertaken to investigate the hypothesis that an Indigenous public sphere exists and that the Indigenous print media, through its choice of news values and sources, have helped to create and develop Indigenous public sphere practices. This approach incorporated semi-structured in-depth interviews with Indigenous print media participants including journalists, sources and those promoting their activities through the Indigenous print media. Textual analysis of Indigenous newspapers, and finally archival research formed the second and third phases of this research design through analysis of both hard copy and archived material. The data collected was then coded and sorted through Nvivo before being

analysed to determine answers to the research questions investigated by this study. The ensuing chapters will detail the findings that emerged from the application of this research protocol.

Chapter 6: The Trailblazers

Despite the publication of the *Flinders Island Chronicle* in 1836, it was not until the end of the 1920s that Aboriginal people in Australia began forming their own organisations and producing newspapers and publicity information on a regular basis. This chapter focuses on the people and organisations that produced Aboriginal newspapers from the 1930s through to the late 1960s. To understand this era fully it is important to describe, briefly, the way Aboriginal people lived during this time. I will specifically investigate the establishment, functions and characteristics of four Aboriginal newspapers *The Australian Abo Call: The Voice of the Aborigines*, *Smoke Signals*, *Churinga* and the *Westralian Aborigine*. This chapter will also consider how these newspapers opened up the Indigenous public sphere, and consider the main participants in the sphere at the time; and the processes and structures they followed. The news value and source choices illustrated by these newspapers will also be examined. Overall, this chapter contends that examination of these newspapers shows Indigenous public sphere processes were in a burgeoning evolutionary phase during this time.

6.1 Aboriginal Australia, circa 1930s-1960s

During the 1930s to 1960s Aboriginal peoples' lives were controlled, or at least strongly influenced, by various state protection Acts⁵ policed by state-run protection boards and appointed "Protectors". These controls meant Aboriginal people had little power over their lives, their families, their finances and had almost no overt political power. As history now shows, many Aboriginal people were forced off their traditional lands and placed on reserves and missions (Lippman 1991, pp. 11,15; Kidd 1997, p. 62; Attwood 2003, pp. 8-30, 31-32). Government policy allowed and facilitated the removal of Aboriginal children from their families and communities resulting in the widespread decimation of family structure and loss of identity in Aboriginal communities (Attwood 2003, p. 313). Aboriginal workers were paid less than other workers (Lippman 1991, p. 21) and large portions of their wages, child endowment payments, aged, invalid and widows pensions were confiscated by state governments and placed into government-managed savings accounts (Kidd 2002, p.

⁵ Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897 (Qld), NSW Aborigines Protection Act 1909-1943, Aboriginal Protection Act 1869 (Vic) and the Western Australian Aborigines Act 1905.

43). Most of the wages and welfare payments withheld have still not been repaid. Until May 1967, Aboriginal people were not included in the national census and therefore did not have any citizenship rights under Australian law. Consequently, Aboriginal peoples' freedom to move about, to manage their own financial affairs and to be politically active was severely hampered during the 1930s and onwards.

6.2 The Indigenous public sphere, circa 1930s

Although Hartley and McKee have argued the contemporary Indigenous public sphere is not under the control of Indigenous people (2000, p. 3), there is evidence to support the notion that during the late 19th century and early 20th century the Indigenous public sphere *was* under Indigenous control. The formation of organisations such as the original Aborigines Advancement League (AAL) in Victoria by William Cooper⁶ (Attwood 2003, p. 30) demonstrates Aboriginal people came together to discuss issues of concern to them and were politically motivated to lobby for change. In addition, Cooper's AAL inspired William Ferguson and John T. Patten to form the NSW Aborigines Progressive Association (APA) (Attwood 2003, p. 32). Therefore, during the 1930s Aboriginal people were forming their own organisations that were engaging in public sphere activity by working collectively for social change. Furthermore, their actions inspired and mentored those who followed.

More evidence of public sphere processes and this mentoring function is offered by meetings that took place at Salt Pan Creek, near Padstow on the outskirts of Sydney. Aboriginal people came together in this place to discuss politics and political action. It was here that Jack Patten and William Ferguson learned about politics and met young Aboriginal people such as William Onus⁷, Pearl Gibbs⁸ and Doug Nicholls⁹ and helped them to hone their political skills (Foley 2005). Salt Pan Creek emerged as a meeting place during the 1930s, after people had been dispersed from their lands and a number of unemployed or squatters camps sprang up around Sydney (Foley 2005). Foley suggests Salt Pan Creek was:-

⁶ William Cooper was Secretary of the Australian Aborigines' League in 1938 and conceived the idea of a "Day of Mourning". Cooper was Pastor Doug Nicholls mentor (Attwood & Markus 1999, pp. 30, 127).

⁷ William Onus was President of the Australian Aborigines' League in 1947.

⁸ Pearl Gibbs was a protégé of William Ferguson who conceived the idea for the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship (AAF) which she formed with Herbert Groves.

⁹ Doug Nicholls was the Treasurer and later President of the Australian Aborigines' League. Nicholls was also a member of the Council for Aboriginal Rights. Formed the Victorian Aborigines' Advancement League with Stan Davey in 1956-1957 (Attwood & Markus 1999, p. 57).

a radical place... and in fact, this is the place where Jack Patten reckoned he learned about politics, sitting around campfires as a kid, listening to the old fellas talk (2005).

These meetings at Salt Pan Creek are evidence of like-minded people forming what Fraser has described as a “counter public” (Fraser 1992, p. 124). Aboriginal people grouped and regrouped, discussed political strategy and were inspired and trained by more experienced Aboriginal elders. The placement of Gibbs, Patten, Ferguson and Nicholls at Salt Pan Creek demonstrates “counter public” sphere activity. Each of these people became prominent activists and leaders who formed Aboriginal organisations that in turn trained and inspired emerging leaders. Therefore, despite being hampered by government policy and activity, Aboriginal people were politically active during this period, were collectively working to bring about social change and were in control of these processes.

6.3 Overview of publications launched from 1938-1960

6.3.1 *The Australian Abo Call; Smoke Signals; Churinga; Westralian Aborigine*

On 27 June 1937, Jack Patten¹⁰ and William Ferguson¹¹, who were part of the “Salt Pan Creek” group, formed the Aborigines Progressive Association (APA) (Horner 1974, pp. 35, 67). The APA was a major force in changing the tone and activity within the Indigenous public sphere. APA members instigated the Day of Mourning protest¹², and it was the first Aboriginal political organisation to produce its own newspaper.

Patten and Ferguson were perhaps the first Aboriginal activists to use written communication to reach their audience and to circulate messages from the Indigenous public sphere to the dominant political public sphere. They began with a manifesto, published by P. R. Stephenson¹³ and J. B. Miles¹⁴ that was used during the Day of Mourning protest. Stephenson was a journalist with the Sydney publication *The Publicist*, which was owned by Miles (Horner 2003; Horner 1974, p. 57). After the

¹⁰ John T. Patten was one of the founding members of the Aborigines Progressive Association and the editor of *The Australian Abo Call: The Voice of the Aborigines*.

¹¹ William Ferguson was the co-founder of the Aborigines Progressive Association.

¹² Day of Mourning protest was originally conceived by William Cooper, was orchestrated by William Ferguson and Jack Patten on 26 January 1937 to mark the 150th anniversary of European settlement of Australia.

¹³ Percy Reginald Stephenson was editor of the Sydney political journal *The Publicist*.

¹⁴ J. B. Miles owner of *The Publicist*.

Day of Mourning protest, Stephenson encouraged Patten to write articles during his travels to Aboriginal communities in NSW and these articles became the tabloid newspaper, *The Australian Abo Call: The Voice of the Aborigines*. *Abo Call* was published by Miles and edited by Stephenson from April 1938 through to September 1938. *Abo Call* demonstrates Patten's awareness of the value of using mainstream communication methods to communicate with APA members and to facilitate communication among Aboriginal people, that is, *within* the Aboriginal public sphere itself, and also between the Aboriginal public sphere and the broader mainstream public sphere.

By the 1950s there was increased public sphere activity and many more Aboriginal organisations were contributing to discussion and action in the Indigenous public sphere. One of these was the Victorian Aborigines' Advancement League (VAAL). Founding members Stan Davey and Pastor Doug Nicholls met when they both worked for the multiracial organisation, The Council for Aboriginal Rights¹⁵ (the Council). The VAAL is an early example of growing discontent in the Aboriginal community with the number of white Australians controlling Aboriginal organisations. According to Attwood (2003, pp. 146-147) it was formed in response to resentment from the Victorian Aboriginal community towards the Council. Davey also recognised that Victorian Aboriginal people needed to raise their level of political influence and control. Both Davey and Nicholls knew how difficult it had been for the Council to attract mainstream media attention and so produced *Smoke Signals*, which was the official publication of the VAAL. Stan Davey was the magazine's first editor (Attwood 2003, pp. 135-147).

The first edition of *Smoke Signals* was published in 1960 and was used by the AAL to circulate information throughout the Aboriginal and Victorian community (*Smoke Signals* 1960, No. 1). While *Abo Call* focused on what was happening to Aboriginal people around the country, *Smoke Signals* was particularly concerned with educating non-Aboriginal Australians about the activities of the VAAL and the social and economic conditions for Aboriginal Australians in Victoria. Nicholls and Davey wanted to "get a newspaper and we can tell people what we want" (Bandler 2004). Again the production of this newspaper provides evidence of ongoing Indigenous public sphere processes and of Davey and Nicholls' awareness of the need to disperse

¹⁵ Council for Aboriginal Rights was a national, multiracial organisation formed in March 1951.

information from the VAAL, to the Aboriginal community itself and the wider Victorian community. Educating non-Aboriginal Australians was a major function of *Smoke Signals* until it folded in 1972.

Public sphere activity was also occurring on the west coast of Australia at this time. In December 1953 the Coolbaroo League published the first *Westralian Aborigine*. This newspaper ran until June/July 1957 and while it initially presents as a community newspaper a closer inspection of the stories covered shows it was also a political voice for the Coolbaroo League with political topics such as discrimination and government funding for Aboriginal projects having strong news value. The *Westralian Aborigine* was a professionally produced, tabloid newspaper that aimed to engage with the Aboriginal community (Kinnane 2005).

While the *Westralian Aborigine* was improving communication between west-coast based communities, *Churinga* (first launched in 1969) picked up where *Abo Call* left off and continued political activity and discussion in New South Wales (NSW) on the east coast of Australia. *Churinga* was published by Herbert S. Groves¹⁶ who had connections to the Salt Pan Creek group and had worked for William Ferguson (Horner 1974, pp. 21, 23, 28). Groves and Pearl Gibbs were the founding members of the multiracial Aboriginal Australian Fellowship (AAF) (Lake 2002, p. 62; Bandler 2004). Groves later revived the Aborigines Progressive Association (APA) originally formed by Ferguson and Patten in 1937 (Lake 2002, pp. 74-77; Attwood 2003, p. 309). Similarly to the VAAL publication *Smoke Signals*, *Churinga* promoted the APA's activities and focused specifically on the problems and issues affecting Aboriginal people in NSW. While there was "considerable division between the states and in the way they worked" (Bandler 2004), *Churinga* was not so much produced in competition with *Smoke Signals*, but was a reflection of the state oriented organisations that existed during the 1950s-1960s. Bandler explains:

There was just a division of work. They were a state body, so they dealt with state problems but there was considerable unity on a national level and that was the value of FCAATSI¹⁷ which brought all the groups together (2004).

¹⁶ Herbert S. Groves, with Pearl Gibbs formed the multiracial Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship (AAF). Groves also reformed the Aborigines Progressive Association in NSW as an Aboriginal-only organisation.

¹⁷ FCAATSI. Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

The individuality and local focuses of the organisations discussed here, and the newspapers they produced, illustrate the diverse range of ideas and influences feeding into Indigenous public sphere processes during this time.

While Groves used *Churinga* to reach both the Aboriginal and wider NSW community, his editorials were often directed towards non-Aboriginal readers. Like Nicholls and Davey, Groves used *Churinga* to educate and inform non-Aboriginal people about Indigenous struggles for equal rights, land rights, and so on. Groves' opening statement in his editorial of the December 1968 – March 1969 issue of *Churinga* reads:

The Aborigines of Australia have been, until the referendum, beyond the scope of democracy. Was it because they were regarded as being politically unimportant? Today the Aborigines are living in a new era, they are very much aware of the fact that they are Australian citizens and British subjects. (They can no longer be regarded as being politically unimportant) (*Churinga* 1968-1969, p. 1)

Groves asks readers to question why there were differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal legal rights, and why the socio-economic gap between “Aborigines and other Europeans” was not closing. He asked them to consider why “Europeans created and are they maintaining Aboriginal communities of self-perpetuating poverty?” (*Churinga* 1968-1969, p. 3). Groves was therefore asking non-Aboriginal readers to confront the living conditions of Aboriginal Australians and to consider why those poor conditions existed. However, Groves also used *Churinga* to speak to the Aboriginal community in an attempt to create community solidarity. He acknowledged the diversity within the Aboriginal community and the range of different political and ideological beliefs. He called for people and groups to “work together in harmony” so they could achieve their “common aim” and “see the Aboriginal people in a better position in our Australian society” (*Churinga*, December 1965). Groves' call for unity mirrors the arguments of O'Siochru and Downing that social movements should combine their efforts to improve their effectiveness (1999, p. 43; 2001, p. 31). Groves was not only using *Churinga* to disperse messages from the Indigenous public sphere and to educate non-Aboriginal Australians, but also to harness unity within the Aboriginal community.

6.4 Access to and participation in Indigenous public sphere processes

During this era, and particularly into the 1950s onwards, Aboriginal newspapers began to enable greater access to and insight for white Australians into Indigenous public sphere activity. While most were limited to observing that activity through communication mechanisms such as newspapers, some white Australians were allowed to play an active role in the production of that information. For instance, during the 1930s (and because of their relationship with Patten) non-Aboriginal journalist/publisher P. R. Stephenson and J. B. Miles were both actively involved in the production of *Abo Call*. Stephenson, along with Patten, produced articles for *Abo Call* which were then circulated within the Aboriginal community and beyond (Stephenson 1938; Horner 2003). While it has been assumed Patten wrote most of *Abo Call*, archival records show Stephenson produced much of the newspaper's content (Stephenson 1938). Stephenson's and Miles' involvement not only shows that as early as the 1930s white Australians were participating in Indigenous public sphere processes but also offers an early indication of the growing conflict relating to the desire for Aboriginal control of organisations and their communication vehicles.

This conflict is exemplified by the deteriorating relationship between Patten and Ferguson. Patten wanted to circulate information about the APA's ideas and activity beyond the Aboriginal community and recognised they would need funding to be able to do this. Patten also recognised that for the APA to be recognised as a legitimate, credible organisation it had to meet the expectations of white Australia. Consequently he wanted it to have "wide membership, a legal constitution, solid rules of administration, consistent policy, and, especially, publicity" (Horner 1974, p. 71). In contrast, Ferguson wanted the APA to focus on and be driven by the needs, wants and ideas of the Aboriginal community (Horner 1974, p. 71). Patten had a clear understanding of the media's ability to shape and influence public opinion and of the need to harness that wider public opinion to pressure government for change. Similarly, Ferguson's attitude illustrates his understanding that for Aboriginal people to support the APA, they had to connect with it and view it as their own. Indeed, the conflict Patten and Ferguson were struggling with as the editors of an Indigenous newspaper has continued through time, and is evident in many of the contemporary publications this study will consider in later chapters. Simply, is the newspaper aimed

directly at the Aboriginal community, communicating their wants, needs and desires to each other? Or is it trying to educate the broader white community about Indigenous issues? Can the publication communicate both inside and outside the Indigenous public sphere, and still connect with both audiences? Ferguson decided that the connection to the Aboriginal community had to be maintained and he was therefore less driven by the need to disseminate information to the wider community. Ultimately, it was this discord between the two men and Ferguson's suspicion of Miles and Stephenson's motives that led to the split in the APA

The outcome of the split was that Ferguson ran his branch of the APA in Dubbo in the Central West region of NSW and Patten ran the La Perouse chapter in Sydney, NSW (Horner 1974, pp. 71-72; Attwood & Markus 1999, p. 59; Attwood 1999). *Abo Call* continued to be published and Patten used the newspaper to wage battle with Ferguson (Horner 1974, p. 73; *The Australian Abo Call*, May 1938, p. 1). The May edition of *Abo Call* indicates how Patten saw the role of the APA: "[to] arouse the conscience of the white community, to make them realise the awful plight of the dark people of Australia under the present so-called 'Protection Acts and Boards'" (*The Australian Abo Call*, May 1938, p. 1). *Abo Call* also inspired political activity within the Aboriginal community. Pastor Doug Nicholls, who went on to become a founding member of the VAAL that produced *Smoke Signals*, wrote to Patten:

Thank you for sending me the "Abo Call". I feel proud of such a paper. I feel sure it will arouse the interest of people who know not yet the disabilities our people are suffering under the present administration (*The Australian Abo Call*, May 1938 p. 2).

Despite the split in the APA, both Ferguson and Patten shared the same vision in wanting to see the APA controlled and run by Aboriginal people. Furthermore, while Ferguson was suspicious of Stephenson's and Miles' influence over the APA, his chapter was supported through his ties to the Australian Labor Party and the Australian Worker's Union (Attwood & Markus 1999, p. 60). As such, during the 1930s both non-Aboriginal organisations and individuals were influencing and participating in Indigenous public sphere processes. Miles' and Stephenson's involvement enabled *Abo Call* to exist and when they withdrew their financial support, Patten's chapter of the APA folded and the last edition of *Abo Call* was published in September 1938 (Attwood & Markus 1999, p. 60). The failure of *Abo Call*, once its external source of funding was removed, mirrors Switzer's findings in

his studies of the South African alternative media during Apartheid. He found funding for alternative publications during this time often came from “sympathetic whites” (Switzer 1991, p. 38). Ferguson’s concerns about Miles and Stephenson’s involvement (as white publishers) was also experienced by African-American writers during the early 1900s. African-American writer A. E. (Amelia) Johnson, supported her husband Harvey Johnson’s “black separatist ideology” by demanding the establishment of independent black publishing houses (Wagner 2001, pp. 93-94). Amelia Johnson claimed white publishing houses were responsible for censoring black authors by refusing to publish their works (Wagner 2001, p. 94). However, it is unlikely *Abo Call* could have been produced at all without the support of Stephenson and Miles and despite their sometimes unwelcome involvement, they did provide something of a vehicle for the burgeoning land rights and Aboriginal social justice movement. Furthermore, Ferguson’s branch of the APA was supported by unions and the Australian Labor Party. The involvement of these organisations and individuals is evidence of non-Aboriginal involvement in Indigenous public sphere processes at this time.

During the 1950s more Aboriginal publications were produced both with and without the assistance of non-Aboriginal Australians. Stan Davey, the editor of *Smoke Signals* was not Aboriginal and it is likely he or Gordon Munro Bryant¹⁸ (G. M. Bryant) another white man, wrote much of its content. However, Davy’s and Bryant’s involvement in the VAAL does not appear to have resulted in the conflict Stephenson’s and Miles’ involvement in the 1930s APA caused. After Davey left the VAAL and went to work for FCAATSI, Bryant took over as *Smoke Signals* editor. The first edition of *Smoke Signals*, in its glossy booklet form, explained the purpose of *Smoke Signals* as “bringing greater understanding between dark and white Australians” (*Smoke Signals*, April 1960, p. 9). Along with explaining the VAAL’s educational goals, the language used is also indicative of the writer’s attitudes and goals which, while perhaps patronising, were progressive for the time:

To foster understanding between Dark and White Australians and to build within the white community an appreciation of the character and potential resources of the aboriginal population.

¹⁸ G. M. Bryant was the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in the Whitlam Labor Government and President of the Aborigines Advancement League.

The article also advised readers that producing and distributing literature was a key goal of the VAAL:

Besides making available the latest booklets relating to the aborigine question, “*Smoke Signals*” is published and distributed (*Smoke Signals*, March 1961, p. 63).

Therefore, while *Smoke Signals* was primarily a tool to promote VAAL activities, it also provided a mechanism through which to feed information into the dominant public sphere in an attempt to educate and influence white Australian attitudes and understanding about Aboriginal Australians. It opened up Indigenous public sphere discussions and activities to wider scrutiny and participation. Furthermore, *Smoke Signals* provides a historic record of white attitudes towards Indigenous affairs, both those of the writers and the perceived attitudes of their audience.



Image 1 Faith Bandler, Sydney, NSW 30 November 2004

In contrast to *Abo Call* and *Smoke Signals*, there is no evidence to suggest *Churinga* was produced with the assistance of any non-Aboriginal individuals or organisations. In fact it was Groves’ primary goal that Aboriginal people should control the reformed APA. He believed Aboriginal people had been “pushed to the background” in other organisations and while he recognised there were several advancement organisations in existence at that time, he also observed that there were “not too many controlled by Aborigines” (Attwood 2003, p. 309). In 1964, Groves published the first copy of *Churinga*. Faith Bandler, a campaigner for Aboriginal rights, explained Groves had been a young man when Jack Patten had produced *Abo Call* and had, to “some extent been trained by Patten”. *Abo Call* was the inspiration for *Churinga* (Bandler 2004). Like Patten, Groves believed Aboriginal people needed to publish their own ideas and information and had stressed the importance of getting into print while he had been a member of the AAF (Bandler 2004).

Like Groves and the new APA in NSW, the Coolbaroo League, which produced the *Westralian Aborigine*, maintained strict control over their organisation and newspaper. While they received help from non-Aboriginal people, white Australians were not allowed to become members of the Coolbaroo League (Kinnane 2005). Non-

Aboriginal people were allowed to assist in the practical day-to-day operations of the League and the production of the newspaper but the editorial control and overall organisation of the newspaper and the League itself remained in the hands of Coolbaroo League members (Kinnane 2005). By the 1960s, and in total contrast to the situation on the east coast, the emphasis in Western Australia changed as younger members of the League began to push for more Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal interaction. This changing attitude ultimately led to the disbandment of the Coolbaroo League (Kinnane 2005).

6.5 Access to Information

Media play key roles in society by informing the citizenry and ensuring people are able to participate democratically (Gurevitch et al. 1991, p. 195). Given that minorities have limited access to mainstream media (Ewart 2002, p. 61; Manca 1989, p. 171) the Indigenous print media have played a key role in opening up democratic discussion of issues of concern across public spheres (Gross 1998, p. 88; Tomaselli and Louw 1989, pp. 204, 213; Forde 1999). During the 1930s the Indigenous print media was used to inform and educate both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and to facilitate the participation of Aboriginal people within both the Indigenous and dominant public sphere. Likewise, it allowed white Australians access to Indigenous public sphere processes.

This was a deliberate act by Patten's *Abo Call*. As well as serving the Aboriginal community, Patten saw *Abo Call*'s potential to reach out to white Australians and educate them about the problems Aboriginal people faced. Examples of this include articles such as "Our Ten Points" that outlined the APA's National Policy for Aborigines and was presented to Prime Minister, J. A Lyons on the 31 January 1938 (*The Australian Abo Call*, April 1938, p. 1). This article outlined the disparity in access between the education provided to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to a range of government provided services. Similarly, while the newspaper suggested it was aimed at the Aboriginal community by claiming it reached 80,000 Aboriginal people (*The Australian Abo Call*, August 1938, p. 2) the first editorial shows its purpose was actually to "present the case for Aborigines" to non-Aboriginal people and the Australian government of the time (*The Australian Abo Call*, April 1938, p. 1). This opening editorial suggests that while *Abo Call* was on the surface directed

“To all Aborigines!”, and claimed to be their “own paper” in fact, Patten intended to use *Abo Call* to reach out of the Indigenous public sphere into the dominant public sphere to present the Aboriginal perspective. This provided many white Australians with their first glimpse of Aboriginal perspectives. Avison and Meadows found similarly in their study of Australian and Canadian newspapers in Aboriginal public spheres (2000; Avison 1996). Subscription lists for *Abo Call* confirm the newspaper was circulated to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The list also establishes that Patten and Stephenson aimed to influence politicians. Of the 848 circulated, 90 were distributed to Members of the NSW Legislative Assembly. Others were circulated via bookshops, 17 went to the Australian Metropolitan Newspaper (signifying their aim to attract mainstream media attention) and at least 100 were distributed by Patten himself to Aboriginal communities around New South Wales (Stephenson 1938; Horner 2004). A copy of the newspaper was also sent to each of the members of the APA listed in the July edition of the newspapers and who were dispersed throughout NSW, Queensland and Victoria (*The Australian Abo Call*, July 1938, p. 1). The data therefore suggests both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people were accessing information produced in the Indigenous print media at this time and, by implication, were either participating in or observing Indigenous public sphere activity.

Similarly in 1953, while the Coolbaroo League limited non-Aboriginal access to the organisation the members also recognised the need to educate a white, mainstream audience. The *Westralian Aborigine* targeted both the Aboriginal community and white Australians who were involved in ameliorative organisations and native welfare councils. The League deliberately targeted groups it knew it could work with, while avoiding those that might try to take control (Kinnane 2005). In contrast to the east coast newspapers that tended to be dispersed throughout the various eastern states connecting the various Aboriginal communities, the *Westralian Aborigine* distribution was mostly limited only to Western Australia (Kinnane 2005). The *Westralian Aborigine* had a small print run of 600 and like *Abo Call*, was distributed to Aboriginal missions and reserves around Western Australia. The Coolbaroo League “had a captive audience” for the newspaper and sold a dozen or so copies to the local protectors for distribution to the local people (Kinnane 2005). While the print run of this newspaper (and others) was small, the readership figures were likely to be much

higher. For instance, Kinnane estimates one copy of the *Westralian Aborigine* is likely to have passed through 10 hands (2005). Consistent with the *Westralian Aborigine* and *Abo Call*, *Smoke Signals* and *Churinga* also targeted their content to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal audiences. *Churinga*'s Groves quite overtly "aimed to educate whites" (Bandler 2004). His language indicates his perception of white Australians as "foreigners" as he consistently refers to non-Aboriginal people as Europeans. This suggests the publication was aimed at Aboriginal people; but also sought to raise awareness within the white community of their "permanent visitor" status.

Still, while much of *Churinga*'s content was directed to a non-Aboriginal audience in an attempt to educate them, Groves also directed articles specifically towards Aboriginal Australians. For example, throughout the article "Education and Our National Identity" Groves uses language such as "us" and "we" using inclusive language to identify directly with other Aboriginal people. In this article Groves also encouraged Aboriginal people to obtain an "European education" but to ensure "the preservation of our own culture, particularly our languages" (*Churinga*, December 1965, p. 24). Again there are parallels here to the work evaluated by Meadows and Avison (Avison 1996; Avison & Meadows 2000). This analysis of *Abo Call*, *Smoke Signals*, the *Westralian Aborigine* and *Churinga* shows that while they all contained content that was specifically targeted towards the Aboriginal community, Aboriginal newspapers of this era were also using their content to open up Indigenous public sphere processes to the wider Australian community. The differences between the various organisation's activities and actions also suggests that there were different factions operating simultaneously and independently on the east and west coast of Australia.

A defining characteristic of alternative media has been their financial fragility (Switzer 1991 p. 38; Comedia 1984). This fragility is demonstrated by the newspapers produced in this era and undoubtedly impacted upon their ability to access public sphere participants and therefore present, encourage and maintain consistent and regular debate. *Abo Call* exhibited this fragility. It attracted no advertising and survived only while funding from the Sydney publisher J. B. Miles was available. When this funding was removed after six months, the newspaper folded. *Churinga*'s sporadic production schedule also suggests financing the newspaper was at times difficult. Only 12 editions were produced over the five years from July 1965 – May

1970. The *Westralian Aborigine* was funded from advertising and sales generated from the Coolbaroo League dances. While they did sell some copies, the cover price was not the main source of funding (Kinnane 2005). *Smoke Signals*, which survived for more than 14 years from December 1957- Summer 1972, had the longest life and contrasts with *Abo Call* which survived for just six months. The *Westralian Aborigine* survived four years and *Churinga* lasted five years. Limited access to funding almost certainly hindered their circulation and their erratic publishing schedules reduced their ability to consistently influence and promote Indigenous politics and affairs.

6.6 Early Indigenous newspapers and the public sphere

A key function of Aboriginal newspapers during this time was informing the newspapers' readers of the activities of the publishing organisation. *Smoke Signals* exemplifies this since one of its primary aims was to promote the activities of the VAAL (Bandler 2004). For instance, the *Smoke Signals* article "Our Hostels Appeal" informed readers about a VAAL appeal to encourage non-Aboriginal readers to donate funds. Using slogans such as "CONSCIENCE CALLING", readers were encouraged to donate. For instance, they were told:

... We cannot right the wrongs of the past. We can repair only part of the damage. We cannot bring back the lost tribes of the forest and the river. We can only see that the sons and daughters of the people whose country was taken from them share in the benefits of modern society (*Smoke Signals*, June 1961, pp. 19-21).

Similarly, the "You Can Help the Appeal" article called on its readers to organise functions such as garden parties, film nights, barbecues and street stalls to raise funds (*Smoke Signals*, March 1961, p. 40). Given the poverty so many Aboriginal people faced during the 1950s and 1960s, it is unlikely many of them were in a position to hold a garden party and would suggest the articles were written by non-Aboriginal people, and *aimed* at non-Aboriginal readers. The regular use of words such as "we" throughout these articles suggests these stories were written by a non-Aboriginal person who was specifically targeting non-Aboriginal readers in order to raise awareness of VAAL activities and to coerce the donation of funds for the organisation. Attracting mainstream funds is likely to have been essential for the survival of Aboriginal organisations and this mirrors Switzer's findings that South

African alternative media was often funded by “sympathetic whites” (Switzer 1991, p. 38).

Along with coercing non-Aboriginal readers to donate funds, providing information about Aboriginal living conditions also raised mainstream awareness and therefore put pressure on governments. Patten used this strategy in *Abo Call* by exposing how the Aborigines Protection Board were deducting money from Aboriginal women’s family endowment payments (*The Australian Abo Call*, September 1938, p. 2). Similarly, he told readers about the dismal rations Aboriginal people on government reserves were forced to survive on. He explained:

...Our people inherit strong physique, but cannot contend against the poor food which the white man’s charity, and benevolence, and official “protection” allows.

Rations are: 81bs of flour, 21bs of sugar, 1lb of tea. ¼ lb of baking power, and 1/- worth of meat per week.

On this ration many Aborigines have starved to death on Government reserves, their constitutions weakened to the point where they fall victims to TB. ... (*The Australian Abo Call*, September 1938, p. 2).

These articles are most likely to have been directed towards non-Aboriginal readers since Aboriginal people were almost certainly acutely aware of these poor conditions. Patten also used *Abo Call* to boost his credibility with both Aboriginal and mainstream readers by describing his trips to Aboriginal communities around NSW such as Bowraville, Kempsey, Fingal, Tweed River and even Beaudesert in Queensland. By illustrating his travels around NSW and Queensland he not only demonstrated his links to the wider Aboriginal community but also that he had witnessed the problems being discussed first-hand. For example, he described personally seeing the “Queensland Government’s slave methods” in operation and advised readers of the £250,000 the Queensland Government had “accumulated under the Apprenticeship system of grabbing our people’s wages” (*The Australian Abo Call*, July 1938, p. 2); a view later vindicated by the extensive study of the Queensland government’s misuse of Aboriginal wages by Dr Ros Kidd (1997, 2002). Consequently, Patten was using *Abo Call* to raise awareness of problems facing the Aboriginal community, to demonstrate his community connections and by informing the non-Aboriginal audience, pushing for change.

All of the newspapers in this section encouraged political participation at some level and attempted to present a united front. Patten did this by entreating his audience to take out APA membership. Membership lists were published along with comments such as: “Aborigines should hurry to join and give support to this great movement, for our progress” (*The Australian Abo Call*, July 1938, p. 1). He urged them that it was only “by strength of numbers that we shall be able to convince White Australians of the justice of our cause” and that they should join “for his own sake, and for the sake of his children” (*The Australian Abo Call*, June 1938, p. 1). This push for solidarity was also encouraged by including letters from people around the country who viewed the *Abo Call* as “their” newspaper. Patten, by including readers’ letters and describing the *Abo Call* as the “voice of the Aborigines”, was attempting to show that it and the APA were an important part of building a united front against oppression and to push for change.

Newspapers during this era also promoted survival strategies and mechanisms to protect culture and identity. For instance in *Churinga*, Groves used language such as “we” and “us” in his article “Education and Our National Identity” to show he was directing his comments to Aboriginal Australians. He encouraged self-determination by explaining the impact substandard education had had on Aboriginal people and stressed Aboriginal people must obtain a “European education“. He also explained the importance of ensuring the “the preservation of our own culture, particularly our language”. He called on Aboriginal people to teach and learn their traditional languages because “...this will play an important part in the preservation of our national identity” (*Churinga*, December 1965, p. 24). The following quotation from this article in *Churinga* shows why Groves believed education and the preservation of culture were so important for Aboriginal Australians.

Generally we don’t realise just how this lack of education and the destruction of our culture has affected us as a people and how important it is for the preservation of our national identity and progress...Education, whether it is through books or the practical methods used by our Aboriginal people, prepares us for life, widens our knowledge and equips us to understand and often solve our problems.

...Instruction in our own language and culture as well as European education, except on the lowest level, has been denied us for the same reason as these have been denied to other oppressed peoples. ...” (*Churinga*, December 1965, p. 24).

This extract also demonstrates Groves's awareness of the similarities between Australia's Indigenous people and other minority groups in other parts of the world and again shows the diversity within the Indigenous public sphere at this time.

During this period, newspapers also corrected stereotypes and misrepresentations. Groves tried to educate "Europeans" that Aboriginal culture and politics were neither simple nor homogenous. In "The Changing Aborigine" he argued "Europeans" oversimplified the problems between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and advanced the notion of supremacy of one group over the other. He argued the Aboriginal nation was [and still is] made up of many diverse groups and that Aboriginal people in the 1960s were more sophisticated and educated than their predecessors and that with education, the younger generation would be integrated¹⁹ (as opposed to assimilated²⁰) as equals into the wider community (*Churinga*, December 1965, p. 1). Being viewed as an homogenous group by mainstream society impacts on the ability of minorities to negotiate effective policy that reflects a diversity of needs and situations (Avison 1996, p. 83). Groves, in 1965, aimed to educate mainstream Australians that Aboriginal Australians belonged to a complex and diverse group, with complex and diverse needs, and an ancient culture that was worth protecting.

Newspapers were also used to build unity and solidarity. Patten in *Abo Call*, with reference to the dispute with Ferguson, called on readers to "...not waste any more time in personal arguments among ourselves. Let us all stand shoulder to shoulder in unity for the great work ahead for our Organisation" (*The Australian Abo Call*, May 1938, p. 1). Similarly, in the *Churinga* article "United Effort Advances the Aboriginal People", Groves argued that despite the diverse ideas and approaches within the Aboriginal community, the various groups and individuals must "work together in harmony" to achieve their "common aim[s]". This notion mirrors O'Siochru and Downing's suggestions that social movements must combine their efforts to gain the best outcomes (2001, p. 31; 1999, p. 43). Calls for unity were a point of similarity across the newspapers. While they were each reaching out to the wider community for

¹⁹ In the 1960s government policy changed from Assimilation to Integration. Aboriginal people could remain a distinct group while being part of the social and political framework of Australian society (Attwood & Markus 1999, pp. 200-210).

²⁰ Assimilation became official government policy in 1937 and meant Aboriginal people of mixed descent would be absorbed into mainstream society. They would be "detrified" (Lippman 1991, p. 22).

support, they were all aware of the need to provide their own community with information about what was happening to their own people and to unite their people in a common cause.

Linking the community was another function carried out by the newspapers during this time and in a sense the *Westralian Aborigine* shares much in common with the contemporary Indigenous community newspaper, the *Koori Mail*. The *Westralian Aborigine* demonstrated a strong community spirit and many of its articles were specifically directed to building a sense of community, often with “soft” and positive news about achievements in the community. For example, the 1956 June-July edition includes a picture of two-and-a-half-year-old Rosemary with a caption explains she would be working as a model for baby clothes (*Westralian Aborigine*, June-July, 1956, p. 1). The *Westralian Aborigine*’s content demonstrates its goal was to produce a community newspaper that promoted positive images of Aboriginal Australians and connected the community which, as Chapter 9 shows, is also one of the primary contemporary functions of the *Koori Mail* newspaper.

Finally, these newspapers provide an historical record of attitudes prevalent at the time. For instance, while *Abo Call* was not a radical newspaper by contemporary standards, in its time and because it was (at least partially) written by an Aboriginal man and covered topics relating to Aboriginal Australians it was indeed radical. Patten did not hold back when describing the way Aboriginal people were being treated as “dingoes” and accused the government of employing men to “torture us mentally with bullying tactics” (*The Australian Abo Call*, June 1938, p. 1). The government’s response (discussed in the next section) indicates how threatening this newspaper was. By comparison, and possibly because *Smoke Signals* was written by the publication’s white editors Stan Davey or G. M. Bryant, this newspaper had a gentler, persuasive tone that aimed to educate and cajole white Australians to act. Nonetheless, the language used by Davey and Bryant indicates some of the attitudes of white Australians towards Aboriginal people. For instance, the critical tone taken in the *Smoke Signals* article about a young Aboriginal woman’s entry in the Miss Australia Quest, is suggestive of the paternalistic and judgmental attitudes still held towards Aboriginal people by non-Aboriginal people at this time (*Smoke Signals*, June 1961, p. 45). Aboriginal people are regularly referred to as “natives” in the *Westralian Aborigine* (June-July 1956, p. 4) which may have been an appropriate

term at the time but has now been long-replaced by “Indigenous” or “Aboriginal”. The newspaper also uses terms such as “part Aborigines” (*Westralian Aborigine*, March-April 1956 p. 3). Neither of these terms would be acceptable today and the use of language highlights not only changing mainstream values but changing Aboriginal values and ideas.

While the Aboriginal newspapers produced here were published from the 1930s through to the 1960s, they share many similar attributes and aspirations to early American Black publications. Washburn (2006, pp. 36, 49-51) found the emphasis of the early black press was also on gently educating white Americans about the conditions black people lived under and positive messages about the things African-Americans could do (their educational achievements, home ownership etc.) while also seeking improvements in their political, education and employment conditions. Analysis of Aboriginal newspapers produced during this period indicates similar goals for both earlier, and contemporary, Indigenous publications - particularly in terms of their educational role; and the importance of presenting 'positive' images of people and community. They informed the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community of topics and events affecting Aboriginal people and encouraged both groups to participate to bring about change. They also advocated protecting Aboriginal culture and attempted to apply pressure on governments by raising public awareness of the problems faced by Aboriginal people.

6.7 News values

A primary news value for stories appearing in Aboriginal newspapers from this era was that they had an Australian or international Indigenous focus. By concentrating on issues of importance to Aboriginal people these newspapers opened up a window on a world of which many mainstream Australians would have been hitherto unaware. Unlike mainstream media publications (Dunn 1969, p. 34), the often spasmodic publication schedules of these newspapers meant deadlines were not of prime importance (Atton 2002, p. 10, 12). The *Churinga* article, “A good look at the Aborigines” provides an example of the longevity of stories in Aboriginal newspapers. This article, which covered a \$100,000 research project that surveyed Aboriginal people, was published in the February 1968 edition of *Churinga* but was

actually written in the lead up to the 1967 referendum (pp. 5-7). Since conditions for Aboriginal people had not changed in that time, the content was still topical.

Equally, while objectivity and providing balanced viewpoints is of prime concern to many mainstream journalists (McNair 1994, p. 31; Anderson 1997, p. 69; Schiller 1981, p. 3; Gans 1979, p. 186; Chibnall 1977, p. 33) this was not always a major consideration for the writers of these publications since their whole *raison d'être* was to present information from the Aboriginal perspective. Consequently, while editorial content was prevalent throughout *Smoke Signals*, in *Churinga* and *Abo Call* there was little attempt to balance the viewpoints being expressed with alternative or oppositional points of view. For instance, the *Abo Call* article, "Family Endowment Deductions: Why are these made?" criticised the Aborigines Protection Board for deducting money from Aboriginal mothers' welfare payments but provided no opportunity for the government or the Board to respond (*The Australian Abo Call*, September 1938, p. 2). Similarly, a piece by (Mrs) Renate S. Groves (20.1.70) "Viewpoint on Assimilation and Mixed Marriages" criticised Victoria's Agent-General Sir Horace Petty but included no response from him (*Churinga*, December 1969-February 1970, p. 5). However, while many of the reports in these newspapers could accurately be described as subjective, it could also be argued that the very presentation of the Aboriginal perspective was balancing the already skewed mainstream media coverage (Husband 2000, pp. 212-213).

Changing mainstream Australian social values and raising awareness are major news values for alternative publications (Atton 2002, p. 87) and this was evident in the newspapers from this era. For instance, a call for a Royal Commission into the conditions and treatment of Aboriginal people on NSW reserves in *Abo Call* raised awareness of living conditions of Aboriginal people but also pushed for policy change. The article reported on a station manager who kept an Alsatian dog:-

...which he sets on aged Aborigines when they ask for rations. We feel sure the white community does not realise the atrocities occurring right here in New South Wales, in the name of "protection" (*The Australian Abo Call*, May 1938, p. 2).

Similarly, G. M. Bryant reminded *Smoke Signals* readers that "Every farm, every factory, every home, every building in this country is built on the land which was taken from the original inhabitants of this country" (March 1961, p. 13).

Consequently, stories that educated and raised awareness of problems facing Aboriginal people and encouraged readers to act to bring about social change had strong news value in these newspapers.

Lewes and Traber both highlighted the strong connections alternative newspapers have to their communities (2000, p. 381; 1985, p. 3). While Aboriginal newspapers in this era targeted the white community to gain their support, the data also shows each newspaper had a strong connection to the Aboriginal community. For instance, *Abo Call* included letters from community members that expressed their appreciation of the newspaper and informed readers of conditions for Aboriginal people around Australia (July 1938, p. 4). Similarly, the *Westralian Aborigine*, because of its stronger community role, included community oriented articles covering topics such as baby shows, the opening of Aboriginal shops, the medical condition of a Coolbaroo League elder and sporting stars (June-July 1956). Consequently, regardless of whether they were written by an Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal person, the commitment to connecting their community of interest was paramount in each of these newspapers. By connecting Aboriginal communities, these newspapers linked and opened up public sphere processes.

Analysis of the four newspapers in this section indicate the Aboriginal print media from the 1930s through to the 1970s aimed to provide an independent voice, to protect language and culture, focused on the development of Aboriginal communities and showed “solidarity with other indigenous minorities” (Robie 2006). The data gathered from this era suggests self-determination was a burgeoning aspiration of Aboriginal people in Australia. The news values used by Aboriginal newspapers during this time were different from those employed in commercial news organisations, primarily because they were driven by the needs of their community of interest.

6.8 Sources

Given the lack of access Indigenous people have historically had in the mainstream media (Ewart 2002, p. 74; Burrows 2000, p. 184) the four Aboriginal newspapers discussed here gave Aboriginal people their first control over media access and portrayals. Stories in these newspapers were often generated by the activities of sympathetic or similar organisations. Therefore, stories about the Apex Club, the South Australia Aborigine Advancement League and Native W.A. Native Welfare

Council were included in the June-July, 1956 edition of the *Westralian Aborigine*. Similarly editions of *Smoke Signals* included articles from Shirley Andrews who was the Secretary for the Council for Aboriginal Rights. The organisations that produced these newspapers were therefore linking into other organisations that were operating within the Aboriginal arena and were publicising their activities. Information about activities relating to Aboriginal people from other organisations was circulated throughout the Indigenous public sphere. This not only publicised their activities to Aboriginal communities, but also to white Australians including mainstream journalists who otherwise might have remained unaware. These newspapers therefore had the potential to reach mainstream media journalists and to disseminate Indigenous public sphere processes into the dominant public sphere.

Likewise, the Aboriginal newspapers considered in this section valued different interview sources. They were less likely to rely on official sources such as politicians, bureaucrats and high profile figures (Anderson 1997, p. 71; Fishman 1980, p. 96; Hall et al. 1978, p. 58). The data shows white politicians or official non-Aboriginal sources were rarely allowed access to these publications. Instead access was given to people who played important roles in the organisations that published the newspapers, who held prominent positions in similar organisations or were members of the Aboriginal community and gained access by writing letters to the newspapers. These sources were not necessarily Aboriginal sources and *Churinga* included Herbert S. Groves and his wife Renata, the Reverend Jim Downing and T.G.H. Strehlow²¹. In *Smoke Signals*, articles by members of the Victorian AAL such as G. M. Bryant and initially Stan Davey regularly featured. Also, articles about Pastor Doug Nicholls were included along with a review about T.G.H. Strehlow's book and Shirley Andrews²² from the Council for Aboriginal Rights. The *Westralian Aborigine* provided a contrast because it did occasionally follow traditional journalism practices. It had the appearance of a traditional tabloid style newspaper and many stories included quotations from sources. For example, the article "Birth-Rate Increasing" included quotes from the former Chief Medical Officer from the Northern Territory Dr Cook (*Westralian Aborigine*, June-July 1956, p. 1). Similarly, "Babies in Limelight" included a quote from the Mayor of Kempsey (*Westralian Aborigine*, June-July

²¹ T. G. H. Strehlow. Linguist and ethnologist 1908-1978.

²² Shirley Andrews – Campaigner and key member of FCAATSI. Andrews was also the secretary of the Council for Aboriginal Rights.

1956). The adoption of a more traditional newspaper style by the *Westralian Aborigine* may reflect Kinnane's suggestion that the Coolbaroo members wanted to show they were capable of producing their own newspaper (2005). Therefore, this was perhaps a deliberate attempt to produce a newspaper that complied with mainstream standards and would attract more credibility in mainstream society. Consequently, while high-profile mainstream figures were not afforded open access to these Aboriginal newspapers, high-profile or connected people within the Indigenous public sphere (not necessarily Aboriginal) were. In fact, in the editions of *Smoke Signals* analysed most named sources were non-Aboriginal. Access for readers, just as in mainstream newspapers, tended to be limited to the Letters to the Editor section.

6.9 Pressures –internal and external

During the period from the 1930s-1950s Aboriginal people began to establish their own political and social organisations and beginning with *Abo Call*, used mainstream methods of communication to educate, persuade and lobby for political, economic and social change. This is evidence of a major change within the Indigenous public sphere. However, not all factions participating in public sphere activities at this time were in agreement with Patten's choice to collaborate with Stephenson and Miles to produce an Aboriginal newspaper. The clash between Ferguson and Patten, who shared the same cultural background and at least some political and ideological values, perhaps signals that there were shifting attitudes about the most appropriate method for communicating public sphere activities and who should be involved in those activities. Ferguson believed the APA's direction should be driven from within the Aboriginal community while Patten believed the APA needed to conform, adapt to and adopt mainstream methods of communication (including the production of a newspaper) to reach outside the Indigenous public sphere and exact change. Patten's philosophy and ideals were perhaps ahead of his time. This dispute emphasises the diversity of ideas within the Aboriginal community but also the emerging attitudes in relation to public sphere processes.

Further evidence that the Indigenous public sphere was in a transitional phase comes from the pressure applied to *Abo Call*'s publishers by the Australian government. In June 1938, the *Abo Call* reported the government had demanded the newspaper pay "as required by the Newspapers Act, 1898, the amount of the recognizances being

£300, together with two or three sureties for like amount” (*The Australian Abo Call*, June 1938, p. 2). The monies were paid by J. B. Miles. The article “The Abo Call: Difficulties Overcome” explains the fee was almost a “knock-out blow” for the newspaper and that the demand for monies demonstrated the democratic restrictions imposed on those who lacked money:-

...under our existing Australian press laws, since the year 1898, the poor man has no hope of starting a newspaper or practicing “freedom of the press”. The Aborigines of Australian certainly are unable to put up £300 recognizance for a newspaper ...(*The Australian Abo Call*, June 1938, p. 2).

The *Abo Call* closed three months later and no new Indigenous newspapers were launched until the 1950s. It seems clear then that while Patten was ready to begin confronting mainstream Australia and lobbying for change, because of his methods and choice of associates he faced pressure from both within the Aboriginal community and the Australian government. Despite the problems Patten faced, his work did have a long and lasting impact. For instance, the training Patten (and Ferguson) provided to Nicholls, Gibbs, Groves and other key 1950s Aboriginal leaders suggests their ideas paved the way for the evolution of Indigenous public sphere processes. By the 1950s many more Aboriginal organisations existed and there were more Aboriginal newspapers published. There was an increased push for self-determination and control over Indigenous public sphere processes during this time. While Patten pushed for the implementation of more mainstream practices to give Aboriginal organisations more credibility during the 1930s, by the 1950s Nicholls and Groves were pushing for self-determination, self-government and Aboriginal control of their organisations and the messages they were transmitting to both the Aboriginal community and the wider Australian community. They wanted control of their own public sphere processes.

6.10 Chapter Summary

During the period from the 1930s to the 1970s, these four newspapers helped to establish and develop the early Indigenous public sphere processes. They promoted the activities of Aboriginal social movements, educated mainstream Australia, lobbied local, state and federal governments, pushed for social change and informed the Aboriginal community of events, policies and issues that affected them. They were the voice of the organisations that produced them and carried messages not only to

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal readers at the time of production, but to the young people who read them many years later. These newspapers were circulating information throughout the Indigenous public sphere and were attempting to break down dominant public sphere barriers by informing, educating, influencing and coercing white Australians to change their attitudes towards Aboriginal people. By doing this they were also attempting to instigate political and social change. Furthermore, the producers of these newspapers, and certainly Jack Patten, became mentors for many young people. They were the vanguard, and often provided the impetus and training for the next generation of Aboriginal advocates.

Different levels of access existed within the Indigenous public sphere during this era. Those who had strong connections to Aboriginal social movements were in a position to strategise and organise activities. Articles in these newspapers illustrate that conflict about the non-Aboriginality of some participants led to “Aboriginal only” organisations being formed. Still, while participatory non-Aboriginal involvement was eventually shunned, reaching out of the Indigenous public sphere and into the mainstream public sphere was a major function of each of these newspapers. This study also suggests that while organisations shared similar ideologies and agendas, the geographic distances between communities meant there were different Indigenous public sphere processes operating on the East and West coast of Australia.

This study is particularly concerned with how news values and sources have been used by Indigenous newspapers to establish an Indigenous public sphere and an investigation of the newspapers showed they used very different approaches. Stories had to have an Aboriginal focus but deadlines were not highly valued. Of great value were stories that educated or persuaded both the mainstream and Aboriginal community to act. Likewise, stories that promoted the activities of the publishing organisation were likely to be published. While objectivity is highly important for mainstream journalists, it was not in these newspapers. However, rather than resulting in unbalanced reportage, it is possible their subjectivity could have created more balance in the wider mediasphere. These newspapers aimed to provide an independent voice, to improve the lives of Aboriginal Australians and to build community links and protect culture. Rather than acquiring story ideas from bureaucrats and political circles, stories were more likely to be generated by sympathetic or similar organisations. While remaining connected to the Aboriginal community was

important, a more valued function appears to have been raising awareness in the mainstream community. This finding is also reflected in the choice of credible sources. Those who had articles published were usually connected with the organisation producing the newspaper or similar bodies. Again, while towards the late 1960s there was a move away from non-Aboriginal involvement, a number of the sources in the East coast newspapers were not Aboriginal people.

This chapter has argued that the Indigenous public sphere was in an evolutionary phase during this era. The challenges faced by these publications presents an opportunity to gauge the newspapers' (and public sphere) response to a range of internal and external stimuli. These responses (and the type of stimuli) provide clues to the atmosphere prevalent in the Indigenous public sphere at that time. This era saw Aboriginal campaigners begin to use mainstream communication methods, to adopt mainstream structures for their organisations and ultimately to begin demanding control over their own organisations and public sphere processes. These early pioneers were the mentors for the campaigners that followed.

Chapter 7: The Revolutionaries

Kill the legend
Butcher it
With your acute cynicisms
Your paternal superfluities
With your unwise wisdom
Kill the legend
Obliterate it
With your atheism
Your fraternal hypocrisies
With your primal urge of miscegenation
Kill the legend
Devalue it
With your sophistry
Your baseless rhetoric
Your lusting material concepts
Your groundless condescension
Kill it
Vitiate the seed
Crush the root-plant
All this
And more you must needs do
In order
To form a husk of a man
To the level and in your own image
Whiteman²³

More Indigenous publications were produced from the late 1960s through to the 1980s than at any other time in Australian history. These publications were diverse in tone, style and purpose. The *Aboriginal-Islander-Message* or *AIM*, for example, launched by Roberta Sykes (now Dr Roberta Sykes) and produced by students working under the Aboriginal/Islander Skills Development Scheme with the assistance of two white mainstream journalists was a fairly conservative publication. In contrast, *Koori Bina*, produced in Redfern NSW, by the Black Women's Action Group that included Naomi Myers, Marcia Langton, Roberta Sykes and Sue Chilli, was a hard-hitting, staunchly political newspaper. These newspapers were often funded and supported by Aboriginal organisations although they still often relied on community donations to keep publishing. Other publications were linked to their communities rather than organisations, for example, the *Palm Island Smoke Signal* was produced on Palm Island by Bill Rosser and Palm Island community members.

²³ Kevin Gilbert, "People Are Legends", in "Poems 1970", Mitchell Library mss. no. 2429, 1970

The newspapers discussed in this chapter reflect a small sample of those produced during this era. By the end of the 1960s, Aboriginal organisations were aware of the power of the printed word to promote their messages. My library, archive and interview data collection uncovered a number of Indigenous publications produced at this time. However, while many newspapers were studied, it was outside the time constraints of this project to include discussion regarding each and every Aboriginal news sheet produced during this era. Consequently, this chapter will focus on five influential Indigenous newspapers; *The Koorier*, *Identity*, *the Black Australian News*, *Black Liberation* and the *Black News Service*. These newspapers performed as tools of resistance, education and as important conduits of community information. Overall, I suggest these newspapers illustrate the conflict raging within the Indigenous public sphere during this era, and that they informed the Indigenous community of the views of people who were largely excluded from the mainstream media forum. It will also be argued the Indigenous public sphere was still in transition during this time as these publications performed the important multiple functions of resistance, education, counteraction, political activity and community identity-building. They created conditions that enabled an Indigenous public sphere to flourish.

7.1 Aboriginal Australia in transition

From the late 1960s to the late 1980s, the Indigenous public sphere was a battleground. Different political factions fought for control of the agenda. During the 1950s, many Aboriginal organisations were controlled by non-Aboriginal people and this became a source of conflict and change within the Indigenous public sphere (Attwood 2003, pp. 308-310). Aboriginal-controlled organisations such as the National Tribal Council²⁴ were formed by Pastor Doug Nicholls, Kath Walker (later known as Oodgeroo Noonuccal) and others, and older organisations such as the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI) gradually disbanded (Attwood 2003, p. 307; Lake 2002, pp. 123-125). In 1971, young Aboriginal people such as Gary Foley, Denis Walker, John Newfong, Bruce McGuinness, Paul Coe, Cheryl Buchanan and Michael Anderson emerged as

²⁴ National Tribal Council was an Indigenous only organisation formed in 1970 after a rift with the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI). Taffe, Sue 2008, "National Tribal Council", *Collaborating for Indigenous Rights*, National Museum of Australia Canberra, <http://indigenoustrights.net.au/organisation.asp?oID=22> accessed 10 September 2008.

the “new guard” in Aboriginal politics. The Black Panther party, shaped by the Black Power movement in the U.S.A, was formed and radically changed the political environment inside the Indigenous public sphere. Not content to wait politely for white Australia to implement social change that would improve Aboriginal people’s lives, the new guard orchestrated protests such as the Aboriginal Tent Embassy²⁵ on the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra. Their radical approach, demands to control their own destinies and political futures and their willingness to resist and rebel against the establishment challenged and confronted the “old guard” of Aboriginal politics (Attwood 2003, pp. 324-326; Cavadini 1972). A comparison can be drawn here with the way most white Americans viewed those involved in the American Black Panther movement and the way white Australians viewed those involved in the Australian Black Power movement. Streitmatter argues most Americans thought only of the potential violence and threat of the Black Panthers and missed completely that these people were also:

...highly dedicated, forward thinking young journalists bending over their typewriters into the wee hours of the morning in order to craft and articulate a political ideology to guide America’s poor and powerless into the new millennium (Streitmatter 2001, p. 228).

Similarly, it is unlikely most white Australians would see past the more radical activities of the Australian Black Power movement to see the wealth of journalistic work they produced. Many of the key Black Power activists were also documenting their activities and perception of Aboriginal lives in the Indigenous publications they produced. Consequently, the Indigenous newspapers produced during this time carried the messages of these various factions and portrayed this conflict with different styles, tones, attitudes and objectives.

7.2 Selected publications 1968-1989

While contemporary attitudes may consider calling Indigenous politicians and campaigners “activists and militants” offensive (McKee 2002, p. 17), some Indigenous campaigners from this era wear these terms, and the defiance against white control that these terms suggest, as a badge of honour (Foley 2005; Buchanan

²⁵ Aboriginal Tent Embassy. On 26 January 1972 a group of Aboriginal activists set up a collection of tents on the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra, Australia and declared them an “Aboriginal Embassy”. The purpose of the protest was to lobby government for Aboriginal rights (*Identity*, July 1972, p. 4).

2005). There is no “one-size fits all” stereotype that describes the campaigners for Aboriginal rights during this time or the newspapers they produced. While *Identity* was a well-funded publication, predominantly produced by professional journalists, journals such as *The Koorier* were grassroots publications produced by community members with few resources. *The Koorier* especially demonstrates the passion and energy that existed in the Indigenous public sphere during this era.

The Koorier (also known as *National Koorier* and *Jumbunna*), was produced by Aboriginal man Bruce McGuinness²⁶ between 1968 and 1971. Unfortunately copies of the early editions are not available and the accessible issues are not dated. Therefore, volume and edition numbers will be used to identify the different copies. McGuinness, Lin Onus²⁷ and Bob Maza²⁸ produced copy for *The Koorier*. *The Koorier* and *Jumbunna* were publications of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League (VAAL), and the *National Koorier* was the organ of the National Tribal Council (*National Koorier*, Vol 1, No. 14, p. 4). Pastor Doug Nicholls and William (Bill) Onus guided McGuinness’ political development (Attwood 2003, p. 313; Foley 2005). As an example of the changing ideas within the Indigenous public sphere during this time, McGuinness’ appointment led to conflict as moderate VAAL members, including Nicholls, worried that McGuinness’ more radical ideas would reduce support for the organisation. McGuinness had connections to radical Aboriginal activists from around the country (and the world) such as Gary Foley and Denis Walker (Attwood 2003, p. 318) and was a key member of the National Tribal Council. Consequently, while his appointment may have turned some moderate supporters away from the VAAL, nationally, more militant Aboriginal campaigners were inspired by McGuinness’ fervour expressed through *The Koorier* (Attwood 2003, p. 318). McGuinness’ use of VAAL funds to pay for National Tribal Council activities led to criticism and the withdrawal of government funding for the VAAL

²⁶ Bruce McGuinness (1939-2003) took over the reigns of the Victorian A.A.L. from Pastor Doug Nicholls OBE and edited *The Koorier*. McGuinness was a mentor to Gary Foley and a supporter of the Black Power movement in Australia. See also Taffe, S 2008, “Bruce McGuinness”, *Collaborating for Indigenous Rights*, National Museum of Australia Canberra, <http://indigenousrights.net.au/person.asp?plD=1012>, accessed 10 September 2008.

²⁷ Lin Onus. Aboriginal artist and sculptor. Onus also wrote for *The Koorier*.

²⁸ Bob Maza (1939-2000). Born on Palm Island in 1939 and a member of the Vic A.A.L. and a participant in the Aboriginal Tent Embassy protest. Taffe, S 2008, “Bob Maza”, *Collaborating for Indigenous Rights*, National Museum of Australia Canberra, <http://indigenousrights.net.au/person.asp?plD=972>, accessed 10 September 2008. Maza also produced copy for *The Koorier*.

(*The Koorier*, Vol. 1, No.12, p. 9). The withdrawal of funding affected the VAAL's ability to pay its staff, expenses and to fund the publishing costs of *The Koorier*.

McGuinness used *The Koorier* to reach out to Aboriginal people around Australia. Through its pages he called on Aboriginal people to "demand" their rights (*The Koorier* 1969, Vol 1, No. 11, p. 27). While *Abo Call*, discussed in the previous chapter, was a radical publication in its time, *The Koorier* was the first truly confrontational Indigenous publication and reflected McGuinness' Black Power consciousness. Foley (2005) described *The Koorier* as "a gestetnered, stapled thing"—alluding to its amateur presentation—that had a significant impact on him personally as a young emerging Aboriginal leader, and also on its readership: "It fucking grabs you and it shakes you up. It doesn't matter which way you jump in regards to it. It at least fucking does something to you" (Foley 2005). *The Koorier's* impact is still evident 40 years after it was first published. And *The Koorier*, like McGuinness, was an inspiration to Foley to produce his own publications and to other emerging leaders such as Robbie Thorpe who went on to produce *The Koorier 2* (Foley 2005). *The Koorier* inspired political involvement and was somewhat of a training vehicle for upcoming leaders in the use of print media to disseminate messages (Traber 1985; Jacobs 2000, p. 28).

While *The Koorier* was primarily produced for an Aboriginal audience, McGuinness also targeted mainstream Australians and the Australian government. McGuinness' Black Power principles attracted negative and positive Letters to the Editor and he published both. Some letters were highly critical but as this extract demonstrates, McGuinness remained undeterred (*The Koorier* 1969, Vol. 1. No. 10, p. 3): "We intend only to clarify and educate uninformed people of the atrocities committed against the Aborigines, and to all those anonymous writers (drop dead)". *The Koorier* provided a platform for McGuinness to discuss issues he believed were important, such as his dissatisfaction with the national Indigenous organisation, FCAATSI. He felt Aboriginal leaders who attended the FCAATSI conference were more "concerned with pleasing the whiteman than solving the Aboriginal problem" and he claimed "apathetic appeasements" were handed out by Aboriginal leaders ad nauseam (*The Koorier* 1969, Vol. 1, No. 6, p. 2). McGuinness' discontent with the FCAATSI executive, which was dominated by non-Aboriginal people, mirrored the earlier attitudes of Groves, Nicholls and Charles Perkins (Attwood 2003, pp. 309-310). This

demonstrates that during this era Indigenous people continued to battle for control of Indigenous public sphere processes and that the fundamental attitudes and goals remained consistent.

Still, despite wanting Aboriginal control of the organs which fed into the thriving Indigenous public sphere of the time, McGuinness did not dismiss or devalue the contributions made by non-Aboriginal Australians to the campaign for improved conditions for Aboriginal people. His news value choices demonstrate that he used *The Koorier* to try to correct misinformation about Black Power and his own philosophy. These points are demonstrated in an editorial in *The Koorier*, where he accused “professional agitators”, posing as Black Power and Roosevelt Brown²⁹ supporters, of suggesting the aim of Black Power was to ensure that “Aboriginal Affairs is the concern only of Aboriginals”. McGuinness argued there were a number of non-Aboriginal people who had made a “valuable contribution...[that was] ...typical of men who are fighting for a cause, in this case the aborigine”. He also wrote that he “value[d] their support. Not only do I value it, but I also know that without it, the progress of Aboriginal claims would be set back ten years (no exaggeration)” (*The Koorier*, Vol. 1, No. 12, p. 3). Despite his comments, McGuinness’ support and respect for people such as Stan Davey and Gordon Bryant was criticised and he was labelled a “hate-filled racist” because he pushed for control of the Indigenous public sphere by Aboriginal people. McGuinness responded to the claims he was a racist in an editorial:

I am not a hate-filled racist. If anyone considers me to be such they are wrong. But I am a racist. I want the Aboriginal people to have an Identity. I want them to have the power to make policy changes for their betterment. I want to be able to be responsible as a Koorie, not a so-and-so Abo. This I feel makes me a racist but certainly not hate-filled (*The Koorier* 1969, Vol. 1, No. 10, p. 3).

McGuinness’ comments in *The Koorier*, not only again allude to the battle for control being fought within the Indigenous public sphere during the late 1960s and early 1970s but also illustrate the diversity of attitudes held by Aboriginal people during this time. While McGuinness wanted Aboriginal people to control their own organisations, he did not preclude all white involvement and he respected the work achieved by non-Aboriginal campaigners such as Stan Davey and Gordon Bryant during the late 1950s and 1960s. McGuinness’ willingness to publish opposing views

²⁹ Dr Roosevelt Brown. Caribbean academic and Black Power advocate.

to his ideas demonstrates his objectivity and desire for *The Koorier* to be a forum for open debate on the best course of action for Aboriginal people during this time.

Similarly, *Identity* magazine illustrates the range of participants and attitudes circulating the Indigenous public sphere. Published from July 1971 until July 1982, *Identity* (also known as *Aboriginal and Islander Identity* and *Aboriginal and Thursday Island Identity*), had five editors. The first was a non-Aboriginal woman Barrie Ovenden (1971-1972), followed by Aboriginal journalist John Newfong (November 1972-1973 and 1979-1981), then the joint editorship of Aboriginal campaigner Michael Anderson (1973) and writer/poet Jack Davis. Davis continued on as sole editor until 1979 when John Newfong stepped in again. The final *Identity* editor was Aboriginal journalist Les Malezer (1981-1982).

Identity was a professionally produced, glossy magazine published by the Aboriginal Publications Foundation (APF)³⁰. Established “under the sponsorship of the Commonwealth Government in September 1970” it was intended that the Foundation would become independent (Perkins in NAA, A3753, 1971/903). Government funding to the Foundation came with strings attached. The government questioned how the Foundation spent its money and made editorial suggestions and requests (NAA, A2354, 1971/326). The Office for Aboriginal Affairs scrutinised the Foundation’s accounts and questioned the allocation of grants not only from them, but also from the Council for the Arts. The Council provided the grant to pay the trainee editor’s wages and the allocation of the grant had to be approved by the Prime Minister and was provided on the condition that an audited statement was provided to show the expenditure of the money (NAA, A2354, 1971/326). Malezer confirmed *Identity* received funding through the Aboriginal Arts Board and from subscriptions (Malezer 2005). Consequently, while the funding from the government was indirect in that it came via the Aboriginal Arts Board, this government funding (and the subsequent editorial control exerted) affected *Identity*’s credibility in the eyes of the more radical factions within the Aboriginal community (Buchanan 2005; Foley 2005). Therefore, while the Foundation and Arts Board had access to secure funding for

³⁰ Aboriginal Publications Foundation. National Aboriginal organisation formed in 1970 to publish written materials (books, pamphlets, magazines) by and for Aboriginal Australians (*Records of the Aboriginal Publications Foundation*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, MS3781, p. 5, http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/9322/MS3781_Aboriginal_Pubs.pdf, accessed 10 September 2008).

Identity magazine, its government source diminished the publication's credibility as a genuine tool for Aboriginal communication.

The lack of Aboriginal voices, editorship and initial moderate tone also impacted on *Identity's* credibility within the Indigenous public sphere. *Identity's* first editor, Barrie Ovenden, was originally hired for one year while the Foundation attempted to find an Aboriginal editor. Kevin Gilbert, who later became an important Aboriginal author, was initially employed as trainee editor although the magazine's apolitical attitude along with Gilbert's lack of commitment to the administrative demands of the role led to conflict between him and Ovenden. Gilbert felt *Identity* was not sufficiently "radical" and in time left to produce his own more political publication, *Alchuringa* (NAA, A2354, 1971/326). Gilbert considered the first edition of *Identity* to be "more for white people interested in Aboriginal affairs than an avenue for expression by Aboriginal people" and Charles Perkins³¹ agreed with him. Providing more evidence of the push for control of Indigenous public sphere processes, Perkins wanted *Identity* to include more Aboriginal opinions and articles written by Aboriginal people about "their own affairs".

John Newfong's appointment as editor boosted *Identity's* credibility, at least with the more radical factions within the Indigenous public sphere. Newfong replaced Ovenden for the sixth edition and was introduced to *Identity* readers by Sir Doug Nicholls, OBE (the pastor) who explained Newfong had a long association with the Aboriginal Advancement Movement, was a key figure during the Aboriginal Tent Embassy protest and had been General Secretary of FCAATSI (in *Identity*, November 1972). Newfong was a highly respected journalist who worked for *The Australian*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *Ebony* magazine in the U.S.A. during his journalism career and was revered by both mainstream journalists and the Aboriginal community (Plater 1999; Buckell 1999). He was a mentor, adviser and friend to Gary Foley and Michael Anderson (Foley 2005; Anderson 2006). A publication's perceived value to different Aboriginal groups and its ability to circulate their message depended upon

³¹ Charles Perkins (1936-2000). Born in Alice Springs, Perkins organised the Australian Freedom Rides and went on to become the Secretary of the Aboriginal Publications Foundation (*Records of the Aboriginal Publications Foundation*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, MS3781, p. 6, http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/9322/MS3781_Aboriginal_Pubs.pdf, accessed 10 September 2008) and held a number of key positions in other key Aboriginal organisations (Taffe, Sue 2008, "Charles Perkins", *Collaborating for Indigenous Rights*, National Museum of Australia Canberra, <http://indigenoustrights.net.au/person.asp?plD=983>, accessed 10 September 2008).

“the receptiveness of the person in charge and Newfong was one of us” (Foley 2005). Under Newfong’s editorship, *Identity* became a credible political tool, an outlet for the Black Power movement and a political voice for the more radical factions within the Aboriginal community that had previously been excluded. Foley (2005) concluded:

[Newfong had a] legitimacy in our eyes and when I say our eyes, I’m talking about the Black Power movement. We didn’t put any of our stuff in *Alchuringa* or any of those fucking kinds of things because these were run by the old guard who we were trying to replace.

Under Newfong, *Identity* reflected the changing Aboriginal political scene. Newfong was a Black Power supporter (Foley 2005) and possibly for the first time, people like Bruce McGuinness, Gary Foley, Denis Walker, Bobbi Sykes and others were given an opportunity to present their views on Black Power in a professional and more mainstream publication. Newfong left *Identity* to go to work for the Channel 7 television network and later the U.S.A. publication *Ebony* (AIATSIS, Records of the APF). The attitudes towards Ovenden and Newfong’s editorship demonstrate how important the editor’s role is in choices relating to news values and sources and the impact such choices can have on the effectiveness of publications in public sphere debates.

The focus and tone of *Identity* changed again between 1973 and 1979 when *Identity* was edited predominantly by Aboriginal writer Jack Davis. However, for a short period in 1973, Davis shared this role with Michael Anderson who went on to edit the more militant publication, the *Black Australian News*. Davis and Anderson came from different political spheres. Anderson was a radical campaigner who wanted to maintain the tone and direction *Identity* had taken under Newfong. In contrast, Davis wanted *Identity* to be a forum for Aboriginal art, culture, literature and heritage. Anderson and Davis had “very interesting” discussions about what should be included in *Identity* during the two months they shared editorship (Anderson 2006). Under Davis, *Identity* lost its political focus. While Davis was not opposed to *Identity* carrying political messages, he believed those messages should be presented as a natural part of the literary process rather than *Identity* being used as “a political paper” by people who were “anxious to bring about quick changes to the abysmal Aboriginal conditions” (Davis in Chesson 1988, p. 174). While circulation of the magazine continued to rise, Davis’ commitment to his own writing began to overshadow his

work with *Identity*. After Davis took over as sole editor, production of *Identity* and the Foundation's operations were moved to Perth where David was based. Later, Perkins (as the Foundation's founding Secretary (AIATSIS, Records of the APF, p. 6)) decided the administration of both should be moved to Canberra and John Newfong stepped in as editor again for a short period before leaving and being replaced by Les Malezer³².

Malezer edited *Identity* from 1981-1982. Malezer worked for the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA), a small research organisation in Brisbane. Malezer had been on the Aboriginal Publications Foundation (APF) board for two years. Malezer, because of his work with FAIRA and the Foundation, had a clear understanding of the importance of controlling messages and this has remained with him and he continues to maintain a firm hand over his own media production. Malezer viewed *Identity* as an "up-front and very out-in-the-open" magazine that did not attract very much government scrutiny while he was editor. In fact, during Malezer's editorship *Identity* was a useful source of information for governments about the Aboriginal community and their perspectives. *Identity* was a "pace-setter" and while government may have monitored its content there was no attempt to use "clandestine or covert effort to try to monitor or interfere with what we were putting out" (Malezer 2005). *Identity* was less radical under Malezer than it had been under Newfong, and less arts-oriented than it was under Davis. Malezer took the middle ground. He had received journalism training while at university during the late 1970s. Malezer initially perceived himself primarily as a community member who was writing a magazine but as his role developed and conformed more fully to that of a journalist, his attitude changed. While he still saw himself as a community member, he operated within a journalistic framework and so applied the attitudes of a journalist to his work. He became a member of the Australian Journalists Association (AJA) and became involved with the National Press Club (Malezer 2005). This changing view of his role undoubtedly impacted on *Identity's* content and the role Malezer saw the magazine playing. Eventually family problems demanded Malezer return to Brisbane and while he wanted to continue to edit *Identity*, the Foundation was reluctant to move operations again and decided to try to find another editor. *Identity* folded in

³² Les Malezer. Editor of *Identity* magazine. Chairperson of the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA), Representative and Chairperson of the Global Indigenous Caucus at the United Nations.

June 1982 with the last editions being produced by guest editors such as Jack Waterford³³ (Malezer 2005). What this discussion shows is the influence an editor can have on the tone, attitude and credibility of a publication. *Identity's* ability to operate as a useful mechanism within the Indigenous public sphere was clearly affected by each editor's own philosophy and politics.

This point is strongly illustrated again through analysis of the *Black Australian News*. Like *The Koorier* and *Identity*, this newspaper provides evidence of the different factions operating within the Indigenous public sphere. The first *Black Australian News* was published in June 1972 by the Foundation of Aboriginal Affairs and was a moderate, community newspaper. The masthead describes it as the "Official Organ of the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs" that was established in Sydney in 1963 to provide advice to the community on a range of issues including housing, employment, education, legal and medical issues (Perkins in NLA MS8047, Series 4; Anderson 2006; *Black Australian News* 1972). However, this changed dramatically when Michael Anderson took over as editor in July 1972. Anderson was a member of the Black Power movement and was one of the original Tent Embassy protest organisers. Therefore, the second edition of the *Black Australian News* reflected Anderson's Black Power ideology and assumed a strong, confrontational stance.

This publication not only shows the influence an editor can have on a publication but demonstrates the strong connections between Indigenous public sphere constituents during this time. Anderson had no formal journalism training but he did have Newfong as a mentor who advised and assisted him with his writing and journalistic style (Anderson 2006). In fact, Anderson credits Newfong with "saving his arse" on occasions because he was a "layman" and "was busting his butt to make things happen". Newfong let Anderson "bounce" ideas off him and provided advice on approaches to take, effective language and where to obtain information to provide more in-depth coverage (Anderson 2006). The link between Newfong and Anderson demonstrates the connections that existed between the radical factions within the Indigenous public sphere. Newfong, McGuinness, Foley, Anderson and others in this group, despite being spread around the country, shared a common goal and ideology and were working together to exact change. Newfong was acutely aware of the power of the print media to help bring about social change and like McGuinness and Patten

³³ Jack Waterford. Australian journalist who is now Editor-at-Large of the Canberra Times.

before him, encouraged other Aboriginal campaigners to utilise this power with greater effect.

As further evidence of the “new guard’s” awareness of the importance of controlling the messages being dispersed both inside and outside the Indigenous public sphere, in 1975 Cheryl Buchanan, another member of the Black Panther faction, established the Black Resource Centre (BRC) in Melbourne. The BRC produced both *Black Liberation* and *Black News Service*. Initially, the BRC had little independence from the Australian Union of Students (AUS). They controlled the finances and any activities undertaken by the BRC had to be approved by the AUS. In 1976, Buchanan negotiated a \$27,000 grant from the AUS that was administered by the BRC. Buchanan also moved BRC operations to Brisbane where her family was based. Buchanan was then, and still considers herself to be, a militant and she saw a need for a publication that would “tell the truth” about how Aboriginal people were being treated. She viewed *Identity* as too soft and while it contained some “good information” it “certainly wasn’t anything that challenged the system”. *Identity*’s government funding relegated it to being not much more than a “big budget publication” with “beautiful, glossy photos” in Buchanan’s view.

In contrast, Buchanan was all about challenging the system (Buchanan 2005). Perhaps as evidence of the impact their campaigns were having, Buchanan, like Gary Foley, Bruce McGuinness, Denis Walker and Lionel Fogarty (Lacey) and other members of the Black Power movement, was constantly watched by government. They were followed wherever they went, harassed and picked up for questioning. Walker, Fogarty and John Garcia, who became known as the Brisbane Three, were imprisoned for about a year on a variety of charges that were ultimately dismissed by the courts. Buchanan (2005) recalled:

It was like you were always targeted because you dared to speak up and you were targeted also because you were young so you didn’t have a hope in bloody hell whichever way you went.

Documents in the National Australian Archives corroborate the monitoring of Black Power members by secret service and police agents. Members of the police Special Branch in Queensland followed Buchanan and other members of the Black Power movement around and ASIO took their photos at marches and events (Buchanan 2005). ASIO files in the National Archives discuss Buchanan and other members of

the Aboriginal community and provide evidence of the government fear and distrust of these Aboriginal campaigners. Buchanan was on one hand referred to as an “intelligent, deep thinking” person, but is then accused of having identity issues and “hang-ups”. Other Aboriginal campaigners are described as having “chips on their shoulders about racism” and as being “anti-Australian and anti-white”. The Aboriginal heritage and sexuality of high profile activists was discussed by ASIO operatives with those judged homosexual being described as “deviates” who would ultimately be “shunned” by “pure-bloods”. Any link to the Communist Party of Australia also attracted ASIO attention (NAA, A6119, 3435).

Along with constant monitoring by Australia’s secret service and police, Black Power supporters were also misrepresented by mainstream media. For instance, mainstream media suggested they were connected to the Communist Party and media discussion about “black militants” led to misconceptions about the exact nature of Black Power in Australia. Buchanan used her ability to make news value choices to correct misrepresentations of the Black Power Movement, an example of this is provided by an article in Buchanan’s journal, *Black Liberation*, which argued the term simply meant “black people being able to make decisions about what affects our lives” (1976, p. 6). Involvement in the Black Power movement drew more than bad press and surveillance though. Members were threatened with being removed from Queensland missions or reserves. Buchanan used *Black Liberation* to accuse white authorities of using a “divide and conquer” strategy against Aboriginal people to keep the peace:

Fear is built up (by threat) so that your own people get scared to be seen talking to you in the street, in case one of the Aboriginal councillors or white police see them (*Black Liberation* 1976, p. 6).

Buchanan launched the *Black News Service* on 3 April 1975 and *Black Liberation* in November 1975. Both were originally published in Fitzroy at The Centre and much of the information in both newspapers was written by Buchanan, although they did include reports from other Aboriginal organisations such as medical centres and letters and submissions from prominent Aboriginal people. Some copies of the *Black News Service* also included the Northern Territory newsletter *Bunji* in its entirety. *Bunji* was written and published by William Day and will be discussed further in the next chapter. However the inclusion of *Bunji* in the *Black News Service* demonstrates Buchanan’s and Day’s willingness and awareness of the need to work in conjunction

with other organisations and people to circulate messages throughout the Indigenous public sphere that supported their mutual goals. It again illustrates how connected the various factions operating within the Indigenous public sphere were during this time. There was a concerted push for improved conditions for Aboriginal people taking place across Australia and Indigenous newspapers were being used extensively to disseminate messages.

While there were strong connections between the more radical factions operating in the Indigenous public sphere, there was opposition to their more militant actions and attitudes. Black Power speakers were verbally abused while giving speeches and had flour and other things thrown at them (Buchanan 2005). However, Buchanan believed so staunchly in the work she was doing, she refused to be deterred. She was driven by the need to bring about change for her people:

I just hated the system so badly and wanted to see changes so badly that I would have done anything. It's one of those things where it's not just mind and heart, your whole body; you just give it to the struggle really...It was the action...We were gonna just try and show people this is what's happening in South Africa, comparing it to what was happening with the American Indian movement and you know I'd gone over to the States and I had contact with people in the American Indian movement. Just showing people that yeah, we're here and we're a force to be recognised and we're not going to go away...(Buchanan 2005).

As Buchanan recalls, Indigenous public sphere processes were also extending outside of Australia. Buchanan, McGuinness and other Aboriginal campaigners at this time had travelled overseas and met with both African American and Native American protestors. Indigenous people and their supporters internationally were reaching out and connecting with each other. American Black Power protestors such as Roosevelt Brown had visited Australia (Attwood 2003, p. 325) and similarly, Bruce McGuinness, Bob Maza, Buchanan and others had travelled to the United States and had spent time with Native Americans (Attwood 2003, p. 340). This era saw a united, international push for improved conditions for minorities across the globe and alternative newspapers were an important tool in this goal.

In the same way Buchanan was using the *Black News Service* to promote Black Power movement activity, similarly *Black Nation* produced by Ross Watson in Brisbane from October 1982 through to November 1985, was used to publicise and drive the Aboriginal protest action surrounding the Commonwealth Games in 1982. Watson

formed the Black Protest Committee in 1982 in opposition to the Brisbane Commonwealth Games which also afforded an opportunity to raise international awareness of the racist and oppressive conditions under which many Indigenous people still lived. The Queensland Act³⁴ (as it was known) was still in place and controlled Indigenous people's lives. Watson produced *Black Nation* in response to his disillusionment with the mercenary actions of some of his own people and mainstream media's sensationalist and inaccurate reportage (Watson, R 2005). This is another example of how Indigenous newspaper editors used their control over news values to promote Aboriginal political activity and correct misconceptions and inaccuracies promoted by mainstream media.

Like Anderson and Davis, Watson had no formal journalism training but knew people who could help him layout his newspaper. A friend who was studying law and had worked as a journalist "looked over things before it was actually printed" (Watson, R 2005). Watson saw his role as an "information provider" to the Aboriginal community and *Black Nation* provided a platform from which to present the Indigenous perspective. *Black Nation* folded in 1985, but its content demonstrated a sophisticated knowledge of mainstream media, political tactics and an awareness of how dangerous both of these areas could be to Aboriginal campaigns. *Black Nation*, despite being produced on a shoestring budget, had a strong visual presence. After the newspaper folded, Watson became involved in broadcasting a Murri³⁵ radio programme on Brisbane radio station 4ZZZ and decided this was a more suitable medium from which to disseminate information, concluding (2005): "The spoken word was that much quicker that it was just no longer practical when I wasn't funded." Watson later played a key role in the establishment of community radio station 4AAA, one of the most successful Aboriginal radio stations, and perhaps the most popular country music station in Australia.

³⁴ Queensland Act. The acts known as the Queensland Acts included the *Aborigines Act 1971* and the *Torres Strait Islander Act 1971*. These Acts allowed reserve officials to evict individuals from reserves and missions (Queensland Government 2004, *Issues – Aboriginal and Islander Affairs*, Queensland State Archives 1972 Cabinet Documents, <http://www.archives.qld.gov.au/1972cabdocs/affairs.asp>, accessed 14 September 2008).

³⁵ Murri. A term used to identify an Aboriginal person from Queensland.

7.3 Access to the Indigenous public sphere

7.3.1 Participation in Indigenous public sphere activity

The only Aboriginal people attending the 1958 FCAATSI Adelaide conference were Bert Groves, Charles Perkins and Pastor Doug Nicholls. In contrast, more than 300 Aboriginal people attended the FCAATSI conference in Adelaide just over 10 years later, in 1969 (*The Koorier* 1969, 18 April, p. 12). This rise in participation in fora such as FCAATSI suggests a significant increase in Indigenous public sphere participation from the 1950s to the late 1960s.

The lack of control Aboriginal people experienced within the Indigenous public sphere continued to be the subject of much debate, but changes at Federal, State and local levels had occurred within the wider public sphere. For instance, Aboriginal people were able to elect who sat on the newly established Aboriginal Advisory Council³⁶ that advised the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. While this was a leap from the lack of political influence enjoyed by Aboriginal leaders such as Patten and Ferguson, Onus in *The Koorier* reminded readers those elected to the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Council still had no power. The “Council is exactly what it is named. Advisory only”. Onus argued those elected to the Council would end up in the “same boat as past delegates to Government organisations. Puppets!” (Onus in *The Koorier* 1969, 18 April, p. 14). Therefore, while Aboriginal people now appeared to have more political power and were certainly more politically active, the power they were afforded by government was still minimal.

Similarly, while more Aboriginal publications were being produced, Aboriginal people did not always feature prominently in the production or the content. For instance, Ovenden’s first editorial in *Identity* claimed the magazine would be produced “mainly by and for the indigenous people of Australia” and argued *Identity* “can only function if it is supported by all indigenous people” (*Identity*, July 1971, p. 1). Yet many articles included no Aboriginal voices. For instance, a long opinion piece written by the Superintendent of the Methodist Overseas Mission at Yirrkala, Reverend A. E. Wells, about the land rights issue included no Aboriginal voices (*Identity*, July 1971, pp. 3-5). Instead, the non-Indigenous Reverend Wells spoke *for*

³⁶ Established in 1968 by the Victorian Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Council had six elected Aboriginal members (VAEIA 2009, <http://www.vaeai.org.au/timeline/1965.html>).

the community which fed into criticism levelled at the magazine by Perkins and Gilbert that the early editions of the magazine were produced more for white Australians than as a forum for Aboriginal Australians to have a voice (NAA, A2354, 1971/326). However, the first edition of *Identity* did include stories about and by Aboriginal artists, traditional stories, profiles of Aboriginal elders such as Neville Bonner who was the “first Aboriginal to be a member of any Australian Parliament” (*Identity*, July 1971, p. 29), along with a fictional story by Kath Walker, a study by Neville Perkins about the living conditions for Aboriginal Australians in Alice Springs, a brief report on FCAATSI and a report on Tranby College by Lester Bostock. Still, many articles were *about* Aboriginal people rather than produced *by* them and the apolitical attitude, resulting perhaps from Ovenden’s aim to target both an Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal audience, suggests the magazine was attempting to avoid controversy. Further discussion regarding source choices is included later in this chapter.

Articles written by Kevin Gilbert for *Identity* and later *Alchuringa* provide evidence of the pressure to avoid offending *Identity*’s conservative readers. A comparison of Gilbert’s articles suggests that while Aboriginal people were able to participate in the Indigenous public sphere through *Identity*, that participation was restrained and inhibited depending upon who was editing the magazine. In the 1971 *Identity* article, “My Countryman, My Country”, Gilbert tells readers: “Australians can look with some pride on the achievements, social, political and technological, of this sprawling babe of a continent ...”. He writes that Australia is perceived as a place of “hope” for most Australians but that “in recent years the hope held by Australia’s Aborigines for such freedom of development opportunity has become a little tarnished”. Gilbert points out the hope that things will change is perhaps the cause of most suffering for Aboriginal people in Australia. The hope felt by Aboriginal people is the “unifying identification of our people”. He contends in moving into the 20th century, and adapting to modern life, Aboriginal people have “lost something vital in the sudden transition”. Gilbert argues that essential identity can only be restored by “according dignity and justice to the Aboriginal” (Gilbert in *Identity*, July 1971, pp. 18, 23). While this article is sophisticated and well-written, it lacks the passion and anger portrayed in Gilbert’s later articles in *Alchuringa*. This is perhaps because of *Identity*’s target audience and the apolitical attitude Ovenden wanted for the magazine. It is hard to

believe that Gilbert, a brilliant Aboriginal writer who had spent time in Australia's prison system³⁷, would see the "freedom of development" for Aboriginal Australians as being "a little tarnished". This idea is given credence in the opening editorial of *Alchuringa*, where Gilbert (1971, December, p. 1) writes: "Because of the independent nature of the magazine, Aboriginal views can be truly voiced." This suggests that in other magazines (for instance *Identity*), his views could not be "truly voiced". Consequently, in contrast to his restrained comments in the *Identity* article, in an article about Australia's participation in the provision of aid to Pakistan, "The Pakistani Appeal" in *Alchuringa*, Gilbert is more forthright when he warns Australia against throwing stones at Pakistan, when "our own country is so obviously a glass house". He tells readers Aboriginal people are dying of disease, malnutrition, "of decay of the spirit through lack of hope". Aboriginal people are living in "one room shanties with earth floors which are totally devoid of any facilities which give neither hygiene or comfort" and he asks "Could not the money that is used so unimaginatively and with such deadening effects be used more intelligently by our government?" Gilbert addresses readers who might doubt the truth of his comments and suggests:

If you do not believe that there is no defacto apartheid in Australia and no discrimination just go to Brewarrina and ask to see "Dodge City". It is a housing development for Aborigines only, as usual well clear of white settlement..." (Gilbert in *Alchuringa*, December 1971, p. 5).

The tone in *Alchuringa* is far removed from Gilbert's restrained commentary in *Identity* and demonstrates that while Aboriginal people may have been provided with an opportunity to voice their views, the government strings which appear to have been attached to the content in *Identity* has impacted on independent and unfettered access to the Indigenous public sphere.

Identity had opened up to a range of Aboriginal perspectives that had previously been censured under Ovenden's editorship. Newfong provided access to people connected with the National Tribal Council (NTC) that he described as one of the key developments in the Aboriginal movement of the 1970s. Newfong argued the NTC

³⁷ Kevin Gilbert (1933-1993). Aboriginal writer and editor of *Alchuringa*. Gilbert was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1957 after his first wife was killed during a domestic dispute (The Australian Literature Resource 2007, *Kevin Gilbert*, <http://www.austlit.edu.au/run?ex=ShowAgent&agentId=A%2BbW>, accessed 10 September 2008).

was a more grassroots and representative organisation than the FCAATSI. He concluded:

[Members of the NTC were more] interested in solutions to regional problems than with national and international political manoeuvres, initiated the many Aboriginal Medical and Legal Services throughout the country (Newfong in *Identity*, November/December 1979, p. 4).

Under Newfong, more Aboriginal voices were included in *Identity* and they were not censored. For instance, Bruce McGuinness challenged white readers (and presumably Australian governments and policy makers) with comments such as:

Whitey, it used to be your ball-game. But today, the blacks of Australia have torn up your book of rules, and printed their own. The title of the new book is “Black is beautiful, right on brothers and sisters, and screw you whitey” (McGuinness in *Identity* November 1972, pp. 3-6).

McGuinness discounted the belief of “many whites (and some disillusioned blacks)” that Aboriginal people could bring about social change and freedom through “a black and white revolutionary coalition”. McGuinness dismissed this idea as rubbish and argued:

Oppression is just as bitter a pill to swallow under a socialist regime, as it is under a capitalist regime. In other words, we blacks must stall racism, before we can consider letting whites piggyback on our backs to aid their course. I agree that capitalism is a pig system, but capitalism is kindergarten stuff compared to racism (McGuinness in *Identity*, November 1972, pp. 3-6).

This again demonstrates the impact editorial control has over public sphere content and suggests the ongoing battle within the Indigenous public sphere for self-determination. McGuinness’ comments in *Identity* also contradict his comments from *The Koorier* discussed earlier in this chapter (which were far more supportive of white involvement in the Aboriginal movement) and perhaps offer an insight into the misunderstandings surrounding the Black Power movement. It also demonstrates the existence of an active Indigenous public sphere that allowed such debate to occur.

Content in *Identity* encouraged wider political participation and opportunities to strategise about how Aboriginal people might gain political power. For instance, Denis Walker argued despite the Federal election in 1972 which saw a Labor government elected for the first time in 23 years, Aboriginal people could not gain political power through the ballot box. Walker argued people would only achieve political power through visible shows of rebellion. He maintained only “the big, fat

businessman” would gain power through the ballot box because they had money while Aboriginal people needed to “vote with your feet in the streets and give peace and power to the people” (Walker in *Identity*, November 1972, pp. 3-6).

In contrast to Ovenden who avoided promoting a political agenda, Newfong used *Identity* to advise readers which political party offered the best policy for Aboriginal people. In the lead up to the 1972 Federal election, Newfong canvassed the various political parties and included articles that not only educated Aboriginal people about their democratic choices, but critiqued Aboriginal politicians and their treatment by various mainstream newspapers. *Identity* provided important publicity for Aboriginal politicians who would have struggled to gain mainstream coverage (Newfong in *Identity* November 1972, pp. 7-15). Overall, Newfong informed *Identity* readers that all of the political parties on offer were “there to look after the white man” and they should vote for the Labor party except where there was an Aboriginal candidate running for a different party. Aboriginal politicians would “act in the interests of black men in a way that white politicians will not” and Aboriginal voters would be best served by supporting their own politicians even if they appeared to be achieving nothing. Newfong argued that it was easier to pressure Aboriginal politicians into “acting in the interests of Aborigines” and more Aboriginal politicians meant more white politicians were kept out of parliament and he suggested:

When there are enough black men in parliament it may be possible to form a voting bloc on matters affecting Aborigines. And, if there is ever enough common ground between these men on other issues too, then a Black Australia party may become fact rather than fiction (Newfong in *Identity* 1972, November, pp. 7-15).

It is clear then that Newfong opened up the political debate through the pages of *Identity* and widened access without censoring opinions. He and the other writers allowed access to *Identity*, encouraged political participation and in this way used *Identity* to encourage vigorous debate within the public sphere.

The other newspapers in this section, the *Black Australian News*, *Black News Service* and *Black Nation*, were written by their editors and usually included articles by other Aboriginal writers such as Gilbert and Newfong. The *Black News Service* played a significant part in opening up participation within the Indigenous public sphere by including letters from people working in the legal field such as Ray Robinson, who was at the time a Field Officer for the South-West Queensland Aboriginal & Torres

Strait Islanders Legal Service (Qld) Ltd (Robinson in *Black News Service* 1976, 23 February, p. 12), and telegrams from Marcia Langton (Langton in *Black News Service* 1976, 20 September, p. 8). The *Black News Service* also included extracts from other Aboriginal publications such as Bill Rosser's *Black Knight* and Bill Day's *Bunji*. Buchanan gathered stories and information of interest to Aboriginal people from a wide range of sources, including other publications. She did not limit the information to Australia, but broadened the Indigenous public sphere by including articles about Indigenous people in Hawaii, and articles about the civil rights movement in the United States. Buchanan also included information from mainstream human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and therefore further extended Indigenous public sphere activity by linking non-Indigenous activist organisations, the Indigenous public sphere and the broader dominant public sphere (*Black News Service* 1976, 28 June). While grassroots publications such as the *Black News Service* did not have the circulation enjoyed by *Identity*, they offered an important voice for Aboriginal people who were undoubtedly excluded from mainstream media coverage. They expanded the information available in the Indigenous public sphere beyond national borders, and broadened Indigenous public sphere debate across multiple public sphere boundaries. This notion is dealt with in greater detail in the following section.

7.3.2 Access to information

One of the key aims of newspapers in both this era and the previous era was to increase access for Indigenous people to information and voices of specific relevance to them, creating and enlisting an Indigenous public sphere in the process. However, while publications such as *Abo Call* and *Smoke Signals* hoped to educate mainstream Australians about the conditions Aboriginal people were living under and to encourage, cajole, shame and encourage them to lobby for social change, the goal and attitude of the grassroots newspapers from the late-1960s through the 1970s was different. Aboriginal people running the organisations that produced *The Koorier*, *Black Australian News* and *Black News Service* aimed to maintain Aboriginal control of those organisations and their media. Consequently, while *The Koorier* did not exclude white Australians, and the evidence for this is provided by letters to the editor from white readers, this newspaper primarily targeted the Aboriginal community.

White Australians are often referred to as “gubbah[s]”³⁸ in *The Koorier* (1970, p. 15). Similarly, editorials such as “White Power” contrasted “FALSE DEFINITIONS” made by white Australians such as “We the white Australians of this country must grant the Aborigine full rights;” against “TRUE DEFINITIONS” such as “We the white Australians of this country will grant the Aborigine some rights!”. Or “At all times we must respect him” contrasted with “At all times he must be grateful to us for doing this for him” (McGuinness in *The Koorier* 1969, p. 3). While these quotes suggest *The Koorier* was seeking to open up the Indigenous public sphere to white Australians and increase mainstream awareness, in reality *The Koorier* took the position that white Australians were aware of the poor conditions under which Aboriginal people lived but did not care. Nonetheless, *The Koorier* did open up access to the processes of the Indigenous public sphere for Aboriginal community members. McGuinness achieved this in two ways. Firstly, he encouraged Koories³⁹ to work as journalists for the newspaper. McGuinness advertised for “at least three journalists (preferably Koories) from each state” to write for the newspaper (*The Koorier*, Vol. 1, No. 11, p. 27) and secondly he printed many Letters to the Editor and encouraged Aboriginal people to write to *The Koorier* to voice any “complaint, comment or criticism” (*The Koorier*, Vol. 1, No. 11, p. 27).

While the tone of *The Koorier* was unlikely to attract many conservative white readers (unless it was to voice their criticism) McGuinness and other members of the Aboriginal community did encourage white readership of the publication. For instance Kath Walker⁴⁰, through the Letters to the Editor, aimed to boost financial support for the publication. She made the following suggestion, which was supported by McGuinness:

I nominate two of my white friends for a copy of the “Koorier” with the proviso that my two white friends so nominated will nominate two of their black friends and pay a subscription for them to receive the “Koorier”. Then I hope the two black friends will nominate two more white friends for a subscription to the “Koorier” (Walker in *The Koorier*, Vol 1. No. 11, p. 13).

³⁸ Gubbahs. Non-Indigenous Australians, emanating from the term gubba-ment (government).

³⁹ Koori (or Koorie) name used to identify Aboriginal person from New South Wales or Victoria.

⁴⁰ Oodgeroo Noonuccal (aka Kath Walker) (1920-1993). Poet and campaigner for Aboriginal rights. She was a member of FCAATSI and one of the founding members of the National Tribal Council (Taffe S 2008, Kath Walker, *Collaborating for Indigenous Rights*, National Museum of Australia Canberra, <http://indigenousrights.net.au/person.asp?pid=988>, accessed 14 September 2008).

Similarly, Bob Maza in a letter to *The Koorier* acknowledged his part in pushing for a “power take over” but warned against excluding white “friends”:

...let us know where our friends are and not hurt them in the curfew. Let us clear-headedly listen to what others have to say and not try to force our ideas on to people (Maza in *The Koorier*, Vol 1, No. 12, p. 8).

It is clear therefore that despite *The Koorier*’s more militant tone, both McGuinness and Kath Walker (and Maza although perhaps with reflection), along with other members of the more radical Aboriginal faction within the Indigenous public sphere, still recognised the achievements of white campaigners in establishing the VAAL and the futility of excluding supportive allies because they were white.

Educating white Australians and providing access to Indigenous perspectives were key aims of the *Black Australian News* but the method adopted by the newspaper changed dramatically after a change in editor. The tone of the first edition of this newspaper is similar to that found in *Smoke Signals*. It appears to be aimed at sympathetic white Australians to secure funding and consequently takes an appeasing role, rather than a confrontational stance. In contrast, when Anderson took over as editor the tone changed dramatically. The front page headline of the *Black Australian News* in July 1972 was “Editorial ARE YOU A RACIST? White apathy [sic] – another form of predudice [sic]”. Anderson informed readers that from this point on, the newspaper would be “more militant than it has been in the past”. However, that Anderson still aimed to educate white Australians is demonstrated by this quote from his opening editorial:

All articles will be designed to get the white Australian public thinking about the many problems that we are confronted with, in this so-called non-racist country. The paper will also be designed to show the thoughts of my people towards the white man and his racism (*Black Australian News*, July 1972, p. 1).

He then encouraged white readers to contact him if they had questions or required more information. He explained while white Australians had not given Aboriginal Australians the opportunity to “direct criticism at the white institution through the mass media”, in this newspaper, “our qualified and educated Aborigines are acting as ‘Advisors’ to white men who are the controllers of our affairs” (*Black Australian News*, July 1972, p. 1). While Anderson was targeting his comments towards white readers, it is unlikely the newspaper’s original audience (conservative Aboriginal and

white readers) would have found the newspaper's "militant" direction or tone appealing. The original edition was a conservative community newsletter that informed the Aboriginal community about events and projects. The moderate tone of the first edition was replaced with Anderson's provocative tone which *is* likely to have inspired those who followed the Black Power ideology. Therefore while this newspaper (and the other more militant newspapers) opened up debate between likeminded Aboriginal people and sympathetic white readers, it is likely the confrontational tone would have excluded the more conservative "old guard" and white Australians.

Readership and circulation provide valuable information about who had access to Indigenous newspapers. *Identity* had the highest circulation in this era and therefore provided wider access to the Indigenous public sphere than the grassroots publications. Newfong explained *Identity* had the "highest circulation of any quarterly magazine in Australia" and the readership included Aboriginal people who lived in "cities, in the outback, and overseas, and white people in Australia and elsewhere" (Newfong in *Identity* 1972, November, p. 2). *Identity* therefore appealed to a range of people. Archival records and interviews show the magazine (total circulation 10,500 for Volume 1, No. 1) was distributed to news agencies via Gordon and Gotch (Malezer 2005) and copies were also sent to organisations such as the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, FCAATSI, and 363 paying subscribers. By Volume 1, No. 3 the list of subscribers had risen to 577 (NAA A3753 1971/903 p. 218). The subscribers ranged from government departments such as the Prime Minister's and Foreign Affairs office, to libraries around Victoria and the ACT. Universities, schools, colleges and museums also subscribed along with settlements and missions around Australia. A range of Aboriginal organisations also subscribed to *Identity* (NAA A3753/903, pp. 191-192). Again, comparisons can be drawn between the Indigenous and African-American press here. As with Australian Indigenous print media, Streitmatter (2001, p. 229) points out that the Black Panther publications have received little attention from journalism historians and yet, publications such as the *Black Panther* had the largest circulation of any black publication during that era, circulating throughout the United States and the world. Similarly, little research has been carried out into the Indigenous print media generally but the wide circulation teamed with a diverse range of subscribers indicates *Identity* was providing

Indigenous public sphere access to a range of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and organisations. However the often lengthy articles in *Identity* might also have made it less appealing to people with limited literacy.

Grassroots newspapers generally lacked the benefit of mainstream distribution networks such as Gordon and Gotch; however, if the editor had a wide network of contacts they could reach a wide audience. For instance, Buchanan's network of contacts meant *Black Liberation* and *Black News Service* were distributed to people and organisations throughout Australia. Buchanan had a comprehensive mailing list that included Aboriginal people, communities and groups and organisations that were supportive of the Aboriginal struggle and subscribed to the Black Resource Centre's newspapers. The newspapers were also distributed to unions, women's groups, gay liberation groups, Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace (Buchanan 2005). Similarly, Watson, the editor of *Black Nation*, had a mailing list containing more than 2000 names. He had also acquired the mailing lists for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA), the National Aboriginal Conference (NAC) and CARE Australia's mailing list and distributed copies to all people on his and these other lists. Watson collected all the Aboriginal names and addresses he could and sent a copy of *Black Nation* to Aboriginal reserves and communities and as he (like Buchanan and Patten during the 1930s) travelled extensively around Australia he hand-delivered newspapers to places in New South Wales, Victoria and other states (Watson, R 2005). Therefore, while these newspapers were unable to secure distribution through agents such as Gordon and Gotch, their editors' networking skills ensured their wide circulation and therefore facilitated extensive access to Indigenous public sphere processes. This suggests Indigenous public sphere processes were complex; interweaving activities of direct relevance to Indigenous people with mainstream political issues on the agenda in the broader public sphere. It is evidence of an important process of overlapping ideas working together to contribute to, and extend, public sphere debate.

7.4 The diversity within the Indigenous public sphere

A recurrent theme throughout this chapter has been the conflict between different factions vying for dominance of Indigenous public sphere processes. Key areas of disagreement appear to be, firstly, controlling influence by non-Aboriginal people;

secondly, the most efficient method to bring about social change; and thirdly, the use of radical activism i.e. Black Power. Inspired by trendsetters such as Jack Patten (Foley 2005; Langton and Kirkpatrick 1979) the Black Power faction used print media to promote its position and to generate political activity and change. However, as has been discussed, not all publications were considered equal. Moderate publications, such as *Identity* under the editorship of Ovenden or Davis, were not considered credible outlets for the radical faction which dominated much of the Indigenous public sphere discussion at the time (Foley 2005). A lack of publications that were considered “legitimate”, teamed with an awareness of the power of print, perhaps provided the motivation for radical factions to produce their own publications through which their messages could be disseminated.

Disparity between different factions and campaigners operating within the Indigenous public sphere extended beyond ideological differences. While both Perkins and Bandler attracted ASIO attention during their earlier protest activities such as the Freedom Rides (Perkins) and the 1967 Referendum (Bandler), fear of Black Power meant the younger generation of Aboriginal protestors was vilified and excluded by the mainstream media, government organisations and members of its own community. Archived ASIO files provide evidence of this vilification (NAA, A6119, 3548). Similarly, Buchanan, who was a member of the Australian Black Panthers, experienced first-hand the fear and abuse levelled at them by officials and members of the white and Aboriginal community:

You’d go to universities to talk and you’d have people just there abusing you...it wasn’t like now when you do a lecture and everyone sits there and listens and they take notes. These were very vocal. People were vocal in their support, but they were also vocal if they didn’t support you as well...you’d have punch ups at things. I remember at one uni ...we had black cents thrown at us and flour...you had to be pretty brave (Buchanan 2005).

Buchanan said the response from the wider Aboriginal community could be equally negative:

When we used to go to Cherbourg⁴¹ ...there’d be people, you’d see them locking their doors. And they didn’t want to know you; they didn’t want to have anything to do with you because you were the Black Power people (Buchanan 2005).

⁴¹ Cherbourg is a large former Aboriginal reserve about three hours drive from the nearest large city, Brisbane. Cherbourg is one of the largest Aboriginal communities in Australia)

Publications such as *The Koorier*, *Black Australian News*, *Black News Service* and *Black Liberation* were therefore used to try to dispel the negative stereotypes permeated about the Black Power movement and to provide an outlet for their perspectives. Likewise, Watson used *Black Nation* to try to dispel mainstream media sensationalism surrounding protests against the Brisbane Commonwealth Games. Mainstream media speculated the protests would be violent (August 1982, p. 1).

While the aim of the conservative and more revolutionary factions operating at this time was to improve the lives of Aboriginal Australians, their very different methodologies suggest the Indigenous public sphere is made up of a complexity of overlapping and connected layers. The varied range of Indigenous publications produced during this era illustrates the diverse range of opinions, attitudes and ideas operating at this time — the very essence of a public sphere, a place which facilitates debate and discussion. While this chapter has focused on some of the more radical publications and *Identity*, there was also a range of more “middle-of-the-road” journals such as *Koorier 2* and *Koorier 3* that had more of a community and networking focus along with moderate publications such as *Aboriginal-Islander-Message (AIM)*. It is interesting to note that both *Koorier 2* and *AIM* were produced by people with connections to the Black Power movement. Robbie Thorpe was mentored by Bruce McGuinness and Roberta Sykes was a member of the Black Power movement and helped produce the hard-hitting NSW publication *Koori Bina*. This further illustrates the connections between the different groups operating within the Indigenous public sphere and the campaigners’ acute awareness of the power of the print media. However, the range of publications demonstrates the complexity of attitudes, methods and ideologies operating within the Indigenous public sphere.

7.5 Characteristics of newspapers

With the exception of *Identity*, each of these newspapers was a grassroots publication (Traber 1985, p. 2). None of these grassroots newspapers was produced by professional journalists and most were produced with limited staff. The *Black News Service* was produced almost single-handedly by Buchanan. She wrote much of the copy, laid out the newspaper and organised its production (Buchanan 2005). Similarly Ross Watson had no journalism training but was fortunate enough to have friends who could help him produce and layout *Black Nation*. The November issue of *Black*

Nation explains that the newspaper was produced on a shoestring with “no office or filing cabinet” and with paperwork being carried out between the “bedroom, lounge and kitchen table”. This was the last edition of *Black Nation* (*Black Nation* 1985, p. 12). In contrast, with the exception of Jack Davis and Michael Anderson, *Identity* was edited by professional journalists, although undoubtedly some of the copy was provided by activists and other grassroots community members.

As with the early African-American newspapers, funding was a major problem for all of these newspapers at some point. Indeed, this is a pattern repeated in many publications existing on the fringes of the mainstream sphere. Fanuzzi (1998, pp. 55-62) explains that editor Frederick Douglass, the black editor of the African-American publication the *North Star*, had to constantly push for funding via subscriptions from readers. Likewise, by the eleventh issue of *The Koorier* (only 14 were produced), McGuinness was forced to ask readers for donations. McGuinness asked readers for \$60 and receipts and expenditure show the newsletter cost \$1821.50 to produce for the 1969/1970 financial year (*The Koorier*, Vol 1. No. 11, p. 27; NAA A2354, 1969/16, Part 2). Earlier in its life, funding was a problem after government support for the VAAL was withheld and McGuinness had to acquire finance through Monash University. Likewise, *Black Nation* survived mostly on donations (*Black Nation* 1985, p. 12). With the exception of the *Black Australian News*, the newspapers discussed here were unable to attract significant advertising revenue. The *Black Australian News*, while it only survived for four editions due to a lack of funding, did contain mainstream advertisers. The editor Michael Anderson attracted advertising from a range of high profile, mainstream companies such as Esso, Ring Leaders, Maxwell House and Akubra. Anderson had no experience selling advertising but attributes his success to his higher media profile at that time (Anderson 2006).

Identity on the surface appeared to be a financially successful publication but archive records show the newspaper operated at a loss, at least during the early years. Correspondence from the Office of Aboriginal Affairs shows production costs were underestimated with losses of \$6000 - \$7000 per issue. *Identity* survived because the Office of Aboriginal Affairs believed it was “a much-needed means of communication between Aborigines and the community”. However, the Foundation was expected to raise advertising revenue to become more self-sufficient (NAA, A3753, 1971/903; NAA 2354, 1971/32). Still, during Malezer’s editorship most of

Identity's funding came from the Aboriginal Arts Board and subscriptions. The Arts Board funding paid for the editor, a bookkeeper and full-time secretary, while the subscriptions barely paid for the printing costs of the glossy magazine. *Identity* did not attract significant advertising because of its quarterly printing schedule (Malezer 2005). Therefore, all of the newspapers discussed here were financially fragile which is a common scenario for most independent and alternative publications in the Australian environment (Forde 2000, 2008).

7.6 Role of Indigenous newspapers

A central aim for these newspapers was not only disseminating the wide range of Aboriginal perspectives throughout the Indigenous public sphere and beyond, it was also about controlling the way those messages were transmitted to improve their success. Aboriginal people were generally not media savvy and “HOW TO WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR” by Barrie Pittock in *The Koorier* instructed readers how to write publishable letters-to-the-editor. Pittock explained that if readers could get their letters published in mainstream media newspapers they would “probably have the LARGEST AUDIENCE YOU WILL EVER ADDRESS”. Readers were educated about circulation figures and target audiences (Pittock in *The Koorier*, Vol. No. 8, pp. 14-15). Pittock was trying to provide education about basic public relations tactics – skilling-up readers to more effectively lobby politicians and get issues of importance to the Aboriginal community presented in the mainstream public sphere. This again offers evidence of the existence of an overlap between Indigenous and dominant public sphere processes.

The *Black News Service* and *Black Liberation* offered an opportunity to produce a historical document from an Aboriginal perspective (Downing 1995, p. 34). This was a major motivation for Buchanan:

People are going to remember this...someone is going to have a snapshot of what's going on right now and say “oh hell, I didn't realise that's what was happening?” And I think in my mind, that's what I was trying to achieve, was that I'm going to put a footprint here in history in some way and if it's with the *Black News Service* or whatever, it is that we do, at least I know that it's something that can be remembered (Buchanan 2005).

Another important function of these newspapers was encouraging Aboriginal people to participate politically. Anderson used an editorial in the *Black Australian News* to push Aboriginal people to act politically by joining together:

[We need to select] a representative group who will be appointed as our Black Administrators of the business that concerns the Black Australians. If we fail to do this in the near future, we will face continued subjection to a white society that has no intention of giving up willingly or easily, its position of priority and authority (July 1972, p. 1).

Indigenous newspapers covered topics that were affecting the Aboriginal community but might not be covered elsewhere. For instance, Buchanan used the *Black News Service* and *Black Liberation* to provide community information about sexually transmitted diseases and rape because these were taboo issues that nobody else would talk about but were things that were affecting the Aboriginal community:

I guess for me, nothing was sacred really. It was like; I'm not going to have people thinking that all of these things don't happen in our community. There was a lot happening in our communities and I wanted people to know everything that was going on (Buchanan 2005).

Similarly, Anderson in the *Black Australian News* wrote about the different punishment meted out to Aboriginal victims and perpetrators of rape. Rather than a sensationalist, one-sided perspective Anderson's editorial piece was well-researched, informative and progressive for its time (*Black Australian News*, July 1972, p. 4)

Another key motivation for the production of these newspapers and an important news value was the disillusionment with mainstream media coverage of issues affecting Aboriginal Australians. Anderson used the *Black Australian News* to provide background information and the Aboriginal perspective on the Aboriginal Tent Embassy protest (July 1972, p. 6). Likewise, Watson used *Black Nation* to counter mainstream media and Queensland government propaganda that suggested protests against the Brisbane Commonwealth Games were going to be violent as a method of keeping the number of protesters down and to dampen support for the protests. In contrast, *Black Nation* urged readers to find peaceful protest methods and to remember that violent scenes broadcast by mainstream media organisations would hurt their cause. Watson used *Black Nation* to show why it was counterproductive for Aboriginal people to use violent protests because it would lead to diminish the effectiveness of their messages and expose more Aboriginal people to the "injustice of the whole legal process" (*Black Nation*, August 1982, p. 1). *Black Nation* aimed to

correct misrepresentations of Aboriginal people, to encourage peaceful protest and to “challenge” white Australia and to encourage them to examine the “social conscience of their organizations in this country and correct any short comings” (*Black Nation*, August 1982, p. 2).

As with mainstream media, a wide range of important news values are evident in these publications. Indigenous newspapers were used to promote other communications mediums being used by Aboriginal people. For instance, Foley wrote “Blacks on Film in the Seventies” (in *Identity*, Nov-Dec 1979, pp. 10-11). They also raised awareness of important issues such as police brutality and legal injustices (Clarke in *Black News Service* December 1975, pp. 3-4; Watson in *Black Nation*, August 1982, p. 1), and health (Buchanan in *Black News Service* 1975, p. 7) and homelessness problems (Buchanan in *Black News Service* 1975, p. 7). These newspapers therefore documented Aboriginal living conditions and educated readers of the day-to-day reality for many Aboriginal people. The potential to educate readers therefore had high news value. Indigenous media continue to fulfil those two primary functions (Molnar & Meadows 2001a; Meadows et al. 2007).

An important and unique function for Indigenous newspapers that had high news value was the opportunity to target not only injustice and corruption within governments and organisations but also within the Aboriginal community. Watson (2005), Williams (in *Black Liberation*, July 1977, p. 7) both levelled criticism at Aboriginal campaigners for promoting themselves rather than working for their communities. Similarly, Browne used *Black Liberation* to criticise “so called” Aboriginal leaders for not being connected to their communities. He argued they promoted their own agendas rather than helping their own people and helping those in need (Browne in *Black Liberation*, July 1977, p. 7). Furthermore, as evidence of the importance of Aboriginal voices speaking to the Aboriginal community Anderson included an opinion piece from Kevin Gilbert in the *Black Australian News* in which Gilbert asks the Aboriginal community “Where have all the black guts gone” and calls on his community to stand up and have the “guts” to support others (1972, July p. 1). Gilbert pulls no punches and it is unlikely such a piece would have been accepted from a white Australian or someone less respected by the community. Aboriginal sources therefore play an integral role in providing relevant criticism to the Aboriginal community. Indigenous newspapers operated as a type of watchdog on

their own leadership and community processes, suggesting they played a “fourth estate” role (Schultz 1994) within the Indigenous public sphere.

Another key role played by these newspapers and illustrated by *Identity* was the provision of training and work experience for writers and editors such as Kevin Gilbert, Jack Davis, Michael Anderson and even Les Malezer. It also provided Aboriginal people with work and training as office staff, artists and cartoonists (Davis in Chesson 1988, p. 175). Each of the newspapers discussed here played a part in the development of the Indigenous public sphere during this era and were responsible for encouraging political participation, provided training and employment opportunities and opened up public sphere discussions across a range of issues relating to Aboriginal Australians.

7.7 Pressures – internal and external

During the mid to late 1960s analysis of Indigenous newspapers shows Indigenous public sphere processes were focused on mainstream public sphere interaction, pushing for social change and raising awareness of issues affecting Indigenous people. The Indigenous public sphere was continuing to evolve. Aboriginal-only organisations were established and there was a push for greater self-determination. This trend continued from the late 1960s onwards but there was conflict within the Indigenous public sphere as this transition occurred, primarily a clash of political beliefs between the more conservative “old guard” and the new breed of Black Power activists. As has been previously discussed, across the eastern states of Australia members of the Black Power movement were experiencing opposition from both the mainstream and Indigenous public sphere. Anderson has said his Black Power past still haunts him and the Queensland government’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory board resigned when Cheryl Buchanan was appointed Chairperson of the Board (Burrows in *Koori Mail*, 23 March 2003, p. 7). Anderson argues those who were connected to the Black Power movement during the late 1960s onwards were “locked down” by the establishment. He argued (2006):

[They continued pushing to] develop financially sustainable programs where we can build up the Aboriginal community. Develop Aboriginal people where we don’t have to compromise our culture and traditions whilst running successful enterprise. And the government certainly don’t want us to get into a situation where we’re going to be promoting and showing how self-determination works in reality.

Despite the opposition against the Black Power protest movement in Australia, those behind this movement such as Foley, Paul Coe, Denis Walker, Buchanan, Anderson and others played a strong role in establishing Aboriginal legal, health and housing services across Australia. Their actions gave Indigenous people *some* control over many areas of their lives. Indigenous newspapers provided an important outlet for these organisations to publicise their activities and to push for community support.

Funding however, was always a major concern for any of the Aboriginal organisations that existed during this time, including those producing newspapers. When Buchanan initially established the Black Resource Centre (BRC) in Melbourne, it was funded by the Australian Union of Students (AUS). However, in 1977, the University of Melbourne's National Liberal Student Association took out a court action against the AUS claiming they were spending student fees on purposes that fell outside the function of the union and contravened the union's constitution. The BRC was named (along with other organisations) as receiving funds illegally and their AUS. funding was consequently cancelled (Buchanan in *Black News Service*, Vol. 1. No. 4). From then on, the BRC was dependent on donations and support from readers and other organisations. Hence, either threats to remove or the actual removal of funding was used by organisations and governments as a tool to dictate editorial content. Equally, the lack of funding was an ongoing and unrelenting reality for these newspapers that ultimately led to their demise.

7.8 Chapter summary

In summary then, a recurrent theme throughout this era was the battle to control both Indigenous organisations and wider debate in terms of public sphere processes. Each of these newspapers provides evidence of the dissention between the various factions operating within the Indigenous public sphere. Yet while conflict did exist between these groups, it is also clear their overriding aim was the same, to improve the lives of Indigenous Australians. The evidence presented here suggests the three primary aims of Indigenous publications of the time—and hence their contribution to their public sphere—was focused on mainstream public sphere interaction, pushing for social change and raising awareness of issues affecting Indigenous people. The area of contention was the means by which this change would be achieved. Yet rather than this being a negative element, these conflicts are evidence of the strong public sphere

activity that was happening during this era. It is indicative of the diversity within Aboriginal society, reflected in the processes that created and continued to re-create the Indigenous public sphere. Incorporated in this mix were ideas from a wider, international public sphere that represented minorities from across the globe. All of these elements contributed to the formation and sustainability of the Indigenous public sphere.

Unlike the previous period when non-Indigenous people played pivotal activist roles and lobbied politically for Indigenous Affairs, during this period non-Indigenous people were discouraged from playing central roles and were not allowed easy involvement in the production of these newspapers or the collective Indigenous public spheres. The main contributors were members of the Aboriginal community. The messages being produced by these Aboriginal campaigners were likely to have reached wide sections of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community. In this way, the Indigenous print media during this period, through the overlap of the Indigenous and “mainstream” public spheres, enabled Aboriginal voices to be heard beyond the boundaries of their own communities. Publications such as *Identity*, with its high circulation and mainstream distribution, provided a link between the Indigenous and mainstream public spheres. Similarly, the grassroots’ publications through their high levels of readership circulated information through the Indigenous public sphere via widespread networks of contacts and access to Indigenous communities and organisations. They were also read by white Australians, primarily those either working for government departments, academics, university students, unionists or others who already had an interest in Indigenous issues.

These newspapers successfully worked to inspire upcoming Indigenous leaders such as Foley and Thorpe, and they offered an opportunity for training as leaders and messengers. Newfong and McGuinness were both mentors for those following behind them. These newspapers educated Indigenous Australians on how to lobby governments and how to expose their ideas to a wider audience. They highlighted problems that without their voice might have remained largely ignored. They encouraged Indigenous people to vote, informed them about Indigenous Australians who were standing for government and critiqued the political performance of the major parties in respect to Indigenous affairs. These newspapers were a “voice for the voiceless” (Forde 1997, p. 126) and they provided an opportunity to correct

mainstream misrepresentations and inaccuracies. This level of access to media as a tool had largely been denied Indigenous people up until this point. Issues such as the treaty debate and land rights were given prominence in these newspapers and in turn, enabled them to gain a higher profile in mainstream Australian society. They provided more contextual information about issues that may have been covered superficially by the mainstream media. Equally, advice about sensitive or taboo subjects such as rape, incest and sexually transmitted diseases that would largely have been hidden from view and therefore rendered their victims ill-informed, were discussed and debated in these newspapers. Credible Aboriginal sources were able to criticise Indigenous community members and the community at large for their lack of action or apathy. Those who produced these newspapers with little or no funding battled not only conflicts within the Indigenous public sphere, but also government departments, ASIO and the police. Their funding was also threatened if they did not submit to editorial control. They often operated on a “shoestring” but continued because of the sheer determination and doggedness of their editors. Their refusal to give in has left a written record of many issues and debates that would otherwise have faded with the memories of those who were involved or disappeared completely as the participants passed on. As Buchanan hoped, she and her comrades have left an indelible footprint of the work they accomplished during this time to improve the lives of their Aboriginal communities. These newspapers chronicle a fascinating period in Australian history, from an Indigenous perspective. They provide powerful evidence not only for the existence of an active Indigenous public sphere, but also offer an insight into the complex processes that led to its formation, re-formation and sustainability.

Chapter 8: The Fight for Land Rights

To understand our law, our culture and our relationship to the physical and spiritual world, you must begin with the land. Everything about Aboriginal society is inextricably interwoven with, and connected to, the land. Culture is the land, the land and spirituality of Aboriginal people, our cultural beliefs or reason for existence, is the land. You take that away and you take away our reason for existence. We have grown the land up. We are dancing, singing and painting for the land. We are celebrating the land. Removed from our lands, we are literally removed from ourselves (Dodson 1997, p. 41).

The battle for Indigenous land has been ongoing since James Cook landed on Australian shores in 1770, and claimed the land for the British Empire. Indigenous people have been murdered for their land, removed from their country and placed on to missions and reserves. They were forbidden from speaking Indigenous languages and practising customs to further break ties with their traditional lands. However, while their fight to regain their lands may have been restrained at times, it has never been quashed. In time, Indigenous peoples' desire to regain their lands was legislatively recognised, and notions such as the myth that Australia was *terra nullius* when claimed by Cook were dismissed by law.

This chapter is specifically concerned with those Indigenous publications that have overtly focused on the political fight for land rights. While all Aboriginal newspapers are and have been concerned with land rights at some level, five publications focused specifically on the recognition of Aboriginal native title and their rights to land. These were *Bunji*, *NQ Messagstick*, *National Messagstick*, *Land Rights News* and *Land Rights Queensland*. This chapter will discuss these five newspapers, their place within the Indigenous public sphere and the part they played, and play, in encouraging public sphere access and disseminating information.

8.1 Land rights publications in the Indigenous public sphere

Land rights became a pivotal news value within Indigenous affairs throughout the 1970s and onwards. The range of publications launched that specifically focused on lobbying for land rights and sharing information about ongoing claims illustrates this point. *Bunji*, *Many Tribes – One People*, produced by non-Indigenous man William (Bill) Day from August 1971 through to November 1983, was one of the earliest

publications. Day learned of the Larrakia⁴² people's battle to reclaim ownership of their land Kulaluk after moving to Darwin from Perth in 1969 (Day 1994, p. 19; Day 2005). *Bunji* fed into the Northern Territory's mainstream media interest in land rights generated during the Wave Hill Cattle Station walk-off during 1966⁴³. Day and the Larrakia people wanted to build on that mainstream media interest by providing access to a land rights issue happening right in Darwin. For instance, Day and the Larrakia people staged events such as raising the Aboriginal flag (one that predated the contemporary and now familiar Aboriginal flag) and claiming Darwin as Larrakia land to attract mainstream media attention (Day 2005). The strategy worked and extracts from *Bunji*'s first edition were read on ABC radio, the national public broadcaster's news bulletin (Day 1994, pp. 18, 21). Day and the Larrakia people, who at this time were still living in humpies in the middle of town, capitalised on this mainstream media attention (Day 2005). Day circulated *Bunji* as widely as possible and encouraged other Aboriginal campaigners such as Cheryl Buchanan (*Black News Service* and *Black Liberation*) to include parts or all of *Bunji* in their publications. *Bunji* targeted both an Indigenous and non-Indigenous audience. Day ensured the long-term existence of *Bunji* by lodging copies with the National Library in Canberra (Day 2005). Therefore while only 500 copies of each edition of Day's hand-drawn, typed journal were produced, he managed to extend its reach to a much wider audience by tapping into other Indigenous and mainstream organisations.

Like many of the Indigenous publications discussed in the previous chapter, many land rights publications were funded by Indigenous organisations. *Bunji* was the exception to this rule but each of the other newspapers discussed in this chapter fell into this category. For instance, *NQ Messagestick* and *National Messagestick*, edited by Aboriginal man Shorty O'Neil from 1976-1986, were both funded by land rights organisations. O'Neil, who was born on Palm Island, had previously edited and produced the Indigenous newspaper *Palm Islander*. Barbara Miller⁴⁴, the original editor of the *NQ Messagestick*, was aware of O'Neil's work with the *Palm Islander*

⁴² Larrakia people. Aboriginal people of the greater Darwin area of the Northern Territory. Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation, <http://www.larrakia.com/AboutUs.html>, accessed 22 September 2008

⁴³ Wave Hill walk-off. A strike for better pay and conditions by a group of Aboriginal stockmen and their families in 1966. ABC 2006, "Remembering the Wave Hill walk-off", *7.30 Report*, 21 August 2006, <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2006/s1720400.htm>, accessed 23 September 2008. It is considered a pivotal moment in the campaign for Aboriginal land rights, and led to the first hand-back of traditional land to Aboriginal people.

⁴⁴ Barbara Miller. Then wife of teacher/activist Mick Miller.

and in 1977 asked O'Neil to take over the editorship of the *NQ Messagestick* (O'Neil 2006). Both the *N. Q. Messagestick* and the later newspaper *National Messagestick* targeted the Indigenous and mainstream community. *National Messagestick* was published by the National Federation of Land Councils.

Around the same time that O'Neil began editing the *N. Q. Messagestick* in Cairns, the Northern and Central Land Councils⁴⁵ launched their land rights publications. The Central Land Council launched the first edition of *Central Australian Land Rights News* in April 1976 which ran until August 1984. Three months later in July 1976, the Northern Land Council launched *Land rights news: a newsletter for Aboriginals and their friends*. In September 1985 the two land councils combined their resources and began to produce *Land Rights News: One mob, one voice, one land (LRN)* which is still in production.

The data suggest *LRN* fills a unique demand for information regarding land rights specifically in the Northern Territory. The land rights situation in the Northern Territory has historically been and remains distinct from the rest of Australia. Todd Condie, former editor of the national Indigenous newspaper the *Koori Mail*, works for the Northern Land Council and writes for *LRN*. Four land councils in the Northern Territory have successfully lobbied for strong land rights legislation since the 1970s and this has provided Northern Territory people with more power than in other states where the land rights legislation is weaker (Condie 2004). While there has been effective lobbying for land rights legislation in the Northern Territory, the conflict between mining companies, pastoralists and other business has maintained the need for newspapers such as *LRN*. Land councils increasingly provide training and employment for Indigenous people and assist with negotiations between Indigenous communities, the Northern Territory government and businesses to ensure Aboriginal rights and needs are met. Condie (2004) explained:

...they're saying well if you put this through my land, you make sure there are jobs and training for the young people. For the young people who live and reside in that particular area. So the stories we focus on are things like that.

⁴⁵ The Northern Land Council and Central Land Council were bodies representing Aboriginal peoples' land and cultural rights in the Northern Territory, in some of the remotest regions of the continent.

LRN therefore fills a demand within the Indigenous community for a newspaper that provides specific information about land rights legislation and ongoing negotiations with business, pastoralists and the Northern Territory government. While more than half of the Northern Territory is owned by Aboriginal people, Condie reiterates the argument made by Groves (*Churinga*, December 1965, p. 1) that Indigenous people are not an homogenous group. This is particularly true in the Northern Territory where, due to the remote location of many communities and the lack of contact with the broader society, many Aboriginal languages are still spoken, the kinship and clan system are still in place and traditional lore (including customary marriage and promised marriage) are practised (Condie 2004). Condie described the Northern Territory situation as “...a meeting of two laws. The white Australian law and the ancient Aboriginal and how these things marry up are what is happening at the moment”. Despite the unique Northern Territory situation and while *LRN* specifically focuses on Northern Territory land rights topics, its content provides valuable information for other Indigenous communities who can learn from the Northern Territory experience (Condie 2004). Consequently, while *LRN*, *Bunji*, *N.Q* and *National Messagestick* were each concerned with land rights, their individual emphasis, news values, audience and role could be quite different. Still, their shared land rights focus meant their value extended outside their own geographic and cultural community and throughout the Indigenous public sphere.

By 1994, *Bunji*, *NQ Messagestick* and *National Messagestick* had ceased publication and *LRN* was being published spasmodically. To fill the void, in December 1994, the Foundation for Aboriginal and Island Research Action (FAIRA) launched *Land Rights Queensland (LRQ)*. *LRQ* was a strong political newspaper and its brief was to focus specifically on covering topics related to native title, native title legislation, reconciliation, and social justice issues (Forde 2004). It emerged at a time when the Australian government had passed the Native Title Bill which was the first official recognition that Indigenous people owned the land before white settlement—and it led to a surge of Aboriginal claims for traditional lands. Les Malezer, General Manager of FAIRA at the time *Land Rights Queensland* was published, said it aimed to provide information about land rights and native title that were not available elsewhere (Malezer 2005). While it specifically targeted the Indigenous community and writing for Indigenous the community was its primary focus, it had a large

secondary audience and was read by government ministers and their advisers, with their subscription list showing numerous government department contacts (Forde 2004; Malezer 2005). *Land Rights Queensland*, while not officially cancelled, has not been published since 2002 because of a lack of resources (Malezer 2005).

The five newspapers discussed here provide a sample of the Indigenous newspapers produced since the early 1970s that had/have a specific land rights focus. Analysis of these publications provides appropriate data to examine the role these newspapers played in establishing an Indigenous public sphere and advancing Indigenous public sphere processes.

8.2 Indigenous public sphere activity and participation

The tension between various factions within the Indigenous community for control of the Indigenous public sphere was discussed in the last chapter. From the late 1960s, there was a push for Aboriginal control of Aboriginal organisations. Bill Day produced *Bunji* amidst this tension and during the Black Power movement's heyday. He felt "vulnerable" and was surprised he did not receive more criticism because he was not an Aboriginal man. The Black Power movement was heavily opposed to white involvement in Aboriginal Affairs and this had been a major feature in the FCAATSI split (Attwood 2003, pp. 324-326). However, Day found Black Power founders such as Cheryl Buchannan and Denis Walker supportive of him and *Bunji*. Buchanan spent a lot of time working in the Northern Territory and reproduced *Bunji* in her publication the *Black News Service*. Day wrote most of *Bunji*'s content and community members, such as Fred Fogarty, helped to produce and distribute it. Fogarty also encouraged community members to submit letters and ideas for the publication (Day 2005).

Newspapers such as *NQ Messagestick* created a public forum for communities whose voices, because of their widely dispersed geographic locations, often went unheard. O'Neil travelled extensively around Australia setting up land councils, clocking up 250,000 miles in one year. On his travels O'Neil collected stories and story ideas from people in the communities he visited. He provided an opportunity for people, who would have been otherwise excluded from Indigenous public sphere participation to be heard. O'Neil was "spreading the message" and by gathering stories and ideas was

opening up access to public sphere processes (O'Neil 2006). Similarly, *LRQ* included sources *the Indigenous community* believed were important (Malezer 2005) and therefore facilitated Indigenous participation in Indigenous public sphere activity. This contrasts with mainstream newspapers that focused on people *they* considered to be important Indigenous leaders such as Noel Pearson, Patrick Dodson and Lowitja O'Donoghue. While these people may be important community spokespeople, they may also not be considered to be their leaders by Aboriginal communities and certainly not on all topics. Mainstream media may therefore not recognise people “who’ve had a lot of influence” and who are “respect[ed] and follow[ed]” at a community level (Malezer 2005). *LRQ* journalists and editors recognised who the Indigenous spokespeople were on specific issues, they were familiar with the various personnel on Queensland land councils and sought comment from those people (Forde 2004). *LRQ* also included columns from people such as Evelyn Scott (in *LRQ*, June 1999, p. 9) Les Malezer (in *LRQ*, September 1996, p. 14) and Mick Dodson (in *LRQ*, September 1996, p. 3). Equally, rather than extracting “sound bites” of information from Indigenous sources, an interview with a prominent Indigenous person such as Cheryl Buchanan might be published in its entirety as a transcript so the reader could read “her words”. Forde explained “it was her voice going in rather than my interpretation of what she said” (Forde 2004; *LRQ* 1995, p. 8). *LRQ* therefore provided an opportunity for people respected at a community level to be heard and facilitated public sphere participation by people and organisations that would have otherwise been rendered silent and invisible.

8.2.1 Identifying and reaching their audience

Journalists working for these newspapers had differing opinions about whether their newspaper was targeting the Indigenous community or seeking to reach beyond the Indigenous public sphere. For instance, Condie from *LRN* viewed the newspaper’s main audience as Indigenous, but when *LRN* was awarded a 1988 Print Newspaper Award from the Australian Human Rights Commission and a Special Citation in the 1988 United Nations Media Peace Awards, the newspaper quoted the then Northern Land Council Assistant Director Roseanne Brennan as saying “Aboriginal controlled media are essential in getting the right message about our lives across to the non-Indigenous community” (*LRN*, 2 January 1989, p. 4). Brennan reiterated the argument that Indigenous people were only of interest to mainstream media when they were

“perceived as a problem” (*LRN*, 2 January 1989, p. 4). McCallum’s (2007) study of mainstream news coverage of Indigenous affairs from 2000-2006 confirms this is still the case. *LRQ* also focused on and tried to redress the lack of objective and balanced reportage of Indigenous issues by mainstream media. *LRQ* aimed to provide an opportunity for Indigenous people to address this problem, to provide a medium to disseminate information and to be a source of empowerment and was “consistent with our agenda of pursuing Indigenous rights” (Malezer 2005). Malezer described the “...inherent bias in mainstream media and at the moment, and there have been other times, mainstream media has been particularly vicious through stereotyping and running racist agendas”.

When *LRQ* was initially published there were “two points of view” being offered regarding Indigenous affairs; on one side was the government and legal perspective and on the other side was the Indigenous perspective. *LRQ* dispersed information from both sides (Malezer 2005). Richard Buchhorn’s “Indigenous Media Watch” in the *LRQ* debated issues such as radio 4BC announcer Wayne Roberts’ ridiculing Aboriginal culture, language and identity (*LRQ*, September 1996, p. 14). *LRQ* broke stories that were often picked up by mainstream daily newspaper *The Courier-Mail* within a couple of days and in this way *LRQ* permeated the messages from the Indigenous public sphere out to the wider community. By launching each edition of *LRQ* at monthly media conferences, FAIRA strategically encouraged mainstream media attention. Representatives from mainstream media organisations including the ABC, SBS, *The Courier-Mail* and others were invited to each launch where the General Manager of FAIRA and publisher of *LRQ*, Les Malezer, discussed the main stories in the issue. The only obligation for journalists attending was that they attributed the stories to *LRQ*. This raised the profile of *LRQ* and the “political voice for land rights in Queensland” (Forde 2004). Since most mainstream journalists did not have easy access to Indigenous sources, attending the *LRQ* media conferences enabled them to keep their finger on the pulse of what was happening in the Indigenous community and to access Indigenous sources such as Cheryl Buchanan, Bob Weatherall, “Sugar” Ray Robinson and Robbie Williams (Forde 2004). *LRQ* reached government departments, libraries and ministerial advisors but these were never viewed as the primary audience for the newspaper (Forde 2004). *LRQ* therefore encouraged mainstream media to cover Indigenous stories, provided access to sources

and information that would otherwise have possibly not been available to mainstream journalists, disseminated stories of interest to the Indigenous community out to the mainstream community and opened up the processes of and between the Indigenous and mainstream public sphere.

Examining circulation figures for these newspapers provides an indication of their ability to disperse their messages throughout the Indigenous and mainstream public sphere. However, it should be remembered that many of the newspapers produced were likely to have been read by more than one person. Standard readability measures suggest five people read each copy of most mainstream newspapers and magazines, but I would suggest far more than five Indigenous people read one copy of any publication due to numerous families living in the same residence, and the practise of community members regularly gathering and “yarning” together. *Bunji*, which Day produced almost single-handedly, had the smallest circulation of these newspapers. Initially Day roneoed off 500 copies of *Bunji* until The Friends of the Earth organisation purchased an old printing press and allowed Day to use this to print *Bunji* (Day 2005). Day also encouraged other Indigenous rights campaigners, such as Cheryl Buchanan, to include *Bunji* or extracts from *Bunji* in their newspapers and therefore significantly broadened the distribution of his newspaper. *Bunji* was mailed to Aboriginal communities and subscribers. The Larrakia people also sold *Bunji* for a nominal fee in places where large numbers of people were congregated (Day 2005).

Both *NQ Messagestick* (circulation from 5,000-10,000) (O'Neil 2006) and *LRN* were distributed to Aboriginal communities and individuals and both had subscription lists. *LRN*'s 14,000 copies per edition were distributed to government departments, Aboriginal organisations, businesses, individuals and Aboriginal communities (*Land Rights News* 1989, p. 2). In contrast, *NQ Messagestick*'s subscriber list did not include government departments but did include individuals who worked for government departments (O'Neil 2006). *LRN* is also distributed through mail outs to organisations outside of the Northern Territory and through regional offices within the Northern Territory (Condie 2004).

However, higher circulation figures have not ensured ease of distribution. *Land Rights Queensland*'s circulation of 10,000 per edition at its highest point was unable to secure distribution through news agents. Gordon and Gotch, the only independent

newspaper distributor at the time, was unwilling to take on the contract because it did not believe *LRQ* could sell sufficient copies to make it worth its while. Their refusal infuriated Forde because *LRQ* “was an independent publication that couldn’t get into news agencies” and this was one of the newspaper’s main aims” (Forde 2004). *LRQ* was therefore distributed via mail out subscriptions and shipped in bulk to communities and townships (Malezer 2005). *LRQ* was officially distributed free but if individuals or communities then distributed the newspaper in areas where they could charge \$1 per copy, they could keep the money as their income (Malezer 2005). Copies of the newspaper were dropped to selected news agents in areas with a high Indigenous population and the emphasis was “on reaching the audience” rather than “receiving an income” (Malezer 2005). While *LRQ*’s circulation never exceeded 10,000 copies it did drop to only 3000 copies at its lowest point (Forde 2004). While *LRN* and *LRQ* had relatively secure funding, they could not acquire commercial distribution. Funding and distribution were therefore significant impediments in enabling these newspapers to broadcast their messages which inhibited their contribution to a broadening Indigenous public sphere.

8.3 Characteristics of early Indigenous newspapers

8.3.1 Funding

Like many of the earlier Indigenous newspapers, insufficient funding was an important challenge for these land rights newspapers. *Bunji* and *N. Q. Messagestick* survived primarily on donations and received some support from organisations such as trade unions (Day 1994, 2006; *Bunji: Many Tribes - One People* 1981). Lack of funds forced Day to stop producing *Bunji* for a year in March 1977. Similarly, O’Neil and the other land rights campaigners received very little money and were lucky to be paid “once every three months”. They printed and sold T-shirts to raise funds and held on-site meetings with trade union members to pay their telephone bills and buy petrol to get to the next community (O’Neil 2006). *National Messagestick* received some funding from a grant provided by the Aboriginal Arts Board to the National Federation of Land Councils but primarily survived on donations and actively avoided accepting any government funding (*National Messagestick* 1985). *Bunji*, *NQ* and *National Messagestick* did not attract significant advertising and O’Neil said *NQ* and *National Messagestick* had a strict editorial policy that “was not shaded by

advertising”. O’Neil’s policy was “if someone said well we’ll advertise as long as you tone it down a bit, we’d tell them to stick their advertising where it couldn’t see the sun” (2006).

LRN and *LRQ* were different because they were published by fairly secure Indigenous organisations. *LRN* is funded from the Northern and Central Land Council budgets (Condie 2004). Historically, though, the newspaper had suffered financial strain. Initially free copies were distributed to communities and a range of organisations however in 1989 the land councils placed an advertisement asking those who had been receiving free copies to pay for a subscription. They assured Aboriginal communities that they would still receive their free copies of the newspaper (*LRN*, 2 January 1989, p. 2). Like *Bunji* and the *Messagestick* newspapers *LRN* has been unable to attract significant advertising revenue and *LRN* currently contains around 10 percent advertising (Condie 2004).

LRQ was funded by FAIRA. FAIRA began life as a small community research organisation but after it was appointed the South East Queensland Native Title Representative body its funding rose from \$40,000 to around \$400,000 and *LRQ* was financed out of this funding. The funding was sufficient to prevent *LRQ* being reliant on donations or attracting government or other advertising. *LRQ*, like *LRN*, attracted only 10 percent advertising (Forde 2004; Howes 2004). However, the demise of the national Indigenous representative body ATSIC, and the loss of their native title representative status left FAIRA with insufficient funding to continue publishing *LRQ*. No editions have been published since 2002. Out of the five newspapers under discussion only *LRN* is still being published on a regular basis.

8.3.2 Journalists’ perceptions of their role

The writers all had different perspectives on their roles. Neither Day (*Bunji*) nor O’Neil (*NQ Messagestick* and *National Messagestick*) saw themselves as journalists. Day believes “journalists interpret the world but the point is to change it. That was my philosophy”. Day saw his role as being a “creator of news” rather than a reporter of news (2006). Similarly, O’Neil did not want to produce a newspaper so he could work as a journalist, his goal was to further the land rights movement and improve the lives of Indigenous people (2006). The same can be said of the writers of *LRN*; while they may consider part of their role as reporting on land rights issues, the Northern Land

Council's media unit undertake many roles that promote and further the land council's work (Condie 2004). *LRQ* is the exception because the production of this newspaper was the primary goal of those who worked for it. Consequently, Howes and Forde (who both wrote and edited *LRQ* and are not Indigenous) viewed themselves primarily as journalists rather than activists, although they were and are both involved in Indigenous politics and protests. However, Malezer, who is Indigenous, saw his role as the publisher and as "managing and driving the process" (2005). Generally, this suggests producers and writers of Indigenous newspapers may consider the publication to be just one part of their contribution to the general movement and cause, rather than the primary reason for their involvement.

8.3.3 Raising awareness of Indigenous issues

As discussed in earlier chapters, research shows Indigenous issues are not viewed as highly newsworthy for mainstream publications *unless* the story is a negative comment on Indigenous people. Indigenous newspapers attempted to redress this. While *Bunji* was viewed as a subversive publication in some circles, Day saw it as patriotic because "Australia will never be a true nation until it accepts the Indigenous history and integrates it" (2006). Day therefore wanted the local Indigenous people to view *Bunji* as their own but he also wanted to reach and influence a wider audience. He viewed the process as "scattering seeds" (2006). In contrast, O'Neil saw *N. Q. Messagestick* as a political paper that should educate Australians about Joh Bjelke-Petersen's ultra-conservative regime in the state of Queensland (O'Neil 2006). Despite its staunchly right wing ideology, the Bjelke-Petersen government attracted significant Indigenous votes because of its effective use of propaganda. O'Neil used *N. Q. Messagestick* to educate people of these tactics (O'Neil 2006). O'Neil also used his newspapers to lobby for land rights, to cover events and issues affecting Indigenous people around the country and to push for Indigenous representation at the United Nations (O'Neil 2006).

LRQ was the master at engaging with the mainstream media. Although *LRQ*'s primary brief was producing news about the then new native title legislation and circulating information to all the new Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT) communities around Queensland as well as other urban Indigenous communities, having stories picked up by mainstream media outlets was a key objective for the newspaper. *LRQ*

aimed to provide an alternative but balanced source of information about events and opinions in the Aboriginal community (Howes 2004). Each of these newspapers was therefore focused on promoting Indigenous issues and the activities of particular organisations beyond the boundaries of the Indigenous public sphere.

8.4 News values

The predominant news value for each of these newspapers was the issue of land rights. As has been discussed, the production of a newspaper was not the main reason for their existence, rather the writers wanted to promote and campaign for the activities of their organisations in relation to land rights. Day wanted to present an objective view of the land rights movement and to canvass the dangers of land rights and the notion that the land rights issue was not simply about getting land back (Day 2005). Similarly, *LRN* wanted to show its readers that land rights were not just about protecting culture and heritage. Successful land claims could also provide economic stability for Indigenous communities. *LRN* showed that through appropriate land management Indigenous people in the Northern Territory were “marrying the modern and traditional societies simultaneously. So you can keep your culture strong, your language strong, but you can also derive economic benefits from your traditional lands and homelands” (Condie 2004).

However, while the main focus for each of these newspapers was land rights, other topics also had high news value. Stories about deaths in custody and police brutality were newsworthy with *N. Q.* and *National Messagestick* including articles such as “Aboriginal Rights Under Attack!” and “No justice for John Pat⁴⁶” which both illustrate the important news value of these two topics (*National Messagestick*, Vol 1, No. 1, 1985, p. 6). Positive news stories were also newsworthy with Brennan describing *LRN* as a provider of “good news stories” that communicated positive messages to non-Aboriginal Australia. She viewed the newspaper as an “authoritative voice within the national Aboriginal community” (Brennan in *LRN*, 2 January 1989, p. 4). The exception here is *LRQ*. While the newspaper did include some stories that fell outside its native title brief, mostly the publication was expected to work within those confines. For instance, while Forde was editing *LRQ* she included stories which

⁴⁶ John Pat was a young Aboriginal man who died in police custody in Western Australia in 1983. After numerous similar incidents, a Royal Commission was held into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody which reported in 1991.

covered issues outside of the native title/land rights area but had strong news value for Indigenous people—but as a result *LRQ* was reminded by ATSIC, the body which funded her employer FAIRA, that the topics she had covered were not within the newspaper's native title brief (Forde 2004).

This study has found differences between the news values prized by alternative journalists writing for these land rights newspapers and mainstream news values. Proximity and impact on the Indigenous community were shared news values but others were not highly regarded by land rights newspapers. For instance, timeliness was generally not highly valued. Most of these newspapers had spasmodic or long publishing schedules which negated the need to meet strict deadlines. An example of this is *LRN* where journalists worked to a quarterly schedule. However, again as the exception to the rule, timeliness was more important for *LRQ* editor Susan Forde (Forde 2004). *LRQ* in its heyday had a regular publication schedule but was also seeking to attract mainstream media attention. This is likely to have made timeliness far more important for *LRQ* writers.

Another important mainstream media news value is conflict. This again was an important news value for Forde because of its importance to mainstream journalists. *LRQ* had a strong political focus and one of its key objectives was to have stories picked up by mainstream media (Forde 2004). However, the conflict covered by *LRQ* was more likely to relate to disagreements between government and Indigenous communities than to conflict between Indigenous people or communities. Howes and Malezer avoided conflict between Indigenous communities. Howes argued: “I could write forever and a day about native title disputes but I won’t because then you’re interfering with the political process of the community” (Howes 2004). Howes also argued that an unwanted outcome of reporting on Indigenous conflict was that mainstream media might pick it up and exaggerate the situation further (Howes 2004). Malezer explained *LRQ* had protocols in place regarding conflict. The newspaper steered clear of criticising an Aboriginal person or promoting “Aboriginal on Aboriginal” conflict. *LRQ* also avoided taking sides in community disputes (Malezer 2005). Malezer and Forde cited an example where Noel Pearson⁴⁷ became upset about

⁴⁷ Noel Pearson is a lawyer and the director of Cape York Partnerships. He has been a prominent spokesperson on Indigenous issues since the early 1990s.
<http://www.capeyorkpartnerships.com/team/noelpearson/index.htm>

an *LRQ* article that was critical of statements he had made. Pearson believed an Indigenous newspaper should as a principle not embarrass any Aboriginal person, or question the decisions they make about their own communities (Malezer 2005; Forde 2004). Therefore, while topics that affected the Indigenous community did have news value, mainstream news values such as conflict and timeliness were not uniformly important.

One news value that was consistent across all the newspapers was the importance of stories driven by the Indigenous community. *LRN* valued stories that reflected cultural value as much as journalistic values and were likely to impact on a large number of people (Condie 2004). Similarly, Forde recognised Indigenous people like to read about people they know, ordinary community members they are related to or familiar with (2004). A strength of *LRQ* was that it included sources the *community* deemed important (Malezer 2005). The meaning of leadership within Indigenous communities is an entirely different concept from the mainstream idea of leadership and while mainstream Australians may be aware of certain Indigenous people that are used as “spokespeople” by mainstream news programs, they are likely to be unaware of the elders who operate as mentors and role models at a community level, those “who’ve had a lot of influence and the people respect and follow” (Malezer 2005). There is a disparity between who is considered prominent from an Indigenous and from mainstream perspective. There is also a disparity between the people mainstream media portray as *Indigenous spokespeople* and those the community consider to be *community* leaders. Importantly, the fact that a person is Indigenous does not qualify them to speak on all matters Indigenous, indeed, according to Aboriginal custom an Aboriginal person can only speak on matters relevant to their own community and their own traditional lands. Indigenous media recognise this.

8.5 Sources

Almost universally, members of the Aboriginal community and particularly ordinary people were the primary and preferred sources for these newspapers. Discovering local “unsung heroes” from “people on the street” was more important for Day in *Bunji* than speaking to people who were well known by mainstream Australians (Day 2005). Similarly, Forde was acutely aware of the exclusion of ordinary Aboriginal people from mainstream media coverage of any issue, including issues that directly

affected Indigenous people. Consequently in her work with *Land Rights Queensland* Forde ensured the first people she spoke to were community members. She knew official sources such as government spokespeople and other non-Indigenous people were likely to be included in stories covered in mainstream media about Indigenous affairs and she therefore had a “commitment to make sure there were more Indigenous voices in news about Indigenous people” (Forde 2004). To ensure her stories were balanced, though, Forde did include comments from government ministers and spokespeople, officials from the native title tribunal and other “official” sources when required (Forde 2004).

Similarly *Land Rights Queensland* journalists, because of their close links to the Indigenous community, knew who the ATSIC commissioner for each region was, knew the heads of key Aboriginal organisations such as First Contact and university Indigenous centres. They knew who the various spokespeople were on issues around Queensland and Brisbane and they knew the names of the chair people of the various land councils. *LRQ* journalists would seek comment from the appropriate Indigenous person on a variety of issues on which they had the authority or knowledge to comment (Forde 2004). Indigenous newspapers therefore had a clearer sense of appropriate sources within the Indigenous community and actively avoided relying on the people mainstream media put forward as Indigenous leaders. Journalists working for newspapers such as *LRQ* also had a strong sense of the cultural protocols required in seeking out the person the community had nominated as a spokesperson on specific issues rather than speaking to anyone who was Indigenous.

Just as the preferred interviewed sources for these newspapers were drawn from the Indigenous community, the community itself was also the main source of news story ideas. The activities of the Larrakia originally provided the majority of story ideas for *Bunji* but this was later expanded to include stories from around Australia and the world that related to Indigenous peoples and provided “new direction for Aboriginal people” (Day 2005). O’Neil gathered stories for *N. Q.* and *National Messagstick* as he travelled through Indigenous communities (O’Neil 2006). He explained “As I was travelling around, people would give me stories or we’d sit down and write a story...then I’d put that in my briefcase and when I got to Melbourne, I’d pull out these articles and get them typeset” (O’Neil 2006).

Other story ideas came from events the land rights campaigners were organising themselves (O'Neil 2006). The Central and Northern Land Council provided stories for *LRN*. *LRQ* was again somewhat different to the other Indigenous newspapers. Both Forde and Howes used mainstream newspapers, public radio and television to find Indigenous story ideas they could then correct and present with Indigenous sources (often missing from the mainstream version). Both also used press releases as a starting point for some stories (Forde 2004; Howes 2004). However, despite these different (and perhaps more mainstream) methods of generating story ideas, the main source of stories for *LRQ* was also the Indigenous community. Community organisations and individuals contacted the newspaper with information about events (Howes 2004; Forde 2004). FAIRA researchers also generated story ideas by passing on information about research projects they were working on or places they had visited (Forde 2004). Other Indigenous newspapers and radio stations were valuable sources of story ideas along with record companies, book stores and other community groups (Forde 2004). Like news values then, sources of story ideas for these newspapers were predominantly community-driven. While *LRQ* used other media organisations to generate story ideas, all of these newspapers looked to the community for information about what was happening and what the community was interested in. This was an important dimension in the development of an Indigenous public sphere.

8.6 Pressures – internal and external

Each of the newspapers in this section has experienced a range of pressures from within and outside the Indigenous community. Day, as editor of *Bunji*, was accused of being patronising because of the simplistic style and language he used to write the publication and he was aware that he was a “whitefella” writing an Indigenous newspaper at a time when the Aboriginal Black Power movement was actively lobbying against white involvement (Day 2005). Day also attracted the attention of ASIO (NAA A6122 (2005/00161248), pp. 66-67) after he included instructions for how to make a Molotov cocktail in *Bunji*. Day was “harassed and followed by ASIO quite a bit” and they removed his typewriter to gather evidence to use in a case against *Bunji*. Day suggests that in the current political climate and with the new terrorism legislation in Australia he would probably have been arrested (2006). Shorty O'Neil also attracted government attention. O'Neil explained that anyone who spoke out

against the Queensland government and Premier Bjelke-Petersen were “outlawed” and removed from their community and separated from their family. In contrast, those who supported the Bjelke-Petersen regime were rewarded with “better jobs” and their families were looked after and their children were sent away to be educated (O’Neil 2006). Since the North Queensland Land Council produced *N. Q. Messagestick* and O’Neil was the editor he was ultimately responsible for its content. O’Neil recalls that under the *1974 Mental Health Act* police could arrest and detain, without a warrant, anyone they deemed to be mentally ill until that person could be examined by a Queensland Government appointed psychiatrist (O’Neil 2006; Queensland Government 1974). Similarly the *Commonwealth Games Act* which was in force from 17 September to 10 October 1982 gave the police wide search and entry powers and *Black Nation* claimed under the *Summary Offences Act* (1982) it would be an offence to send “offensive letters to Parliamentarians” and those found infringing this legislation would face a compulsory psychiatric examination. O’Neil believes legislation was passed to silence dissent against the Queensland government and especially to end dissent from people like him and other alternative publishers. O’Neil left Queensland to avoid being arrested under this legislation (O’Neil 2006). While the pressure applied to *LRQ* by government was less overt, it was nonetheless effective in stopping production. The dissolution of ATSIC removed the funding source for the newspaper and led to its prolonged and ongoing suspension of production.

Journalists who wrote for *LRQ* also discussed criticism from within the Indigenous community. Community members might disapprove of the way an issue was covered or a person might have personal issues with a specific member of the editorial team such as Les Malezer. Conflict could arise if a community believed another group had received more attention than they had. There was often “in-fighting” between different community groups for the journalists and editor to negotiate (Forde 2004). However, disputes between individuals or communities did not affect editorial decisions made by the newspaper. At the beginning of the editorial process for each edition, Forde would advise Malezer of the stories she planned to cover, who she planned to speak to and the sort of columns she was going to include and Malezer never told her to cancel a story. Rather, he often provided good story ideas, suggestions for sources to speak to in the community and their contact details. With

the exception of the limitations set by the ATSIC funding brief, Forde never felt pressured to cover or not cover certain stories (Forde 2004).

Albeit having a specific land rights focus, each of these newspapers was a staunchly political newspaper. These newspapers lobbied, educated and strategized as part of the battle for Aboriginal land rights. That they exist at all is evidence that an Indigenous public sphere exists. Land rights, while affecting mining companies, pastoralists, governments and some smaller landholders, it largely does not play heavily on the consciences of the majority of white Australians. However for Indigenous Australians, it is an enormously important aspect of their being, as Mick Dodson (1997) suggests:

To understand our law, our culture and our relationship to the physical and spiritual world, you must begin with the land. Everything about Aboriginal society is inextricably interwoven with, and connected to, the land....

The existence of these newspapers is evidence of the importance of land to Indigenous people. These publications are a sample of the Indigenous newspapers that focus on land and land rights. They provided an opportunity for Indigenous organisations and communities to share their successes and losses in their legal wrangling for improved land rights legislation. While Northern Territory communities have been able to negotiate strong land rights legislation, other communities around the country have been less successful and newspapers such as *Land Rights News* and *Land Rights Queensland* alert others to methods they may be able to adopt. Similarly, these newspapers educate non-Indigenous people about land rights and native title legislation. Mainstream media coverage has often been stereotypical, sensational, misinformed and misleading. These newspapers provided an opportunity for Indigenous people to present an alternative perspective on native title/land rights issues. As has been shown they each viewed as their role the need to educate mainstream Australia but also to correct inaccurate mainstream media coverage.

These five land rights newspapers also provide an example of how resources can be shared across different organisations and communities. Not only are these newspapers sharing information and ideas, but also demonstrated that they shared resources. *Bunji* was printed in *Black News Service*; and *Land Rights News* is the combined effort of two land councils. Even the *Messagestick* newspapers were produced by O'Neil on

his trips around the country. He collected information from a range of Aboriginal organisations and communities and freely published this in the newspapers he edited. The publication of the *Messagestick* newspapers was a result of combined financial resources as people donated funds and time so the newspaper could be produced. This raises other similarities between these publications—their fragility. None were independently commercially viable. With the exception of *LRQ*, their publication schedules were spasmodic as they struggled to find funding to pay for printing, postage and other costs. Likewise, and again with the exception of *LRQ*, writing a newspaper was often secondary to land rights and native title work, and even with adequate funding the writers were often time-poor. Their fairly low circulations and their land rights’ focus did not appeal to mainstream advertisers. Consequently, none of these newspapers attracted more than a minimal level of advertising. An interesting similarity, which perhaps points to their success within their field, is the level of government interference these newspapers suffered. Day, the publisher of *Bunji* attracted ASIO attention and legislation introduced by the Queensland Government resulted in O’Neil leaving Queensland to avoid being arrested. Undoubtedly though, *Bunji* and *NQ Messagestick* were produced during an ultra-conservative period in Queensland politics and history – indeed, during that time Queensland became known as the “Police State” due to the oppressive nature of many of its laws (Whitton 1993). *LRQ*, publishing after this oppressive period, was not directly affected by government actions, but was inadvertently affected by funding decisions. The disbanding of ATSIC removed its major source of funding and severely impaired FAIRA’s ability to challenge Federal government policy on Indigenous affairs, as the newspaper had been doing.

8.7 Chapter summary

The news values and sources used by these newspapers were, across the board, community-driven. Although they shared a common land rights and native title theme, they all covered issues that fell outside this narrow spectrum. Conflict and timeliness were not prized and conflict might be actively avoided if it was between different Indigenous communities or organisations. This avoidance was based on recognition that such disputes were likely to be seized upon and inflated by mainstream media attention. It was based as much on cultural sensitivity and cultural correctness as it was on political correctness. Similarly, while featuring Noel Pearson,

the Dodson brothers and other high profile Indigenous people, all of these newspapers unanimously agreed that providing ordinary people with a voice was more important. Again, the reason for this was more complex than allowing only people who largely were ignored a voice an opportunity to speak. Mainstream media in general was unresponsive to and unaware of the Indigenous community's perception of who was an appropriate spokesperson on issues; and of who were the community elders and voices. The land rights newspapers in this section were linked directly to the Indigenous community and therefore responded to the demands of the community for their elders to speak on issues. As with publications that I have categorised as 'the *Revolutionaries*' (see Chapter 7) there is further evidence of a lack of an audience-producer barrier (Meadows et al. 2007), particularly in publications such as *NQ* and *National Messagestick* and *Bunji*. Overall these newspapers opened up Indigenous public sphere processes by providing an opportunity for Indigenous people, organisations and communities to share knowledge and ideas regarding native title and land rights' issues.

Chapter 9: The Professionals

9.1 Political and social environment, 1991-2008

Australian indigenous affairs in the 1990s were driven by the push for self-determination and featured a series of major events which put Indigenous politics and people prominently on the front page of newspapers and programs for a great part of this decade. Political landmarks from this era included the creation of the elected Indigenous organisation, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) in 1990, the release of the 1991 *Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*⁴⁸, the launching of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation⁴⁹ in 1992 which progressed the reconciliation debate⁵⁰ and the progression of land rights legislation such as the crucial 1992 *Mabo*⁵¹ and 1996 *Wik*⁵² legislation. Other important legislation from this period which had an impact on Indigenous public sphere activities was the 1995 *Racial Hatred Act*⁵³ and publication of the 1997 *Bringing them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*⁵⁴. All of these advancements in Indigenous rights and affairs occurred during the terms of the Hawke (1983-1991) and particularly the Keating Labor (1991-1996) governments. To celebrate the 1993 International Year of World's Indigenous Peoples, Prime Minister

⁴⁸ 1991 Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Royal commission established to investigate the causes of deaths in custody of Aboriginal people between 1980 and 1989. Final report made 339 recommendations and was signed on 15 April 1991.
<http://www.naa.gov.au/about-us/publications/fact-sheets/fs112.aspx>

⁴⁹ Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation was formed on 2 September 1991. Key goals of the Council were to communicate with and educate the nation about the processes of reconciliation and to canvass the community about how to further the process of reconciliation.
<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/car/>

⁵⁰ Reconciliation. The reconciliation of non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australians to create a united Australia that is respectful and accepting of Indigenous culture.
<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/car/>

⁵¹ Mabo. Mabo decision handed down by the High Court of Australia on 3 June 1992 which acknowledged Indigenous people had a right to land under Australian law.
http://www.nlc.org.au/html/land_native.html

⁵² Wik. The High Court decision that found native title rights could co-exist with pastoral leases and native title could only be legislatively extinguished. http://www.nlc.org.au/html/land_native_wik.html
http://ANTaRqld.org.au/03_news/wik.html

⁵³ 1995 Racial Hatred Act. Prohibited discrimination or offensive behaviour against people based on their race, colour, national or ethnic background.
http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/num_act/rha1995109.txt/cgibin/download.cgi/download/au/legis/cth/num_act/rha1995109.txt

⁵⁴ 1997 *Bringing them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*. Investigated the impact of laws, practices and policies in relation to the separation of Aboriginal children from their families, the 'Stolen Generation'.
http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/bth_report/index.html

Paul Keating⁵⁵ made an historic speech in Sydney's Redfern Park during which he formally accepted responsibility for the dispossession of Aboriginal people and the decimation of their culture. The establishment of the Council for Reconciliation in 1992 culminated in the 1997 National Reconciliation Convention and finally in Corroboree 2000⁵⁶, a walk across Sydney Harbour Bridge undertaken by an estimated 250,000 (Parliament of NSW 2000) Australians to show their support for the reconciliation cause.

Corroboree 2000 not only marked the wrap-up of 10 years work by the Council for Reconciliation but also signalled a change in political direction. A Coalition government, led by Prime Minister John Howard, won the 1996 election and its "practical reconciliation"⁵⁷ approach to Indigenous affairs was markedly different from that of the previous Keating government. This change was exemplified by the conflict between Prime Minister John Howard and the Council for Reconciliation after he amended a Draft Document for Reconciliation entitled *Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation*. This document was produced following a nationwide consultative process with a wide range of Australians. Howard disregarded the original draft and produced his own document that did not include the word "apology" and instead offered "an expression of concern and regret" for the way Indigenous people had been treated in Australia. The Howard draft also withdrew references to self-determination. The Prime Minister was criticised for his opinion that reconciliation could not be wrapped up in a document and an apology was symbolic rather than practical reconciliation (Gratton 2008). Furthermore, he chose not to participate in one of the highlights of the Corroboree 2000 celebrations, the people's walks and in particular the major walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge by 250,000 people in support of reconciliation. Prime Minister John Howard himself refused to walk and his Cabinet took a decision that "all or none" would participate (ABC Online 2008). From 1996 on, policy and the government's position on

⁵⁵ Paul Keating. Australian Prime Minister from 20 December 1991 to 11 March 1996. <http://primeministers.naa.gov.au/meetpm.asp?pmId=24>

⁵⁶ Corroboree 2000. 27 May-3 June 2000. A national event during which the Council for Reconciliation presented its final document for reconciliation as the culmination of 10 years work to the Howard government and the People's Walk for Reconciliation (an estimated 250,000 people attended) across Sydney Harbour Bridge took place. <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/orgs/car/m2000/1.htm>

⁵⁷ Practical reconciliation. From 2001-2007 the Howard government sought to bring about "practical reconciliation" which it claimed focused on tangible improvements to Indigenous health and well-being rather than symbolic gestures. <http://reconciliation.org.au/nsw/education-kit/what-is-reconciliation/>

Indigenous affairs moved from Keating's acknowledgement of white Australia's decimation of Aboriginal culture and admission of the genocide of Aboriginal people to Howard's refusal to apologise to the Stolen Generations and his widespread use of the term "black armband" history to criticise those in the community (including the former government) who had highlighted the ills of the white community against the Indigenous peoples.⁵⁸ A series of policies initiated by the Howard government throughout the mid to late-1990s and up to 2007 suggested a significantly different political environment would exist for Indigenous people and their supporters while he was in power⁵⁹.

A Howard government initiative that had a major impact on the Aboriginal community was the disbandment of ATSIC. In April 2004, the Howard government, facilitated by the Australian Labor Party's (in Opposition at the time) announcement it would do the same thing if elected in the 2004 election, abolished ATSIC and replaced it with the Indigenous Advisory Council made up of 14 people selected by the Federal government. Other Indigenous affairs policy changes included bringing all Indigenous specific programs under the control of Commonwealth departments after July 2004. These programs were "mainstreamed" and a policy of "mutual obligation" and "Shared Responsibility Agreements"⁶⁰ was adopted which—essentially—rewards those Indigenous people and communities who attain the "level of behaviour" demanded by government and punishes those who do not (Behrendt 2004). A further development to the "Shared Responsibility Agreements", which, in some cases saw Indigenous peoples' welfare payments reduced if they did not achieve certain levels of care for their children, was the Northern Territory intervention⁶¹ whereby the

⁵⁸ Stolen Generations. Refers to the official policy to forcibly remove Indigenous children from their families and communities which occurred from 1909 to 1969 in Australia.

http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/bth_report/index.html

⁵⁹ On 12 February 2008, the newly elected Rudd Labor government finally apologised to the Stolen Generations.

⁶⁰ Shared Responsibility Agreements were introduced by the Howard Government and are agreements between the Australian Federal Government and specific Indigenous communities. Indigenous communities identify objectives they want to achieve and how they will achieve them in return for Federal Government investment in the projects. (McCausland 2005)

⁶¹ The Northern Territory "Emergency Response" intervention aka "the intervention" was implemented by the Howard Government in June 2007 to address Aboriginal welfare and to specifically target child abuse and domestic violence. Measures instigated under "the intervention" included introducing alcohol restrictions on Northern Territory Aboriginal land, placing restrictions on welfare payments, linking school attendance to welfare payments, introducing compulsory health checks for all Aboriginal children and taking control of townships under five year leases. "The intervention" has been maintained by the Rudd Government despite criticisms that the policy in its current form breaches

Federal government more explicitly attached Aboriginal welfare payments to the purchase of particular food items (fresh meat, fruit and vegetables etc). Despite these controversial moves by the Federal government, the 2007 National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and Oxfam Australia report ranked Australia “bottom of a league table of wealthy nations working to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal peoples” (2007).

The 1990s and indeed the early 2000s saw an almost un-matched level of discussion of Indigenous affairs in the mainstream media and, subsequently, in broader public spheres. As a result, a number of Indigenous media outlets were established during this period to provide information to Indigenous communities about the plethora of policies and political events. This chapter draws on interviews with journalists and editors who worked with Indigenous media outlets during this busy era. Journalists have provided information about their newspapers, their perceived role and their audiences. Specific characteristics such as funding and advertising will be discussed to determine how these issues affect the Indigenous print media’s ability to contribute to public sphere processes, particularly when Indigenous issues were receiving such widespread attention in the mainstream sphere as well. News values and source preferences will be analysed along with an appraisal of the newsgathering methods used. Consideration will also be given to the problems and again, the internal and external influences these newspapers have encountered. The aim of this chapter is to analyse the role these newspapers have played in evolving Indigenous public sphere processes to the present day.

Overall it will be argued that while contemporary Indigenous newspapers provide a forum for Indigenous people to have a voice and an opportunity for issues affecting Indigenous people to be discussed in depth, their apparent desire to take an apolitical stance (and this will be discussed at length) undermines their ability to work as an effective mechanism for change (note the very political *National Indigenous Times* is an exception to this). It will be argued these newspapers use different news values and sources to mainstream newspapers and therefore provide an opportunity to present different and Indigenous perspectives on topical issues, but that these voices rarely make it outside the Indigenous public sphere. While they play an important role in

Australia’s human rights obligations.
http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_Justice/sj_report/sjreport07/chap3.html#part4

building Indigenous community esteem, with the exception of the *National Indigenous Times*, they lack political drive.

9.2 Indigenous print media in the contemporary Indigenous public sphere

The range of Indigenous print media produced since the early 1990s reflects the diversity in the Indigenous public sphere. In contrast with previous chapters where the majority of Indigenous newspapers produced were connected to Indigenous organisations such as land councils and health services, some contemporary Indigenous newspapers have been produced as professional, independent publications with no ties to specific Indigenous organisations. The *Koori Mail* is an example of a professional, independently owned Indigenous newspaper that has no formal connections to an already-funded Indigenous organisation.

The *Koori Mail* was created by Aboriginal campaigner Owen Carriage who, just as Gary Foley and Marcia Langton were inspired by Jack Patten (Foley 2005, Langton & Kirkpatrick 1979), was inspired by campaigners from the 1970s. Carriage conceived the idea for the *Koori Mail* after listening to Aboriginal activists such as Foley and Lyall Munro talking about the need for a national Aboriginal newspaper through which to disseminate their own messages (Carriage 2004). The *Koori Mail* is a fortnightly, tabloid publication produced in Lismore, New South Wales and has now been in production for more than 18 years. Initially, it was circulated only in northern New South Wales and Queensland but now has a network of Indigenous and non-Indigenous stringers/freelance writers throughout the country and is distributed nationally (Rose 1995, p. 23). During the paper's early years, neither Carriage nor his team of helpers had any journalism experience. Carriage was reliant on help from white, freelance journalists such as Liz Tynan and other non-Indigenous media workers (Carriage 2004; Rose 1995, p. 19). The fledgling newspaper battled with both a lack of journalistic experience and poor financial security. The management of Lismore's daily newspaper, the *Northern Star*, saw the financial potential of the *Koori Mail* and stepped in to help get the newspaper off the ground by providing printing and editorial assistance to Carriage. Janine Wilson, a *Northern Star* employee, became the *Koori Mail*'s first non-Indigenous editor. The first 24-page edition of the *Koori Mail* was launched on 23 May 1991 with a print run of 10,000.

Unfortunately the *Koori Mail* ran up a large debt with the *Northern Star* and while the *Northern Star's* management could see its advertising potential they were unable to continue carrying the debt. Carriage was unable to negotiate a loan to allow him to continue producing the newspaper. Control was taken over by the *Northern Star* and *Northern Star* representatives approached the local Bundjalung Aboriginal Corporation who successfully obtained an ATSIC loan to take over ownership of the newspaper (Rose 1995, p. 23; Carriage 2004). As a result in November 1991 the Bygal Weahunir Holding Company (BWHC), which was ultimately an amalgamation of five local communities, took control. The Company acquired a \$226,000 ATSIC loan in 1992 which gave them an 80 percent holding in the *Koori Mail*. The other 20 percent was retained by the *Northern Star* (*Koori Mail*, 11 March 1992, pp.1, 19; Rose 1995, p. 27).

Janine Wilson, the non-Indigenous editor appointed by the *Northern Star*, was replaced by Dona Graham, also non-Indigenous, as editor of the *Koori Mail* until 1998 when Aboriginal journalist Todd Condie took over the reins (Rose 1995, p. 29; *Koori Mail*, 26 January 1994, p. 2). Condie graduated from Griffith University with a Bachelor of Humanities majoring in film, media studies and politics and joined the *Koori Mail* as a cadet in 1992. He stayed with the newspaper as journalist and then editor, for 10 years before moving to the Northern Territory to work on *Land Rights News* (see Chapter 8). Condie's comments about his time with the *Koori Mail* illustrate the range of areas and communities reached by this newspaper. He became familiar with "different language groups and different mobs" across all states and territories and "once I started to travel to Aboriginal communities and learning about different people...I was hooked" (Condie 2004). *Koori Mail* journalist Susan Forde (2004) explained the newspaper aimed to be a "community hub", a space where Indigenous people can talk to other Indigenous people in print: "It's a way of connecting the national Indigenous community." Connecting with the community is a common focus for Indigenous newspapers.

Another professional and independent newspaper is the *National Indigenous Times* (*NIT*). The *NIT* is arguably the most political national Indigenous newspaper published at this time. Launched on 27 February 2002, it was the second foray into newspaper publishing for Owen Carriage. The tabloid-style newspaper is produced

fortnightly out of Bateman's Bay in New South Wales and is owned by a consortium of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. While Carriage ultimately was not a financial investor in the newspaper, he conceived the idea which was picked up and turned into a reality by the *NIT* owners, and their editor Chris Graham. Carriage believed the *Koori Mail* had become stale and felt there was a gap in the market for a newspaper that would provide a strong voice for Indigenous people and could cover Indigenous issues without being intimidated by individuals or government organisations such as ATSIC. Carriage wanted the *NIT* to create a more competitive market within the Indigenous print media arena (and as such the Indigenous public sphere) (Carriage 2004). He believed ATSIC was ineffective and wanted an Indigenous newspaper that was not afraid to discuss these limitations (Carriage 2004). While both the *Koori Mail* and the *NIT* cover similar issues, they have different orientations. The *Koori Mail* is chiefly a community newspaper while the *NIT* has adopted a more mainstream approach to its newsgathering, with both publications targeting mainstream and Indigenous audiences (Carriage 2004). Interestingly, the two national newspapers' mottos sum up their own perceptions of their role in the Indigenous public sphere. While the *Koori Mail* promotes itself as "The Voice of Indigenous Australia" the *NIT* motto is "Building a bridge between Australia's Black and White communities" (*Koori Mail* 2007, *NIT* 2007).

As Indigenous people make up only two percent of the Australian population, they have little political power to force or influence social change. *NIT* editor Chris Graham argues that "if you can't change government in democracy, you will almost certainly be ignored" (Graham 2004). This notion is one of the key focuses of the *NIT*. According to Graham, targeting content specifically at the Indigenous community and those interested in Indigenous issues would be "preaching to the converted". People who read the *Koori Mail* and *NIT* are already aware of the problems Indigenous Australians face, the real challenge is to get mainstream Australians to "give a damn" (Graham 2004). Therefore while the *NIT*, like the *Koori Mail* aims to circulate information throughout the Indigenous public sphere the *NIT* also aims to push information out into the mainstream arena, thus influencing broader public sphere activity.

Another contemporary publication contributing to the Indigenous public sphere is also one of the longest running independent Australian Indigenous newspapers, the *Torres News*, launched in 1954. While for most of its existence the *Torres News* was not owned by Torres Strait Islander people and was primarily targeted at the small non-Indigenous population of the Torres Strait, since 2002 when the Bousen family took over ownership the newspaper's focus and target audience changed (Bousen 2004). The Bousen family are not Indigenous but wanted to produce a newspaper for Torres Strait Islanders (*Torres News*, 29 November-4 December 2002, p. 2, Bousen 2004). More than 80 percent of the Torres Strait population is Indigenous and the *Torres News* audience is now chiefly Indigenous. A major aim for this newspaper is, like the *Koori Mail*, to produce community driven news for the primarily Indigenous community of the many different Torres Strait islands.



Image 2 Corey Bousen, Brisbane, 24 February 2005

Yamaji News, a tabloid-style, fortnightly newspaper produced by the Yamaji Languages Aboriginal Corporation (YLAC) targets the Indigenous community in the mid-west region of Western Australia (Montcrieff 2004; Oakley 2004). Writing for the community was a key goal for journalists with this newspaper. For example, *Yamaji News* journalist Kelly Oakley (2004) said she focused on the notions of “our people” and “our community”. While *Yamaji News* aimed to reach the Aboriginal community, it influenced the mainstream newspaper, the *Geraldton Guardian*, to start its own weekly column called *Yamaji Wangga* that featured an interview with a prominent Aboriginal person from the area (Oakley 2004). Following the demise of ATSIC, the YLAC was unable to continue funding the newspaper and publication of *Yamaji News* was suspended in 2005.

Kurbingui Star is another community newspaper that is produced in Brisbane by the Kurbingui Youth Development Association. *Kurbingui Star* was born out of an employment and training program that initially planned to produce a small newsletter to improve the literacy skills of Aboriginal people who were registered with the

Community Development Employment Program (CDEP). The Kurbingui Youth Development Association obtained funding through the “Breaking the Unemployment Cycle” program and produced 500 copies of the newspaper. The feedback from the community after the first edition in March 2003 inspired them to continue producing it on a regular basis. Around 16 people have received training through the newspaper and have gone on to other employment or training (Parnel 2004). While the primary goal of this publication is to provide training and employment opportunities for Indigenous people, the writers themselves aim to produce a “feel good” newspaper that empowers the Indigenous community (Watson, L 2004).

Indigenous media organisations produced the final two newspapers discussed in this chapter. In terms of circulation, the first, *Deadly Vibe*, is one of the most successful Indigenous publications Australia has seen. Vibe Australia Pty Ltd launched *Deadly Vibe* from Darlinghurst in Sydney in February 1997. The Vibe stable includes two magazines, a radio program that is syndicated to more than 250 Aboriginal radio stations and *The Deadlys* which are national awards for outstanding Aboriginal performances across community, entertainment and sporting fields. The Vibe organisation also includes Vibe Australia, a website that brings together all of Vibe’s products and activities (Vibe Australia 2006). *Deadly Vibe* magazine was launched by Gavin Jones to provide a national forum to promote positive images of Aboriginal people. The magazine focuses on music, sports and entertainment and with a circulation of 47,000 is the leading magazine for informing the community about Aboriginal entertainment and sport. While its primary audience is Indigenous, 30 percent of its readers are non-Indigenous. *Deadly Vibe* targets all ages and includes a section for primary school students. The magazine includes information specifically directed towards older Indigenous Australians (Keane 2004). Jones chose to launch a magazine rather than a newspaper because newspapers tend to have a strong news focus whereas a magazine lends itself to “beautifully written feature articles” (Jones 2004). High-quality images are an important feature of *Deadly Vibe*. Jones (2004) explains: “It’s very important for Aboriginal people to see beautiful images of themselves in the community in a positive way.” Jones aims to include “insightful features” about the Aboriginal community and events in history (2004). Like both *Yamaji News* and *Kurbingui Star*, *Deadly Vibe* seeks to produce positive stories that promote improved Indigenous esteem.

The final newspaper from this era was produced by an Indigenous media organisation, the Mt Isa Aboriginal Media Association (MIAMA). *Murri Views* was launched in April 2004. MIAMA is a non-profit organisation in Mt Isa⁶² run by a group of seven Indigenous people (Knowles 2005). Initially MIAMA produced a page in Mt Isa's mainstream newspaper the *North West Star* calling it *Murri Views* and focusing on Indigenous news. After three years, MIAMA decided to put together a "stand-alone newspaper" that would cover Indigenous issues in the Mt Isa and wider Queensland area (Knowles 2005). *Murri Views* targeted both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community but as with the *NIT*, there was a strong desire not to preach to the converted (Knowles 2005). Like a number of the other newspapers in this section, *Murri Views* aimed to produce "positive, inspirational and well balanced stories on Indigenous issues" (McNamara 2005). This overview suggests the contemporary Indigenous print media includes a diverse range of publications that each feed into and facilitate Indigenous public sphere processes.

9.2.1 Participation in Indigenous public sphere activity

By the early 1990s the ongoing battles for control of the Indigenous public sphere had dissipated. The revolutionary phase from the late 1960s through to the end of the 1980s resulted in the creation of a network of Indigenous organisations such as land councils, health and legal services. These were controlled by Indigenous people and some of them produced their own media such as the Northern and Central Land Council's *Land Rights News* discussed in the previous chapter. In contrast however, the editorship of some of the contemporary newspapers produced during this era has been a source of conflict. The desire for Indigenous people to own and control these newspapers has continued to be a feature of discussion within the Indigenous public sphere. Analysis of the editorship of the *Koori Mail* provides evidence of this ongoing conflict.

The *Koori Mail* was originally edited by non-Indigenous mainstream journalist Janine Wilson and in time her reluctance to hand over the reins to an Indigenous editor resulted in conflict. In the opening editorial following the ownership shift to the Bygal

⁶² Mt Isa is a regional town with a population of about 25,000 in the remote and arid area of far north-west Queensland. It is essentially a mining town, with Indigenous people making up about 15% of the population. Other towns in Gulf region, for which Mt Isa is the major hub, feature much higher proportions of Indigenous people. *Murri Views* was therefore established in a region with a fairly high population of Indigenous people compared to most other areas in Australia.

Weahunir Holding Company, the Aboriginality of the advertising salesman, clerical staff and some stringers was featured but there was no mention of the fact that Wilson was not Indigenous (*Koori Mail*, 11 March 1992). The decision not to mention Wilson's non-Indigeneity suggests the board was reluctant to broadcast this fact but it was obviously an issue for Wilson because in May 1992 she wrote an editorial "Damned by Association" in which she informed readers she was "white" (*Koori Mail*, 6 May 1992, p. 2). In October 1992 she questioned "Should Colour be the Main Criteria [sic] for employment?" and whether a person should be employed based on their Aboriginality. She argued putting "untrained Aboriginal people in high-responsibility jobs with inadequate training was irresponsible and detrimental to the image of indigenous people". Wilson claimed that she, as a non-Indigenous journalist, was "keeping the seat warm until the black bum is ready to sit firmly on it without the risk of falling off" (*Koori Mail*, 7 October 1992, p. 2). Wilson's editorial drew strong criticism from some *Koori Mail* readers with one asking that since Wilson was keeping her seat warm for a properly trained Aboriginal editor, was she training an Aboriginal person to take over her position (Reed-Gilbert in *Koori Mail*, 4 November 1992, p.2)? In late 1992, Wilson was dismissed by the board and replaced by another non-Indigenous editor Dona Graham (Rose 1995, p. 27; *Koori Mail*, 11 March 1992, p. 1). Wilson was awarded \$2000 compensation after she claimed she was sacked because of her race. The Equal Opportunity Tribunal found Wilson was not sacked because of her race but had she been Indigenous she was likely to have been treated more favourably (Curtin 1996).

In December 1992, Todd Condie joined the *Koori Mail* staff and in 1998 became the newspaper's first Aboriginal editor (Rose 1995, p. 29; *Koori Mail*, 26 January 1994, p. 2). After Condie resigned in 2003 (*Koori Mail*, 17 December 2003, p. 2), non-Indigenous journalist and *Koori Mail* sub-editor Barry Cheadle took over as editor until Kirstie Parker joined the newspaper as the *Koori Mail*'s second Indigenous editor in 2006 (*Koori Mail*, 25 October 2006, p. 4). In an interview with the ABC Radio National program *The Media Report* Parker indicated having an Indigenous editor at the *Koori Mail* was important because it influenced the information community members were willing to impart (Parker on *The Media Report*, 2007). Debate about the importance of Indigenous control of Indigenous media organisations and outlets is ongoing.

9.3 Multiple public spheres

During the 1990s through to the present day the Indigenous print media have undergone further transformation, reflecting the current structure of the Indigenous public sphere. During the 1950s through to the 1980s, many Indigenous newspapers were produced by grassroots organisations that were intrinsically connected to the Indigenous community. During the 1990s onwards, a professionalisation of the Indigenous print media has occurred that has resulted in a range of newspapers being published by media organisations. With the exception of the *Kurbingui Star*, the newspapers produced in this era are driven primarily by professionally trained journalists (Giles 2004; Forde et al. 2002; Bousen 2004; Cheadle 2004; Gordon 2004; Howes 2004; Montcrieff 2004; Oakley 2004; Middleton 2004; Graham 2004; Sparks 1991; Keane 2004; Jones 2004; Condie 2004). Each of these journalists has either a university degree in journalism or communications or has received journalism training on the job. Similarly, at a political level, ATSIC provided a link between the Federal government and existing Indigenous organisations such as land councils, legal and health services and therefore improved funding opportunities for Indigenous publications. While it may not be perfectly accurate to suggest ATSIC was a political voice for all Indigenous people, it did provide a buffer between the government and wider community and an opportunity to obtain funding and representation at a Federal level.

Just as the Indigenous political structure functioned at different levels, the newspapers that were produced during this era also operated at different levels within the Indigenous public sphere. At a surface level, there are the national newspapers, the *Koori Mail* and the *NIT*. Despite the *Koori Mail* using stringers or freelancers to provide much of its copy, the scattered geographic locations and cultural individuality of each Indigenous community make it difficult for either of these newspapers to fulfil the needs of individual Indigenous groups. They are reliant on communities reaching out to them to share details of events and issues affecting them at a local level. While community members do contact both newspapers to share details of sporting achievements and local carnivals and meetings (Cheadle 2004; Howes 2004; Giles 2004; Graham 2004), involvement at a deeper level would be difficult to achieve because of a lack of resources. However, these newspapers, and particularly the *NIT*, play an important role as a mediator between the Indigenous community and

the mainstream public sphere (Graham 2004). For instance, the *NIT* (and the *Koori Mail*) provided links between the national organisation ATSIC, the mainstream and Indigenous public spheres by acting as a forum for discussion about Indigenous issues that eventually permeated the broader public sphere (Graham 2004; Cheadle 2004). While writing for the *Koori Mail*, I was contacted by ATSIC councillors who wanted to promote events they were involved with and certainly ATSIC members contacted the *NIT* to put forward their perspective on the abolition of the organisation (Graham 2004).

Newspapers such as *Murri Views*, *Kurbingui Star* and *Yamaji News* that operated at a more regional level suggest the existence of another tier to the Indigenous public sphere. Their news values were/are driven by the local community (Oakley 2004; Waharai 2004; McNamara 2005). Journalists working for these newspapers were less interested in issues involving ATSIC, the Federal or State government unless they specifically impacted upon their own target community. These newspapers were still reliant on interaction with members of their local community but this was more easily achieved because the journalists were often members of that community (McNamara 2005; Oakley 2004; Montcrieff 2004).

Importantly, the connectedness of especially Indigenous journalists to the Indigenous community presented ethical problems for journalists (McNamara 2005; Montcrieff 2004). Journalists discussed their reluctance to report on conflict between communities because these issues were often resolved at a community level (Howes 2004; McNamara 2005). The reluctance of these journalists to interfere and for Indigenous communities to have issues such as local land disputes discussed in the media suggest there is at least another tier to the Indigenous public sphere. This is the level where community discussion takes place to the exclusion of the wider community. Indeed, Heward suggests while topics like domestic violence should and are often debated by community members in the public arena, public discussion of cultural matters *should* be left to the discretion of the community (2005). He argues that outside of topics such as domestic violence:

...there's a whole range of cultural issues and cultural knowledge and our society is very intrusive. It has no respect for anything basically...I'm journalistically trained, I've worked in the media but I really have a problem

with this sort of all encompassing that media need to know everything (Heward 2005).

He suggests that within the Indigenous public sphere there are decisions made about “cultural controls” over the taking of images etc. and the maintenance of these controls is “highly legitimate” and actually “a form of empowerment” (2005). These different levels of access to information therefore suggest the existence of different tiers within Indigenous public sphere processes.

9.4 Characteristics of newspapers

The effectiveness of these publications as a communication tool is partially influenced by the frequency of publication. At the time of writing, there are no daily Indigenous newspapers. All of the newspapers covered in this section are/were produced either monthly or fortnightly. The only exception to this rule is the *Kurbingui Star*. The *Kurbingui Star*’s publication schedule is governed by the amount of funding it can raise (Parnel 2004; Waharai 2004). This creates a difficult marketing environment, where their fortnightly and monthly publishing schedules limit their attractiveness to mainstream advertisers who in turn might provide sufficient funding to allow the publications to increase their publishing schedules. Long publication schedules also impact on the newspapers’ ability to compete with daily mainstream media as information sources for the bulk of the population.

Contemporary Indigenous newspapers, as with their earlier counterparts, also have a much smaller circulation than mainstream media. *Deadly Vibe*, at 47,000 copies per month, has the largest circulation of all the newspapers in this section (Jones 2004). All the others have circulations of less than 10,000, with newspapers such as *Kurbingui Star* (1000) and *Yamaji News* (2500) restricted by very small circulation figures (Parnel 2004; Oakley 2004). However, as Jacobs has suggested circulation figures are not accurate pointers to the effectiveness of minority media (2000, p. 6).

Funding plays an important role in enabling these newspapers to successfully circulate information throughout the Indigenous public sphere. Each of these newspapers relies on a range of funding sources to survive. Newspapers with higher circulation figures such as *Torres News*, *Koori Mail*, *NIT* and *Deadly Vibe* have secured funding from advertising. For instance, between 50-60 percent of the *Torres News* is made up of government and retail advertising (Bousen 2004). Similarly the

Koori Mail is reliant on government advertising to survive (Cheadle 2004; Condie 2004). The *NIT* also relies on government advertising but its editorial choices and government criticism has led to the newspaper losing advertising from government departments it has criticised. Around 20 percent of the *NIT* content comes from advertising (Graham 2004). Each of these newspapers is also funded by subscriptions and news agency sales.

In contrast to these larger newspapers, smaller, regional publications have found it difficult to attract substantial advertising from either government or private sources. The *Kurbingui Star* has only been able to attract around 10 percent advertising (Waharai 2004; Parnel 2004). Similarly, while *Yamaji News* was able to attract advertising from local Aboriginal organisations, it was unable to attract mainstream advertising (Oakley 2004). *Yamaji News* was originally funded by ATSIC but after ATSIC was disbanded the publication sought funding through the Department of Communication, Information and Technology and the ARTS (DCITA). This was refused because their project no longer fitted their guidelines. *Murri Views* was also denied funding through DCITA and folded in April 2005. *Yamaji News* suspended publication in 2005 for the same reason. Since the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) shows a copy of *Yamaji News* being received in May 2007 it seems the Yamaji Languages Aboriginal Corporation have managed to secure sufficient funds to continue publication at some level.

As with the ‘*Revolutionaries*’ (Chapter 7) and land rights publications (Chapter 8), distribution continues to be a challenge for some Indigenous newspapers. Some newspapers have been able to negotiate distribution through commercial newspaper and magazine distributors (*Koori Mail* and *Murri Views* – Gordon and Gotch; *NIT* – Wrapaway). The newspapers are/were also sent to media and Aboriginal organisations and sent to Indigenous communities, prisons and detention centres and distributed to their subscribers via mail and sold through news agencies (Cheadle 2004; Knowles 2005; Graham 2004). *Murri Views* was mostly distributed through street sales. Smaller newspapers such as *Yamaji News* and *Kurbingui Star* are unable to negotiate distribution contracts with companies such as Wrapaway or Gordon and Gotch and are circulated via subscriptions, community drops and to organisations in their local areas (Oakley 2004; Waharai 2004). Consequently the ability of these

newspapers to reach a wider audience is governed by their ability to negotiate distribution contracts. Their lack of distribution would again impact on their attractiveness to mainstream and government advertisers and their ability to circulate their messages throughout the Indigenous and dominant public sphere.

9.5 Staff

A key difference between the contemporary newspapers discussed here and earlier publications such as the *Black Australian News* and *The Koorier* is their 'professionalism'. The early newspapers were grassroots publications produced by Indigenous campaigners who were using their publications to promote their activities. In contrast, contemporary publications are run and/or staffed by professional journalists. The key editorial staff at the *Torres News*, *Koori Mail*, *NIT*, *Murri Views*, *Yamaji News* and *Deadly Vibe* are all qualified journalists. The newspapers' editors and managers (with the exception of the *Koori Mail*, *Deadly Vibe* and *Kurbingui Star*) are also non-Indigenous, although the editor of *Kurbingui Star* is a Maori, indigenous to New Zealand. For 10 years, the *Koori Mail* had an Indigenous editor but after Condie left, the newspaper was edited by non-Indigenous man Barry Cheadle until Yuwallarai Aboriginal woman Kirstie Parker took over in July 2006. The *Koori Mail's* general manager Steve Gordon, who played a reasonably strong editorial role prior to Parker's arrival, is not Indigenous. *Deadly Vibe* has always been owned and edited by an Indigenous man Gavin Jones. The other newspapers are all owned, managed or edited by non-Indigenous journalists. The *Torres News* is owned and run by the Bousen family, journalist Chris Graham is the editor of the *NIT*, Paige Finci edited the *Yamaji News* and Ed Knowles edited the *Murri View*. The *Kurbingui Star* was edited by Aroha Waharai, who is Maori, but overseen by the non-Indigenous manager of The Kurbingui Youth Development Association, Sue Parnel. Most contemporary Indigenous newspapers are operated by non-Indigenous managers or/and editors which could hinder their connection to the Indigenous community and therefore the Indigenous public sphere.

All of these newspapers have Indigenous journalists working for them. For instance of the four *Koori Mail* staff journalists (including the editor) two are Indigenous and two are not, and more than 50 percent of the stringers working for the *Koori Mail* are Indigenous (Parker 2009). Former editor Barry Cheadle described these stringers as

the “face of the *Koori Mail*” as they are the journalists working out in the communities, gathering stories and representing the newspaper (2004). Similarly, of the 13 people employed by *Deadly Vibe*, nine are Indigenous (Jones 2004). The *NIT* has six core staff, two of whom are Indigenous (Graham 2004) and most of the people contributing to *Murri Views*, many of whom were stringers, were Indigenous (Knowles 2005). The *Torres News* has two full-time journalists (including the current editor Mark Bousen who is not a Torres Strait Islander and the other journalist who is). The *Torres News* also has a stringer (of Torres Strait Islander descent) who lives on the mainland of Australia and submits weekly copy. The newspaper has other stringers who contribute less regularly (Bousen 2009). Consequently, while the newspapers may be largely managed by non-Indigenous people, Indigenous journalists are often involved in producing the content.

The influence these Indigenous journalists have is shaped by the structure within the newsrooms. However there is inconsistency between the manager’s, editor’s and journalists’ views of whether the newsroom operates as a “team” or as a “hierarchy”. Stringers also had different viewpoints regarding the structure of the organisation they wrote for. The *Koori Mail* provides an excellent example of these differing perspectives. Condie and Gordon saw the organisational structure of the newspaper as a hierarchy, although Condie saw it as a “flexible” hierarchy (Condie 2004; Gordon 2004). In contrast, Cheadle viewed the internal structure as a “team effort” (2004). Forde, one of the newspaper’s stringers, while recognising the existence of the internal hierarchy agreed with Cheadle that the production of the newspaper was a team effort although her own involvement was quite autonomous (Forde 2004). Stringers have a large degree of autonomy and chiefly have control over the stories they produce and submit (Forde 2004; Howes 2004) but the final word on which stories are published lies with the editorial team. Similarly, Graham, editor of the *NIT* considered its structure to be a “team effort” (2004) while Giles, the journalist, viewed it as a hierarchy although she had a large degree of autonomy (2004). In contrast, both Jones and Keane from *Deadly Vibe* agreed the newspaper has a hierarchical structure. Other than this exception though, there was variance between the managers/editors and the journalist’s attitudes in relation to the power structure operating at each of these newspapers.

Given that these newspapers are largely controlled by non-Indigenous people, it is important to consider who controls the newspaper content and what sort of consultative process with the Indigenous journalists goes into producing the overall product. Essentially, it varied from one publication to the next although the Indigenous and non-Indigenous stringers working for the national publications clearly felt they had a reasonable degree of autonomy in their reporting practises and decisions. There was significant agreement regarding the need for journalists working for Indigenous newspapers to multitask and be “jacks-of-all-trades”. Writers for these newspapers are likely to be producing news stories, setting copy, writing advertisements, working on layout and sub-editing (Giles 2004; Howes 2004; Forde 2004; Oakley 2004; Waharai 2004; Keane 2004). None of the journalists/editors interviewed said they had a set role. These newspapers therefore provide an important training vehicle and staff develop a range of journalistic skills (Monterciff 2004). The implications from a public sphere perspective are that these journalists have wide experience and are involved in each step of the journalistic process. This wider involvement in the news production process connects the individual journalists to the higher values and goals of the newspapers. Rather than being a cog in a large organisation, journalists working for these smaller, Indigenous newspapers are intimately connected to the overall role of the publication they write for. They may have clear motivations and goals for that publication from a community perspective.

9.6 Role of Indigenous newspapers

A common theme emerging from the analysis of these newspapers and the attitudes of those who write for them is the importance placed on producing positive, ‘role model’ stories regarding the Indigenous community. Journalists writing for the newspapers covered in this section, with the exception of the *NIT*, emphasised the capacity-building role of their newspaper. For instance, *Koori Mail* journalist Darren Monterciff expects the newspaper to instil community pride (2004). The newspaper should include positive role model stories and provide hope for young Aboriginal people who have aspirations to work in the media which is historically dominated by white Australians (Monterciff 2004). The *Koori Mail* also allows Aboriginal people to see themselves in print and like the *Kurbingui Star* aims to dispel the myths and negative stereotypes often perpetuated by mainstream media. Positive stories that help to rebuild self-esteem and promote healthy self image in Aboriginal communities are

encouraged (Cheadle 2004; Waharai 2004; Parnel 2004). Empowering the Indigenous community is a major goal for *Kurbingui Star*. Watson described the publication as a “feel good” newspaper (2004).

Similarly, *Yamaji News* and *Murri Views* aimed to promote reconciliation by educating and informing non-Indigenous readers and disseminating positive activities and developments within the Aboriginal community (Oakley 2004; Knowles 2005). *Murri Views* won a Queensland Government Reconciliation Award because of its approach to reconciliation issues and attempts to encourage Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to work together to achieve reconciliation goals and outcomes (Knowles 2005). *Murri Views*, like the other newspapers discussed, also aimed to cover stories ignored by mainstream media and to produce “positive, inspirational and well-balanced stories on Indigenous issues” (Knowles 2005). Almost all of these newspapers consider one of their major roles to be promoting positive images and stories as a means of dispelling inaccurate mainstream media stereotypes and in order to build self-esteem in the Indigenous community.

In contrast to the “revolutionary” newspapers from the 1960s and 1970s and the land rights publications, most of the contemporary newspapers do not have a strong political focus, generally, their coverage primarily reflects positive community news stories with fairly standard reporting on major issues such as the decline of ATSIC, recent Northern Territory intervention policies. The exception to this rule is the *NIT*. The *NIT* seeks to provide a strong voice for Indigenous people and is not intimidated by individuals or government organisations including ATSIC (Carriage 2004). Additionally, the bulk of *NIT*’s content is committed to hard news which distinguishes it from most of the other contemporary publications which feature a great deal of soft, positive community news. Carriage wanted the *NIT* to create a more competitive market within the Indigenous print media arena. He believed people within ATSIC were profiting while the organisation was not delivering for Aboriginal people. He wanted the *NIT* to tackle issues that affected Indigenous people without fear (Carriage 2004). Chris Graham, the *NIT*’s editor, wants the *NIT* to challenge Indigenous organisations and also encourage mainstream newspapers to cover Indigenous issues. As previously discussed, Graham believes the only way to bring about social change and real improvements in Indigenous people’s lives is to publicise the ongoing

problems and have that information circulated out of the Indigenous public sphere and throughout the mainstream public sphere (Graham 2004; Downing 1995, p. 43; Jacobs 2000, p. 36). A major goal for the *NIT* is to “try to get a better deal for Aboriginal Australia”, and the best way to achieve this is to “influence” and “educate” both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia (Graham 2004; Quillam 2004). Graham acknowledges one newspaper cannot single-handedly bring about change and must therefore “educate blackfellas out there who are kicking down doors of not just mainstream media, but kicking down the doors of individual whitefellas...” (Graham 2004). *NIT* provides a voice for the Indigenous community at a local, community and political level (Giles 2004). While it provides information about Indigenous issues it extends its coverage beyond Indigenous topics and covers a range of issues that affect all Australians, Indigenous or not. Indigenous people want to be allowed to speak on issues that affect all Australians rather than only being allowed to speak when “something explodes in the media” and an Aboriginal source is telephoned for a last minute comment (Giles 2004).

This is an area of distinct difference between the *NIT* and other newspapers discussed here. When Carriage originally launched the *Koori Mail* the newspaper was intended to be an “unbiased and non-political” publication that would provide Koori (Aboriginal) people with a voice. While it is unlikely writers for the *Koori Mail* would describe it as apolitical, it equally does not take the political hard line exhibited by the *NIT*. Similarly to the early *Koori Mail*, part of *Yamaji News*’s mandate was to avoid reporting conflict driven or negative news. The newspaper had a “hard policy” of not covering controversial news which meant it did not cover “the big issues because we were not allowed to” (Oakley 2004). *Deadly Vibe* also aims to provide a voice for Indigenous people and Jones considers it to be a source of empowerment and a political publication, but not in the usual sense of the word. For Jones political means “people doing stuff in their community, whether it be against domestic violence or drugs and petrol sniffing or even trying to open an internet café or youth group”. A major goal for *Deadly Vibe* is to:-

...support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to reach their full potential by providing positive imagery, role models and information. To improve the quality of life for the individual and thereby the community (Jones 2004).

Therefore while each of the newspapers in this section has its own agenda and goals, clear themes have emerged from the research. Most are focused on producing positive stories that build Indigenous self-esteem and, with the exception of the *NIT*, applying political pressure is not a significant goal. While contemporary Indigenous newspapers seek to provide information to the wider community to enhance reconciliation, the *NIT* aims to disseminate information to apply social pressure from a political perspective. All the newspapers seek to improve communication between Indigenous groups and communities and to provide a voice for Indigenous people.

9.7 News values

The Indigenous community drives news values in Indigenous newspapers. For example, *Torres News* journalists listen to local talk back radio to ascertain which issues are important to the community (Bousen 2004). Similarly, *Yamaji News* provides a forum for community elders to pass on advice and tell their life stories (Oakley 2004). The Murri Grapevine is an important indicator of issues under discussion within the Indigenous public sphere (Waharai 2004). By allowing news values to be driven by the community, Indigenous newspapers allow the community to influence what information circulates throughout the Indigenous public sphere.

A common news value for journalists working on contemporary Indigenous newspapers is that stories should build community and individual self esteem. A *Koori Mail* stringer summed up news values for this newspaper as revolving around “festivals, book launches and football carnivals” (Howes 2004). This definition conforms to the original aims set down by Carriage in 1991. An early copy of the newspaper further explains the newspaper is focused on features covering “personality profiles highlighting Koori achievements, book and film reviews, children’s pages and sport”. Carriage’s goal was for *Koori Mail* to be “unbiased and non-political” and to provide Koori people “with a voice” (*Koori Mail*, 23 May 1991). A contemporary example of a role model story in the *Koori Mail* is the coverage Cathy Freeman received before and during the 2000 Sydney Olympics when she won a gold medal in the 400 metre event. While mainstream media focused on Freeman’s sporting and Olympic achievements, the *Koori Mail* interviewed her family and community. Freeman’s success was a huge role model story for the Aboriginal community (Condie 2004; Gordon 2004). Likewise positive stories about young

people in *Yamaji News* has a positive impact on the community (Oakley 2004). By attempting to build community and individual self-esteem through the coverage of positive role models and events, Indigenous newspapers help to counteract negative mainstream media.

Indigenous print media, by promoting stories that emphasise healthy self and community esteem, also dispel negative and inaccurate stereotypes that have historically been circulated by mainstream media (Cheadle 2004). Condie argues:

Indigenous people in NSW were sick and tired of seeing negative stories about Aboriginal people and finding that if you're getting flogged with bad perception every day of your life your self confidence and your esteem as a person, as a member of the Aboriginal race, is disrespected (2004).

Indigenous print media news values focus on positive stories rather than sensational issues. The *Koori Mail* aims to give Aboriginal people "special status" and to recognise, through its news value choices, that Aboriginal people are Australia's "first mob" (Condie 2004). Recognising the achievements of Indigenous people is also a key goal for *Deadly Vibe* which also aims to profile people or events (particularly in the music and sports arena) that have been ignored by mainstream media. *Deadly Vibe* stories are generally upbeat and inspirational and build community identity (Keane 2004). According to Johnson mainstream media myths and stereotypes are "one of the biggest road blocks to progress in Australia" (Johnson 2004). Indigenous newspapers must therefore "educate people to the fact that they are probably falling victim to common misconceptions that are on a daily basis perpetuated by mainstream media" (Johnson 2004).

National Indigenous newspapers also seek to raise national awareness of topics and situations that will have a wider impact on the Indigenous community. For example, the *Koori Mail* focuses on issues such as health, politics, sport and other issues that affect Indigenous people at a national level (Condie 2004). Stories such as the demise of ATSIC and other changing government policy that impacts on Indigenous people also have important news value in the *Koori Mail* (Cheadle 2004; Howes 2004). The newspaper not only seeks to inform people about issues such as native title legislation and raise awareness of Indigenous politics, but also encourages people to participate in Indigenous affairs and to take part in elections (Forde 2004). Similarly, the *NIT* focuses on producing harder, politically-based material (Giles 2004). The *NIT*

recognises that Indigenous people are interested in issues and events that directly affect them or their community, but they are also concerned about issues and events that affect the wider community. Therefore any story that impacts on the Indigenous community directly or indirectly as part of Australian society has news value in the *NIT* (Giles 2004). An example of an *NIT* story that has a strong political focus is the ‘Stolen Wages’⁶³ issue. Graham describes this story as an “amazing story in its own right from a pure journalistic perspective” (2004). An interesting aspect of the Stolen Wages issue is that while it has strong news value and high impact for the Indigenous community, the mainstream media has largely overlooked it. Graham argues the primary reason mainstream media *has* published stories on the NSW Stolen Wages issue is because of its potential to embarrass the NSW State government (Graham 2004). To Graham, the Stolen Wages issue is “the sleeping giant of the Aboriginal news stories” and the *NIT* has worked hard to lobby governments across Australia to get a fairer deal for Indigenous workers (Graham 2004). The theft of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worker’s wages by their employers and State governments over many decades provides an explanation for why so many Indigenous people are still so disadvantaged within society today and it is an explanation that mainstream Australians can understand. While most people cannot relate to the pain of having their children removed, all workers can grasp the injustice of working hard and then having their wages stolen (‘put aside’) by their employers or the government (Graham 2004). By allowing Indigenous people to comment on issues outside the Indigenous news arena and by raising mainstream awareness of major issues to the Indigenous community, Indigenous newspapers expand public sphere debates beyond the Indigenous community and open up the mainstream public sphere to Indigenous voices.

The inclusion of photographs was repeatedly cited as a valuable component for news stories within Indigenous newspapers. Local people often submit photographs to the *Torres News* and the publishers try to include as many as possible (Bousen 2004). Apart from allowing Indigenous people to see themselves in print, photographs also allow those who cannot read to see themselves and their family members in the

⁶³ Stolen Wages refers to the wages, savings and government entitlements (family allowance, pensions) that were held controlled by state governments in Australia from the late 1800s through to the 1970s and have not yet been repaid. There are ongoing disputes between Indigenous Australians and state governments for adequate compensation to be paid to Indigenous people.

newspapers (Forde 2004). Enabling community members to see themselves in the *Koori Mail* gives readers a sense of the *Koori Mail* being a “piece of Black media just for them” (Condie 2004). An offshoot of the inclusion of photographs is that it feeds into the transient nature of the Indigenous population in a positive way. Stories about a remote community may connect those who have moved away and are now living in Sydney or Melbourne to their family and community (Cheadle 2004). Therefore photographs fulfil the needs of the Indigenous community at different levels. They help to address the problem of low levels of literacy and help to link and connect communities and community members. In other words they open up the Indigenous public sphere. Photographs also help to create a sense of belonging and ownership of the various newspapers. This is an example of Indigenous public sphere activity that may have little impact on the broader public sphere — and it may well be that it does not need to because it is focused on maintaining kinship ties, a critical element of all Indigenous social structures.

Mainstream media journalists tend to value a similar range of news values such as timeliness, conflict and prominent people (Conley 1997, p. 58) but these news values are less valued by Indigenous media journalists. For instance, timeliness is an important news value for mainstream media but is not prized by the journalists writing for Indigenous newspapers. Following cultural protocols may be viewed as more important than meeting tight deadlines (Bousen 2004). With the *Torres News*, community members have told journalists they would rather see a story late than see it published without comment from the appropriate parties (Bousen 2004). Also at present, there are no daily Indigenous newspapers so the longer publishing schedule negates the need for daily deadlines and the importance of timeliness as a news value (Oakley 2004). However, this longer publishing schedule creates frustration for some journalists because activity surrounding issues they are covering may occur after the newspaper has gone to print and they know the story will be too old by the next edition (Gordon 2004).

Timeliness in Indigenous newspapers is driven by the type of story. Despite being out of date by mainstream standards, some stories will still be published in Indigenous publications because of their proximity to and/or impact on the Indigenous community. An example of such a story might be the coverage of a major sporting

event, such as a cup final, that involved a number of Indigenous teams. Even though the game could have been played two weeks previously, it would still be covered and would provide an important opportunity to publish a large number of photographs for community members to try to identify people they might know (Montcrieff 2004). Similarly, if an issue has not been covered in depth by the mainstream media and is important to the Indigenous community, in-depth coverage of the issue may still be provided by an Indigenous newspaper (Knowles 2005). However, there is criticism of Indigenous newspapers when stories published are too old. For instance, Bayles questioned the value of *Murri Views* when stories published were three weeks old and out-of-date. “And that’s the beauty of radio. You buy this morning’s paper, it’s yesterday’s news; but you hear this morning stories, that’s what’s happening today, what’s happening now” (Bayles 2004). Therefore, because of the different role played by Indigenous newspapers, stories relating to the community may have a longer life span in the Indigenous public sphere than they would in the dominant public sphere; and it may be more important to fulfil cultural protocols such as speaking to all the relevant people rather than simply meeting deadlines. However, there is still a demand for stories to be relevant.

Conflict, another important mainstream media news value, again has less appeal within the Indigenous print media and in fact, many journalists in this field actively avoid conflict-driven stories. This choice can again be related to cultural protocol and sometimes, conflicts of interest that may arise for Indigenous journalists. If a newspaper targets a specific geographic community, the community may be small and writing a conflict driven story may lead to significant community distress (Bousen 2004). While *Torres News* journalists avoid taking a “gung ho” approach to conflict, they do not back away from it if it is present and important to cover. However, they will not “stir any shit” (Bousen 2004). Gordon made the same point about the *Koori Mail*. While journalists should not seek out or inflate conflict, they should not avoid it if it exists (Gordon 2004). To ensure a report is fair and accurate, the *Koori Mail* avoids favouring one Indigenous group over another (Cheadle 2004).

Attitudes towards conflict were a source of disagreement between stringers and the editorial team of the *Koori Mail*. For instance, Howes argued she *would* avoid covering community conflict because of the potential for her story to inflame a

situation that might otherwise have been resolved locally. The long publishing schedule of newspapers such as the *Koori Mail* means a story may not reach a community until many weeks after it was originally written. In this time, the parties involved may have reached agreement and a published story may reignite the problem (Howes 2004). Similarly, *NIT* editor Chris Graham sees conflict as a “hugely important” news value for the *NIT*, but *NIT* columnist Brian Johnson (2004) considers conflict to be an overrated news value and argues it is one of the main problems with mainstream media coverage of Indigenous issues: “If there is no conflict, there is no story.” Howes also suggests journalists who promote disagreements between various Aboriginal people or communities can be seen to be “feeding the lions [the mainstream media]” with stories showing “blackfellas fighting again” (2004). Accordingly, the importance of conflict as a news value varies depending on the journalist’s role within the newspaper. While all agreed they would not seek out conflict, those in an editorial role would not avoid it while journalists who had to work with the community more directly tended to believe it was better to stay away from community conflict. This impacts on the newspaper’s public sphere role because stories may be buried if they are likely to have a negative impact on the community. While this may be appropriate for maintaining ties with and protecting the community, it also opens up Indigenous newspapers to criticism of subjectivity. Topics the wider community may believe should be discussed in an open forum may not be debated outside the local community.

The activities of prominent people also have strong mainstream media news value. People who are considered to have a prominent profile within the community are valued as sources by mainstream journalists. This is another area of difference between Indigenous and mainstream news values. There is also a disparity between which Indigenous people are considered prominent in the dominant public sphere and those which are considered prominent within the Indigenous public sphere. Community elders are valued as sources within Indigenous newspapers but they are likely to be very different people from those the mainstream media consider to be prominent (Waharai 2004; Knowles 2005; McNamara 2005). In fact, the very idea of prominence may be a mainstream media construction that projects “a false sense of identity, which is really in a sense media generated” (Johnson 2004). Johnson explains:

Most of the people that I've dealt with, who have impressed me in my life, are not what I'd consider to be prominent people in the public eye. And there are many, many Aboriginal people out there that are not recognised and yet you get some guy like Noel Pearson, who really in my view talks a lot of gobbledy-gook, is considered to be some sort of media hero. I just don't understand it.

While it is culturally necessary and appropriate to speak to certain people within the Indigenous community, they are unlikely to be the people mainstream media would approach (Bousen 2004). Therefore, while people who are important within the Indigenous community do have news value, these are unlikely to be the same people mainstream journalists would approach for comment. They may have a high profile within the Indigenous public sphere, but this is not likely to have carried over into the dominant public sphere. Consequently, as with the land rights publications discussed in Chapter 8, the journalists writing for contemporary Indigenous newspapers have a strong sense of who the appropriate community voice is to speak on issues. Contemporary Indigenous newspapers are therefore providing entry for a wider range of Indigenous voices to public sphere debates.

9.8 Sources

9.8.1 Sources of news

The way stories are generated by Indigenous newspapers provides a clear sense of the newspaper's connectedness to the Indigenous community and the Indigenous public sphere. The Indigenous community is the most important source of stories for contemporary Indigenous newspapers (Waharai 2004; Graham 2004; Bousen 2004; Howes 2004; Oakley 2004; Montcrieff 2004; Giles 2004; Quillam 2004; Johnson 2004; Jones 2004; McNamara 2005). Community members suggest stringers "write a story about this" which often results in a story being produced (Howes 2004). Community members also contact the newspaper directly with ideas for stories, information about community events or the achievements of community members (Forde 2004). Similarly, *Deadly Vibe* journalists have their "fingers on the pulse of what is going on" and most stories are generated from their community contacts (Jones 2004). Community members and friends and family members of Indigenous journalists provide ideas for stories (Quillam 2004; Giles 2004; Keane 2004). Journalists also canvass forums where Indigenous people gather to discuss issues of importance to them such as talkback radio (Bousen 2004), email lists and groups,

community meetings and events all provide a source of community-driven story ideas (Forde 2004). Through their communication with journalists writing for Indigenous newspapers, the community therefore influences and drives the topics that are debated within the Indigenous public sphere.

Journalists also canvass mainstream media for story suggestions they can rework. Condie explained full-time journalists working for the *Koori Mail* monitor the national and state newspapers on a daily basis for stories affecting Indigenous people. They look for stories that can be presented in more detail using appropriate sources for their readership. Using mainstream media as a source of news stories allows the *Koori Mail*, which lacks resources, to tap into or piggy back on the resources of a larger newspaper (Condie 2004). The stories may be presented from a different angle or to “correct what they [mainstream journalists] have written” (Howes 2004). While tapping into what was being covered in the mainstream media to find story ideas for their newspapers was a common practice for journalists working in this field (Oakley 2004; Montcrieff 2004; Giles 2004), *Murri Views* actively avoided canvassing mainstream or national Indigenous newspapers because of their lack of focus on issues concerning Indigenous Queenslanders (Knowles 2005).

A final but important source of news stories for Indigenous newspapers are government sources and departments, non-government organisations and media releases generally. However, while story ideas may be generated from these sources, they will be approached from the perspective of the community (Howes 2004; Forde 2004). ATSIC staff and commissioners and other government sources often provided the *NIT* with story leads. When ATSIC was being dismantled:

...the news agenda was driven by leaks we were getting from ATSIC staff and commissioners but it was equally important to use government bureaucrats and press secretaries as sources as well (Graham 2004).

Other journalists in this field disliked using media releases and some actively avoided writing stories from them (McNamara 2005). Journalists working for Indigenous newspapers therefore gather story ideas from a range of sources, including mainstream media, government sources and NGOs but the community provides the main pool from which ideas are drawn. Journalists work to maintain their community connections within the Indigenous public sphere and even when using mainstream

media or government sources of information, feel they produce stories from an Indigenous community perspective.

9.8.2 Interviewed sources

Across the board, the first people that journalists working for contemporary Indigenous media seek comment from, are Indigenous community members. Local elders take precedence over those considered to be newsworthy by mainstream journalists (Waharai 2004). Similarly, McNamara begins her interview process with Indigenous community sources (2005). However, *Yamaji News* journalists are more likely to seek comment from grassroots community members since they have higher news value locally than well-known Indigenous people such as Patrick Dodson. They may then supplement these interviews with comment from Indigenous leaders (Oakley 2004). Therefore while Indigenous community members are often the first people contacted for comment, there was a hierarchy even within the Indigenous community.

As part of the investigation process, interviews with community members are supplemented with other appropriate interviews. The other sources included are governed by the story being written and who is a credible source of information (Gordon 2004). *Kurbingui Star* journalists might interview local government members for comment on an issue or event (Waharai 2004) and while there is a move away from the mainstream reliance on official sources and a preference for community sources, there is also a recognition that interviewed sources must bring “credible knowledge” to the story (Forde 2004; Ericson, Baranek & Chan 1989). However, this was not a uniform belief. Some journalists actively avoid interviewing government sources and politicians. For instance, Oakley argued *Yamaji News* readers do not “want to know what a pollie in Perth has to say” (2004). Similarly *Murri Views* journalists looked for the local angle rather than following the government angle that had often been “covered to death” (McNamara 2005).

There was also some disparity regarding the value of social movements and non-government agencies as interviewees. While social movements such as ANTaR (Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation) were valued by *Koori Mail* journalists, Indigenous *NIT* journalist Tamara Giles found some non-Indigenous social movements such as Sorry Day committees and ANTaR difficult to work with.

The people who worked with these organisations were often unwilling to comment and act as spokespeople and could be somewhat “wishy washy” with members only wanting to be involved from a distance (Giles 2004). In contrast, Giles found Indigenous-controlled social movements easier to work with and attributed this to workers’ lack of understanding of media policy and activities. Giles also believes the fact that she is Indigenous and works for an Indigenous newspaper creates a greater level of trust (2004). People working for Indigenous social movements:

...know I’m going to print what they say. There’s a trust there. I’ve still got to live amongst the community and run into those people whereas mainstream journalists, I don’t think, would have that problem (Giles 2004).

Consequently, the first people interviewed for stories in Indigenous newspapers are likely to be grassroots Indigenous community members. Those considered to be Indigenous leaders by mainstream media are however not so highly prized and government officials, while valued by some Indigenous newspapers, may be actively avoided by others.

9.9 Pressures – internal and external

A shared challenge for each of the newspapers in this section is the need to operate in the Indigenous public sphere in a culturally sensitive manner. The *Torres News*, which is run by a non-Indigenous family, resolved this challenge by employing a cultural liaison officer who advises the newspaper staff on how to handle sensitive issues such as deaths and on who is the most appropriate person for journalists to speak to on different islands. Each island in the Torres Strait region is culturally distinct from the others (Bousen 2004). *Murri Views* journalists also followed a strict cultural protocol to avoid offending the community. This was especially true in conflict situations and each story was treated individually (Knowles 2005).

Contemporary Indigenous newspapers also need to negotiate the pitfalls of “black politics”. For example while the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) controls the political sphere in the region and has access to funding and resources, the Greater Economy Steering Committee (GESC) consists of the most powerful, former politicians and leaders in the Torres Strait and lacks funding and resources. Both of these bodies have an important role within the public sphere but the Torres Strait Island region community is also small and connected. Consequently to be able to

operate as an effective method of communication, *Torres News* journalists must avoid becoming involved in conflict between the two groups. This can be difficult, however, when the less powerful GESC requests help with the production of media releases or media strategy advice (Bousen 2004). Bousen (2004) argues he acts as a counterbalance when such help has been given by ensuring both sides have equal space to put forward their perspective in the newspaper. “There’s still a democracy between opposing forces, but obviously the TSRA would like their voice to be heard, unopposed.” The need to be unbiased and to be perceived as unbiased was also highlighted by Graham from the *NIT*. The *NIT* carried negative coverage about the former ATSIC representatives Geoff Clark and Sugar Ray Robinson, but both men continued to talk to the newspaper (Graham 2004). Graham (2004) explained:

If you piss off a blackfella that’s it. You’re unlikely to ever get on side but we’ve been very strategic and very careful in how we’re perceived and who we’re perceived as being aligned with and we don’t really align ourselves with anything other than the story. The Stolen Wages story, for example. There is no excuse, there is no getting out of what happened and if we’re perceived to be anti-government well so be it.

Journalists working for Indigenous newspapers must find the balance between producing objective, honest journalism that covers conflict within the Indigenous public sphere, and avoiding sensationalising community conflict for the sake of getting a juicy story. Irresponsible coverage of conflict could inflame friction and the journalist/newspaper that publishes the story risks being accused of “feeding the lions” (Howes 2004; Keane 2004). Keane (2004) explained:

[Indigenous journalists] have to be very careful...and there are a lot of things we have to take into account when we’re writing a story. You know, who we’re writing about, and this kind of subject is not quite right or it’s sensitive. We have all these things like community expectations and little things you have to take into account when we’re writing stories, like what will be suitable for communities. It can be quite difficult, quite challenging.

However, journalists’ desire to avoid accusations of sensationalism must be weighed against criticism that Indigenous media are biased and not objective (Murphy & Murphy 1981). The Australian Indigenous community, like that of the Torres Strait Islands, is small and connected. This is awkward for all journalists working in the Indigenous media arena but especially so for Indigenous journalists. They will invariably encounter family and friends in positions of power and this can be

“problematic” especially when carrying out investigative journalism (Condie 2004; Montcrieff 2004). Indigenous journalists feel a responsibility to their communities to try to bring about change and to report the discrimination and inequality that still exists (Keane 2004). Indigenous journalists may walk a tightrope between their responsibility to their community and their responsibility as journalists to report fairly and accurately.

Equally, journalists who work in the Indigenous media field must be prepared to take time to develop trusting relationships. A journalist who is Aboriginal but very fair skinned said while the majority of people were “lovely”, on occasions they could “be a bit hostile” and this had made the journalist feel like “an outcast to Indigenous culture”. The journalist’s response to hostility was to “be patient and listen and ask questions” and to avoid being forceful and instead to take a “quite gentle” approach to the journalism process (Anonymous source). Journalists in this field therefore have to be prepared to listen and let people “tell their stories” and they must develop patience and be willing to spend more time with their sources (Anonymous source). The hostility experienced by this *Koori Mail* journalist could have developed as a response to previous mainstream media treatment of the Indigenous community because of the lack of media knowledge within the Indigenous community. A lack of knowledge regarding media practices, teamed with a lack of cultural sensitivity on the part of mainstream journalists has led to people being taken for granted by the mainstream media (Giles 2004). Consequently, Giles (2004) suggests that people “get caught out all the time, because ...Aboriginal people can be really trusting people if you develop a relationship with them on a close level and sometimes they just don’t understand that journos are just there to get the scoop”.

The need to develop a trusting relationship goes further than just enabling journalists to get the story they need. Journalists working in the Indigenous public sphere and especially Indigenous journalists consider themselves to have an obligation to the community, as Giles (2004) recounts: “I cannot live in a community as an Indigenous person if I’ve done something wrong...it’s a social obligation.” She ensures this trust by representing those she interviews honestly. If she “cleans up quotes” she checks what she intends to publish with the source. She may also allow interviewed sources to read over the section of her story that pertains to them before submitting it to her

editor, although she admits this can create problems. Sources who are unfamiliar with the media process may not understand the real pressures of deadlines and they may delay in letting her know they want to make changes or are happy with what has been written. When the story is printed sources will then come back to her and say “I wanted to change that...” (Giles 2004). McNamara from *Murri Views* also allows sources to read her copy before it is published (2005) although her *Murri Views* editor, a non-Indigenous journalist, did not agree with this approach. All interviews were recorded to protect the newspaper from claims sources were taken out of context or misquoted (Knowles 2005).

Being sensitive to the lack of trust in the media and being prepared to allow sources to read over their comments before publication places increased pressure on journalists’ time. Similarly an interview that would take an hour in a mainstream situation might take four in an Indigenous situation (Giles 2004). Journalists must therefore develop a different attitude towards time, as Giles (2004) explains:

[There needs to be an acknowledgment that this is] just how [Indigenous] people work and it’s that whole trust thing... I do it myself so I understand it but it’s really hard to teach, especially to non-Indigenous journos and tell them patience is vital. I tell them, if you’re going to write a story in Indigenous affairs, don’t start it that day, start it a week before.

The inability of non-Indigenous journalists to understand the intricacies of working within the Indigenous community and seeing things from an Indigenous perspective was also highlighted by McNamara (2005). One of the challenges for journalists working in the Indigenous field is getting older sources to speak on the record (McNamara 2005). Older Indigenous people are often scared of doing this because they are embarrassed and fear of being judged or spoken about in the community (McNamara 2005). Journalists working in the Indigenous public sphere must therefore develop excellent communication skills and be prepared to extend and adapt traditional journalistic practices to accommodate the needs of the community with which they work.

The willingness of journalists working in Indigenous media to take extra time and allow sources to review their comments before publication may also add to the lack of respect some mainstream organisations have for Indigenous media. This lack of respect from mainstream media organisations is a source of frustration for those

working in the Indigenous field. Condie often heard “along the grapevine” that the mainstream press did not consider Indigenous media as valid; they were considered too soft and biased in their presentation. Condie agrees there is some validity to the claims but refutes it is related to a lack of ability from individual journalists. The problems relate to a lack of resources rather than a lack of journalistic skill (Condie 2004). As has been demonstrated by analysing news values and their choice of sources, Indigenous newspapers also have a different focus from mainstream media, as Condie (2004) explains: “Indigenous newspapers exist for the community rather than the mainstream media.” In contrast, mainstream media exist to make a profit for their shareholders and this can push journalists to produce sensational and conflict driven news. There is a “completely different underpinning of that organisation” (Condie 2004). Johnson points out that Indigenous media are often judged using the same commercial parameters applied to commercial media and that this is not “a level playing field” because Indigenous media are still in the early stages of development (Johnson 2004). However, criticism of the credibility of Indigenous media comes from within their own ranks too. Graham (2004) suggests it is not helpful to political debate that the greatest criticism of Indigenous media is that there “tends to be a sugar coating of news that reflects badly on Aboriginal individuals or organisations”. He argues the *NIT* is actually harder on Aboriginal organisations and individuals than they are on white organisations: “Not very often, and it’s usually the other way around, but we don’t shy away.” Consequently, while criticism of Indigenous media may be unfair if it is based on an evaluation of its commercial success or practices, criticism of its ability to participate on an equal footing in political debates because of a lack of resources and their subjective attitude has more justification. For publications to bring about social change, they must reach and engage mainstream Australians and their ability to do this may be affected if they are not viewed as objective and credible. This discussion highlights the importance journalists writing for Indigenous newspapers place on maintaining a trusting, open relationship with members of the Indigenous community. Their willingness to allow sources to scrutinize their stories prior to publication and to ensure cultural protocols are met illustrates the connection between journalists and the community. This trust and openness helps to ensure Indigenous journalists are given access to information and stories the community want to discuss at a public level and therefore has the potential to enhance public sphere debate. This discussion also shows the unique relationship

Indigenous journalists have with their sources and community of interest. In contrast to mainstream media journalists, Indigenous journalists, and those writing for Indigenous newspapers, are likely to place the needs of the community before the needs of shareholders and the newspaper.

This evokes consideration of a relatively recent political issue which received considerable mainstream media coverage. Grace Bond, along with other members of the Cherbourg Aboriginal community in south-west Queensland, contacted *The Courier-Mail* about child abuse that was happening in their community. The women knew they had to generate wider community support to pressure government to initiate real changes and ensure child protection was a major concern for the Queensland government (Bond 2005). While the *Koori Mail* or *NIT* would have covered the story and the Indigenous community would have read about it, their coverage would not have exerted enough political pressure on government and mainstream Australia to force the Queensland government to act (Bond 2005). Consequently, despite the trust between journalists writing for Indigenous newspapers and the Indigenous community, and while the Indigenous print media is an invaluable method of communicating within the Indigenous public sphere, it *is* perceived as lacking the power to exert political pressure to bring about social change in the mainstream public sphere.

This idea is not universal though because while the Cherbourg women felt they needed to use a mainstream newspaper to pressure the Queensland Government to act to end child abuse in their community, whistleblowers connected to ATSIC chose to contact the *NIT* with confidential and leaked information about changes to government policy. The newspaper was then faced with the choice of whether to break the story themselves or to pass the story to a mainstream publication and therefore generate more public awareness (Graham 2004). Handing over a strong story to the mainstream media in the hope they break it effectively is frustrating for *NIT* journalists. The mainstream newspaper may water the story down and the lack of kudos for researching a story or obtaining information they cannot use is also very exasperating for the journalists working on the paper that receives the initial leak (Graham 2004). However, the responsibility to the community and family takes precedence over the benefits of scooping the story (Giles 2004). That the *NIT* chose to

pass the story to a prominent mainstream newspaper shows their understanding that they do not have the power to generate sufficient public sphere debate to force governments to act but also their commitment to acting in the best interest of the Indigenous community.

The criticism that Indigenous newspapers are subjective and lack political power has grounds and is enhanced because some Indigenous newspapers are reliant on government advertising. This pressure is two-fold. On the one hand they “cannot afford to put too many noses out of joint” while on the other, taking a hard political line could result in some Indigenous community members (and government representatives or departments) being put offside (Anonymous source). For the most part, newspapers such as the *Koori Mail* are considered “fairly soft” and therefore of no threat to government and with little impact on mainstream media agendas (Howes 2004; Forde 2004). Nevertheless the *NIT* faced significant consequences after receiving leaked information about the abolition of ATSIC. The newspaper chose to pass the leaked information to the *Australian Financial Review* (*AFR*) which broke the story about the Federal government’s plans to replace ATSIC with a government selected advisory body, opposition to the abolition of ATSIC and the failure of government departments to undertake reviews regarding the delivery of services to Aboriginal people (*NIT*, August 2004). Shortly after this leak was passed on to the *AFR*, on 11 November 2004, Australian Federal Police raided the *NIT* offices and *NIT* editor Chris Graham’s home on instructions from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet although no official explanation of why the raid took place was provided. No charges were laid after the two-hour raid. The offices of the *AFR* were not raided. The raid was reported in most major newspapers in Australia and as far a field as the French press. The international organisation “Reporters without Borders” condemned the raid and said it “violated the principle of the protection of sources, which is fundamental to guaranteeing independent investigative journalism” (Reporters Without Borders, 2004)

The *NIT*, more than any other contemporary Indigenous newspaper has endured public challenges and conflicts in the form of rivalry with other newspapers and the well-publicised raid on its premises. It attracted rivalry and animosity from the *Koori Mail* that was greater than had been expected, primarily on the basis of questions

about non-Indigenous control of the newspaper. Journalists at the *NIT* were subjected to pressure from government sources not to publish unfavourable stories. The newspaper, like most small Indigenous newspapers, is largely reliant on advertising and particularly on government advertising. Government departments have tried to influence the stories the *NIT* publishes by threatening to place their advertisements elsewhere. An example of this was the newspaper's strong stance against former ATSIC Chairperson Geoff Clark. The *NIT* was warned it would lose advertising and after not heeding warnings, lost all ATSIC advertising (Graham 2004). The newspaper receives little advertising from either the Queensland or NSW governments and has been forced to find other sources of advertising such as the Croc Festival⁶⁴.

Indigenous newspapers are undoubtedly financially vulnerable. *Yamaji News* did not attract significant government advertising and the newspaper was reliant on funding from ATSIC, once this body was disbanded that funding was lost. While the newspaper took a very soft approach and avoided confrontational stories, it was nevertheless an opportunity for Indigenous people to communicate within the Indigenous public sphere and the removal of its funding removed an opportunity for Indigenous people to participate in the conversation about matters concerning them.

It would seem likely that newspapers in the Indigenous public sphere would seek out opportunities to work together and to share resources and in some cases this happens. For instance, *Murri Views* and *Imparja* television had a contra deal regarding advertising where *Imparja* broadcast advertisements for *Murri Views* and in return *Murri Views* advertised *Imparja* content. However, there is also rivalry between publications. Downing (2001) argued alternative media should create networks and work together to achieve their often common goals, but in truth this rarely happens. Yet, while alternative media may share similar political and community aspirations, they tend to work in isolation (O'Siochru 1999, p. 143). The relationship between the *Koori Mail* and the *NIT* epitomises this isolation because both newspapers, although they share very similar and complimentary goals, have shared a very public rivalry (Condie in Neill in *The Australian*, March 2002). While the *NIT* has always claimed

⁶⁴ Croc Festival. Annual festivals held around Australia for Indigenous and non-Indigenous primary and high school students.
http://www.crocfestival.org.au/modules.php?op=modload&name=PagEd&file=index&topic_id=1&page_id=1

to have Indigenous ownership, the 26 February 2003 *Koori Mail* included an open letter from Owen Carriage in which he informed readers he was no longer associated with the *NIT* and although the newspaper continued to claim it had “‘black and white’ owners” he was unaware of who those other Aboriginal owners were. Carriage’s letter argued Indigenous people were being “misled and betrayed by the proprietors of the National Indigenous Times” (*Koori Mail*, 26 February 2003). An editorial piece in the *Koori Mail*’s 12 March 2003 edition continued with this question and asked “Who really owns the National Indigenous Times?”. Chris Graham, the *NIT*’s editor, wrote to the *Koori Mail* and claimed they had “seized a chance to cause enormous damage to the *NIT*” and that the *Koori Mail* wanted to “drive the *NIT* out of the market”. The *Koori Mail* article advised readers that two Aboriginal people, Tamara Giles and Brett Leavy, had written to them to say they were part owners of the *NIT*. The *Koori Mail* (2003) also claimed it had “no issue with competition, as the *NIT* seems to fear. We do have an issue with any organisation who lays claim to Indigenous ownership but won’t give full details”. While this initial hostility between the *NIT* and *Koori Mail* has not significantly dissipated, both publications seem content to fill their own niche, and continue to produce quite different publications.

9.10 Chapter summary

The 1990s saw some radical changes within the Indigenous print media. While the first national Indigenous newspapers were launched, a need still exists for smaller, regional newspapers that work at a local level. Similarly, like the newspapers in the 1950s, 60s, 70s and 80s, each of these newspapers recognises the importance of maintaining their connectedness to the Indigenous community. Community activities and preferences drive their news values and their choice of sources. The journalists who work for the newspapers (and especially the Indigenous journalists) know that forgetting cultural protocols or getting involved in community disputes could mean they will find it hard to do their work in the future and could impact on their relationships with family and friends. This can sometimes impact on the approach they take to difficult stories, although the *National Indigenous Times* has a strong track record of not backing away from tough community issues. Journalists writing for Indigenous publications must show patience and be prepared to spend time developing trusting relationships within the community. They must be prepared and willing to adhere to cultural protocols, especially when dealing with community

conflict. However, the willingness of Indigenous newspapers and journalists to conform to these demands has led to criticism of the Indigenous print media being subjective and lacking professionalism. In this sense, Indigenous media seem caught between a rock and a hard place — but only if the comparisons are with the mainstream. As Clemencia Rodriguez has argued with respect to citizens' media, they should be considered on their own terms, not in opposition to the mainstream. Rodriguez suggests citizens' media "...express the will and agency of a human community confronting historical, marginalizing and isolating forces..." (2001, p. 63). This is certainly true of Indigenous media in Australia and Indigenous newspapers, both historically and in their contemporary form, are working to address social, political and economic imbalances between mainstream Australia and Indigenous Australians. Indigenous newspapers are intrinsically linked to their communities and journalists writing for these newspapers often consider the needs of their community of interests before the commercial needs of the newspaper they write for. This is a fundamental difference between mainstream and Indigenous media and illustrates why measurements of 'success' should and do vary between Indigenous and mainstream publications. Despite the role they play in confronting these "historical, marginalizing and isolating" (Rodriguez 2001) forces, most contemporary Indigenous newspapers avoid taking a hard political line. The exception to this rule is the *NIT* which sees its role as taking the issues affecting Indigenous communities into the wider political public sphere to apply pressure on governments and to bring about social change. Although most of the journalists working on the newspapers produced since the 1990s are professionally trained, their desire to fulfil their fourth estate role and to ensure issues affecting the Indigenous community are publicly debated seems to have given way to the need to avoid community conflict, and inflaming community politics. Rather, the focus for many of these newspapers is to correct misrepresentations in the mainstream media and build community self-esteem. While this is understandable given these newspapers are largely reliant on funding from government either through the provision of specific funding or government advertising, it does limit their ability to be effective mechanisms for change within either the Indigenous or mainstream public sphere. But the public sphere role of Indigenous media cannot be downplayed. Providing a space for Indigenous people to debate issues of importance, offering a stage from which a range of voices respected within the Indigenous community can be heard, building community self-esteem and

linking community members are just some of the public sphere functions contemporary Indigenous publications help to fulfil.

These issues will be considered in further detail in the final two chapters.

Chapter 10: Looking at the big picture

Up to this point, this research project has focused on how individual Indigenous newspapers worked within their specific chronological and historical setting. The previous four chapters have contemplated each newspaper separately and as part of a network of publications produced at a particular time. Their individual audiences, specific problems they have faced, their news values and source choices were examined to provide a clearer understanding of their purpose and role. While this has provided an understanding of the position of these newspapers within their community and an Indigenous public sphere at those specific times, it has not explained the role played by Indigenous print media *across time*, through the historical development and evolution of the Indigenous public sphere or, indeed, the role they have played in the wider political public sphere. This chapter therefore takes the next step and situates Indigenous print media within a contemporary theoretical framework and examines their public sphere functions. The discussion in this chapter will consider whether this investigation of the Indigenous print media answers the questions “is there an Indigenous public sphere and what is its nature?” It will investigate whether and how these media have helped to establish such a sphere and facilitated ongoing dialogue and interaction between it and the dominant public sphere. The shape of a potential Indigenous public sphere has been the topic of debate amongst scholars (Avison & Meadows 2000; Hartley & McKee 2000) and this chapter will examine how the findings of this study help to provide a clearer sense of its potential structure, and how Indigenous organisations and print media work within this structure. This chapter, through an examination of the attitudes of interviewees who have either produced Indigenous media or have used them to promote the activities of organisations they work for, will then consider how well Indigenous print media execute some of the functions of an alternative media sector.

10.1 Placing an Indigenous public sphere within a theoretical framework

A primary question for this thesis whether and how Indigenous print media have helped to establish and develop Indigenous public sphere/s and the nature of that/those spheres. The very existence of the diverse range of newspapers analysed in this study and the aims and objectives of the journalists and Indigenous people

involved in their production demonstrate there is an Indigenous public sphere and that these newspapers have provided a mechanism for debate and the creation of public opinion. The findings chapters show that beginning with *The Australian Aborigine Call* in 1938 through to the *National Indigenous Times* and *Koori Mail* in 2009, each Indigenous newspaper has played a role in establishing a space where Indigenous people, and those interested in Indigenous affairs, can discuss issues of concern to them and try to influence dominant public sphere public opinion. This thesis also provides a brief history and clearer portrait of the people who participated in the production of these newspapers and the problems, successes, achievements and battles they faced.

Yet the existence of such a space is not indicative of its effectiveness. Public spheres can be categorised as strong or weak and as limited to “opinion formation” rather than “decision making” (Fraser 1992, p. 134). The question remains, therefore, about whether the existence of such a space is sufficient to ensure Indigenous people can initiate public sphere processes with enough substance to exact change. Under Fraser’s classification, given the size of the Indigenous population and therefore the potentially small number of Indigenous public sphere participants, the Indigenous public sphere could only be categorised as weak and presumably limited to influencing public opinion rather than promoting decision making. Yet, Squires (1999) suggests Fraser’s categorisation of publics as either strong or weak underestimates the power of “weak” public spheres because some subaltern public spheres (e.g. the Black and women’s public sphere) *have* affected the decision making processes of state and dominant publics. Similarly, despite the small number of participants, the findings of this study show Indigenous public sphere processes have affected state and dominant public decision-making in Australia. For instance, the lobbying of FCAATSI (including the use of Indigenous print media) contributed to the successful inclusion of Indigenous people in the national census and brought Indigenous Australians under the control of the federal government after 98 percent of Australians voted “Yes” in the 1967 referendum⁶⁵. Similarly, Indigenous public sphere activity, promoted through Indigenous publications such as *Bunji*, *NQ Messagestick* and *National Messagestick*, *Land Rights News* and *Land Rights*

⁶⁵ The 1967 referendum led to a change in the Australian constitution so that Indigenous people (and legislation affecting them) were brought under the control of the Federal government. It also led to Indigenous people being included in the national census.

Queensland may have influenced the successful implementation of a range of land rights legislation. Therefore, while public spheres with small numbers of participants, as in this case, do have limited potential to demand social change, there are instances where through strong and consistent lobbying they have successfully achieved significant political, economic and social goals.

Indigenous media have been a key instrument in the successful achievement of goals at various levels of Indigenous public sphere processes. With this in mind, the mapping of the creation and processes of Indigenous print media from the 1930s onwards undertaken by this study identifies independent media functions occurring in the Indigenous public sphere but also charts the evolution of Indigenous institutions and their role and place within an Indigenous public sphere. The two are intrinsically entwined. For example, *The Australian Abo Call*, edited by John T. Patten and funded by non-Aboriginal publishers Stephenson and Miles, promoted the activities of the Aborigines Progressive Association (APA) that was founded and run by Patten and William Ferguson. The APA existed prior to the newspaper but the newspaper played an important role in promoting the organisation's activities. Patten used *The Australian Abo Call* to highlight the problems facing Aboriginal Australians and to lobby state and federal governments for change. Patten's use of *Abo Call* to pressure the government about Aborigines Protection Board policy and activities is an example of this (*The Australian Abo Call*, September 1938, p. 2). *The Australian Abo Call* was therefore operating as a mechanism to further Indigenous public sphere processes.

A theory developed by Squires sits over the findings of this study that public spheres evolve, and there is significant corroboration between her ideas and the phases of the Indigenous public sphere identified in this study. In her 1999 thesis *Searching Black Voices in the Black Public Sphere: An Alternative Approach to the Analysis of Public Spheres*, Squires identified four phases of public sphere transition (see Appendix 6): the enclave, oscillating, counterpublic and a satellite or parallel phase (Squires 1999, pp. 31-39; Squires 2002, pp. 463-464). This study has identified a similar evolutionary process taking place across time in the Indigenous public sphere and has called them the *Trailblazer*, the *Revolutionary* and the *Professional* phases. Squires' model therefore provides a valuable comparative theoretical framework through which to consider the changing nature of the Indigenous public sphere and the ways

Indigenous print media demonstrate or have contributed to this transition. Squires' model expands on Habermas's (1989) approach and on the work of scholars such as Fraser (1992) by providing a range of signifiers that map out how subaltern public spheres transform in response to internal and external stimulation.

Furthermore, there are clear parallels between characteristics identified in the Indigenous public sphere in this study and the characteristics recognised by Squires in her study of the Black public sphere in the United States. Squires contends that regardless of the level of oppression faced by subaltern public spheres and regardless of any desire to maintain distance from the dominant public sphere, some level of oscillation between the two spheres must occur. It is, however, the level and frequency of this oscillation between a subaltern and the dominant public sphere that dictates its ability to produce change and to disseminate information and ideas across both spheres (Squires 1999, p. 35). Analysis should consider how much oscillation is occurring, the purpose of the oscillation (i.e. to enable surveillance or to engage in dialogue) and whether there is movement across the public sphere boundaries in both directions (i.e. from the dominant to the subaltern and from the subaltern to the dominant public sphere). Whether members of the subaltern public sphere are able to communicate in their own voice and to follow their own norms and rules, and whether the oscillation from the subaltern to the dominant public sphere is opposed either socially or politically by the dominant public sphere must also be considered (Squires 1999, pp.35-36).

Squires defines an enclave public sphere as an embryonic form of a public sphere. In this state, public sphere activity is likely to be covert and communication is primarily between public sphere participants (Squires 2002, p. 448). Access to dominant communication channels is likely to be restricted and interaction with members of the dominant group in society may be "paternalistic or patronising". Members of the enclave public sphere are bonded by their cultural identity (Squires 1999, p. 32). When the findings of this study during the *Trailblazers* phase are compared to Squires' model the evidence suggests the Indigenous public sphere was emerging from an enclave state and transforming into an oscillating state at that time. For instance, during the 1930s-1950s Indigenous people were subjected to significant state and federal government oppression but still managed to meet to discuss politics

and to plan political action at places like Salt Pan Creek where older community members such as John T. Patten mentored younger members such as Nichols, Groves and Gibbs (Foley 2005). Furthermore, Patten's use of *The Australian Abo Call: The Voice of the Aborigines* to circulate Indigenous messages between the Indigenous and dominant public spheres is evidence of the developing nature of Indigenous public sphere processes that Squires refers to as the transition from an enclave to an oscillating response. Campaigners such as Patten and Ferguson were producing independent and overt messages and were using their own media to promote the activities of the Aborigines Progressive Association (Day of Mourning literature and *The Australian Abo Call*). Similarly, while there may have been concerns about their participation, the involvement of Miles and Stevenson in the production of both these documents is evidence of the participation of non-Indigenous Australians working with Indigenous people to bring about social change. The ensuing conflict between Ferguson and Patten is further evidence of the range of voices and ideas being openly circulated throughout the Indigenous public sphere. Regardless of Miles and Stephenson's input, *The Australian Abo Call* was written from the perspective and position of Indigenous Australians and without consideration for the norms and expectations of the dominant group. Still, the response of the Australian government that led to the newspaper's early demise shows the transformation from an enclave to an oscillating response was not quite complete. The Federal government's successful application of force in the form of taxes to close down the newspaper suggests the level of opposition from the dominant public sphere was still too strong and hostile to allow for any great change to be effected by Indigenous public sphere participants at that time.

Further proof that the Indigenous public sphere processes were developing from an enclave to an oscillating framework during the *Trailblazers* phase is provided by the number of Indigenous organisations that came into existence during the 1950s and onward. Squires defines oscillating public sphere activity as more open and successful in promoting social change (1999, p. 35). To successfully generate social change, subaltern public spheres must engage and interact with other public spheres. Oscillating public sphere participants may adopt dominant public sphere communication techniques and styles to facilitate the debate but they will use these channels to promote their own identity and to challenge stereotypes. Dominant public

sphere resistance may be lowered (Squires 1999, p. 35). The research carried out in this study has shown an increasing number of Indigenous institutions existed across Australia during the 1950s and more non-Indigenous supporters were working with Indigenous Australians to effect social, political and economic changes. The findings show newspapers such as the Victorian Aborigines' Advancement League's *Smoke Signals*, the Coolbaroo League's *Westralian Aborigine* and the Aborigines Progressive League's *Churinga* were used to oscillate information from within the Indigenous public sphere and to "educate, influence and assist Government and the community to a proper recognition of its duties and responsibilities" (*Smoke Signals*, June 1961, pp. 19-21). Indigenous public sphere participants were therefore using dominant public sphere communication processes to communicate both within and outside the Indigenous public sphere. For instance, Groves used *Churinga* to transmit information across public sphere boundaries and to create unity within the Indigenous public sphere. Within his work he acknowledged the diversity in the Indigenous community but also the shared bonds that called on participants to "work together in harmony" to achieve their common goals (*Churinga*, December 1965). What this suggests is that while during the 1930s the Indigenous public sphere was still too weak to successfully push for significant change, by the 1950s there was a range of grassroots Indigenous organisations that formed a network across Australia and used their newspapers to link to each other and to connect with the Indigenous and mainstream communities. Consequently, the Indigenous public sphere of the 1950s onwards was stronger and more able to lobby for and achieve social change.

The network of Indigenous organisations that developed and expanded from the 1950s onwards marks the continuing evolution of Indigenous public sphere. By the 1960s and through to the 1980s, evidence from this study suggests the Indigenous public sphere was exhibiting what Squires calls "counterpublic sphere" characteristics (Squires 1999, pp. 36-37; Squires 2002, pp. 459-463). During the counterpublic sphere phase, public sphere participants and organisations are strong enough to sustain ongoing activity and to lobby for social change. An increased level of public sphere activity from the 1960s and through the 1980s and the increasing use of independent Indigenous-controlled media is proof Indigenous public sphere processes had developed further. All of the following newspapers were produced during this period: *The Koorier*, *Identity*, the *Black Australian News*, *Black Liberation*, *Black*

Nation, *Black News Service*, *Koori Bina*, *Alchuringa*, *The Palm Island Smoke Signal*, *Aboriginal-Islander-Messenger (AIM)*, *Black Reaction*, *Pugganna News*, *Koorier 2* and *Koorier 3*. The range of newspapers illustrates the level of healthy debate taking place within the Indigenous public sphere at this time and their varying tones and focuses indicate a changing attitude within the Indigenous public sphere. For instance, *The Koorier* particularly exhibited a strong political radicalism that had not been evident earlier. While *The Koorier* was primarily produced for an Aboriginal audience and McGuinness used it to connect with other Aboriginal organisations, he also used the publication to "...clarify and educate uninformed people of the atrocities committed against the Aborigines..." and to demand change (*The Koorier*, Vol 1, No. 11 1969, p. 3). Squires suggests an indication public spheres have moved from the enclave and oscillating public sphere response to a counterpublic sphere response is that they no longer hide their own texts and scripts (Squires 2002, p. 460). An indication of the continuing evolution of the Indigenous public sphere was certainly reinforced by this study. An example is Bruce McGuinness demanded the right to speak in his own voice and refusing to apologise for any offence his messages caused. McGuinness frankly referred to white Australians as "gubbas". Furthermore, even moderate publications such as *Aboriginal-Islander-Messenger (AIM)* published political stories that challenged government policy and action and encouraged political participation from within the Indigenous community, for instance, *AIM*, produced by a group of Aboriginal students overseen by two mainstream journalists, criticised the legislated power given to ASIO that threatened Aboriginal campaigners (*AIM*, March 1979). National Archive research shows the response to this stronger, more prominent and prevalent political lobbying and activity was closer monitoring of those who were involved in the Aboriginal movement and especially those suspected of having links to the Communist Party by ASIO. Slurs were made against Aboriginal campaigners such as branding them as racists, communists, deviates or irrational (NAA, A6119, 3435). As stronger political activity and tactics were used by organisations within the Indigenous public sphere, the dominant public sphere response was amplified. Campaigners such as Foley, Walker, Bandler, Day and Horner were all watched by ASIO. The *AIM* article detailed new federal legislation that enabled ASIO to legally eavesdrop on people's conversations and to monitor their private mail: "...we can expect phone taps, organisation and private mail to be a long time coming as it makes its circuitous journey through ASIO so that it can be read

there first, and break-ins to private homes and community organization offices.” *AIM* advised its readers to notify them and any other newspaper they believed would publicise the ASIO action. *AIM* argued those involved with land rights protests and campaigns were particularly at risk of being targeted by ASIO (*AIM*, March 1979). The students were therefore using their newspaper to publicise how government legislation impacted on Indigenous campaigners and to pressure the federal government for change by publicising their actions. This is an example of an Indigenous newspaper being used as an Indigenous public sphere mechanism through which to act against dominant public sphere policy and offers further evidence of the Indigenous public sphere at this time being in a “counterpublic” phase.

Indigenous newspapers were regularly used to attack government policy, to educate readers to generate oppositional public opinion to that policy, and to encourage political action. *Koori Bina* was critical of government policies such as spending cuts of \$2,600,000 that the newspaper claimed would severely impact on Indigenous organisations. Similarly, the newspaper attacked the conservative Fraser federal government’s plans to dismantle the publicly-funded healthcare system Medibank, to abolish income tax rebates for children, to tax social service payments, and to implement a wage freeze (*Koori Bina*, Vol 1, No. 1 1976, p.1-2). *Koori Bina* argued this would have dire effects on Aboriginal workers, 30 percent of whom were already registered as unemployed. The article maintained Aboriginal workers, women and migrant workers would be the first to suffer because of the ‘last hired, first fired’ mentality that existed at that time. This pressure and/or racism were the responsibility not only of the Fraser government but also of the trade unions. Consequently, *Koori Bina* was not only educating the Indigenous community about services available within the Indigenous community, it was attacking dominant public sphere institutions such as the federal government, mainstream media and trade unions.

An important political activity undertaken by Indigenous campaigners in the counterpublic phase that exemplifies the more radical public sphere processes characteristic during this time was the Aboriginal Tent Embassy protest.⁶⁶ Squires’ model suggests that to avoid confrontation, dominant public sphere institutions must

⁶⁶ The Aboriginal tent embassy was erected on Australia Day/Invasion Day 1972 on the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra as a protest against the government’s refusal to recognise Aboriginal land rights.

enter into negotiations with minority groups (Squires 1999, pp. 35-36). The Aboriginal tent embassy protest is an example of the consequences that occur when Indigenous public sphere demands are ignored. The Aboriginal Tent Embassy was erected on the lawns of Old Parliament House on 26 January 1972 as a response to the conservative McMahon federal government's rejection of calls for land rights. The government response was to pass a law prohibiting camping on the parliamentary lawn. The embassy was then destroyed by police. Since that time, the Embassy, which attracted national and international attention, has been rebuilt and destroyed repeatedly and in 1995 it was registered by the Australian Heritage Commission as having special significance for Aboriginal people (*Vibe Australia* 2004). The Aboriginal Tent Embassy provides another example of successful political action which emerged from within the Indigenous public sphere. Government pressure has so far failed to have the Embassy permanently removed and it stands as a proud icon of successful Aboriginal protest.

Along with providing an example of the oscillating responses between the Indigenous and dominant public spheres, it also demonstrates the linkages between the Indigenous press and the key participants. Many of the key participants in the Aboriginal Tent Embassy protest, such as John Newfong, Cheryl Buchanan, Gary Foley and Michael Anderson, were also the producers of Indigenous newspapers. Indigenous newspapers were also used to put forward alternative information from that being published in mainstream newspapers. Similarly, Ross Watson used of *Black Nation* to contradict sensationalist and inaccurate mainstream media suggestions that Indigenous protests against the Brisbane Commonwealth Games would be violent (2005). Therefore, the Indigenous public sphere during the late 1960s through to the late 1980s demonstrated many of the characteristics suggested in Squires' model. For instance, there was significantly increased oscillation between the Indigenous and dominant public spheres. Some of this oscillation was in the form of dominant public sphere surveillance responding to the more assertive action from Indigenous public sphere participants, and in fact this type of surveillance is itself another characteristic of the counterpublic phase (Squires 1999). Indigenous public sphere actions also resulted in more aggressive responses from the dominant public sphere against Indigenous campaigns. These campaigners used their own media to not only influence public policy but to also demand change and to confront dominant

public sphere institutions such as government and mainstream media and in return they were forced to respond. This also marks a significant difference between contemporary Indigenous newspapers and earlier publications. Contemporary newspapers are largely produced by journalists who are observers rather than participants and producers of news and public sphere activity.

Another clear example of the counterpublic response from the Indigenous public sphere is provided by the land rights newspapers. Indigenous public sphere constituents used newspapers such as *Land Rights News*, *Bunji*, *National and NQ Messagestick* and *Land Rights Queensland* to lobby for policy changes. Land rights are particularly important to Indigenous people and Indigenous organisations ran successful land rights campaigns that may have helped to establish land rights legislation. These newspapers demonstrate the movement within the Indigenous public sphere from talking about the need for land rights legislation to actually protesting against government actions and lobbying for land rights. Without these newspapers, it is unlikely the voices and actions of Indigenous campaigners would have been heard. Newspapers such as *Bunji*, *Messagestick* and *Land Rights News* and *Land Rights Queensland* provided a platform from which Indigenous people could, in their own voices and with cultural awareness, publicise their activities and share their knowledge. The newspapers were a tool to supplement the campaigners' actions.

These organisations and their media also helped to consolidate the Indigenous public sphere. For instance, O'Neil gathered stories to publish in *N. Q.* and *National Messagestick* from communities as he travelled around the country campaigning for and raising awareness of land rights issues (O'Neil 2006). Similarly, *Land Rights Queensland* chose to interview people the Indigenous community considered credible and valuable (Malezer 2005). *LRQ* also acted as an entry point into the Indigenous community for mainstream media journalists who were looking for comment from Indigenous source (Forde 2004; Malezer 2005). In these ways, Indigenous newspapers provided links throughout the Indigenous public sphere and raised awareness of Indigenous issues and perspectives within the dominant public sphere which, in turn, put pressure on federal and state governments to act on land rights issues. The *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976 (Northern Territory Government of Australia)* is another example of their success. This legislation provided the

opportunity for Indigenous communities to take control of their land and to manage their own resources (Northern Land Council 2003). It also required mining companies, pastoralists and government representatives to negotiate agreements with Indigenous communities regarding amongst other things roads and entry to Indigenous lands and the protection of sacred sites. Other legal shifts that have had significant impact on the land rights issue include both the Mabo and Wik legislation.

Another major goal for these land rights newspapers was correcting the misinformation and use of stereotypes by mainstream media. Squires' model suggests challenging stereotypes and re-creating the group's public image is a key function of the oscillating public sphere (Squires 1999, pp. 35-36) and that this function continues during the counterpublic phase. This study has found challenging inaccurate perspectives of Indigenous people, issues and communities was a key characteristic of Indigenous newspapers produced during this era. The main aim for campaigners such as O'Neil was to successfully win land claims; the production of the newspapers was a tool through which they campaigned, strategized and raised awareness of their actions (*Central Land Rights News*, June 1978, p. 23; *Central Land Rights News*, December 1979, p. 1; Condie 2004). Journalists working in this field saw themselves as "managing and driving the process" rather than just reporting on the issues (Malezer 2005). Therefore, the land rights and other Indigenous newspapers produced during this era have played a pivotal role in developing and maintaining Indigenous public sphere processes. At a community level, by including appropriate Indigenous voices (Malezer 2005), they have helped to build and repair the Indigenous community's imagined sense of 'who' it is. Similarly, by including transcribed interviews with campaigners such as Cheryl Buchanan, Indigenous newspapers provided readers with the opportunity to gain a more detailed view of sources' ideas and opinions as opposed to journalists' modified views (Forde 2004). In these ways these newspapers had moved from only informing and educating their readers to promoting the action taking place to force social change. All of these characteristics fit into Squires' model of the counterpublic sphere.

Squires' final public sphere phase is the satellite or parallel public sphere. During this phase, she suggests information flows freely across public sphere boundaries and oppression from the dominant public sphere no longer occurs. Members of the

subaltern public sphere in a satellite phase are viewed as equal to the dominant group and their cultural differences are accepted. Squires found no satellite public spheres exist in the United States and the evidence presented by the study suggests the Indigenous public sphere in Australia has also not yet reached this ideal (Squires 1999, pp. 37-39, Squires 2002, pp. 463-464).

10.2 The changing structure of the Indigenous public sphere

Changes instigated at a federal government level have altered the structure of the Indigenous public sphere and one of the consequences of that is a reduced number and type of Indigenous print media. The establishment of ATSIC led to the demise of the multitude of smaller, independent Indigenous organisations that produced their own media and as such reduced the number of grassroots' newspapers being published. Newspapers such as *The Koorier*, the *Palm Islander* and the *Black Australian News* not only helped to link the organisations that produced them, but also connected the organisations to their communities and vice versa. In 1990, the Hawke federal government replaced the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA)) and the Aboriginal Development Commission (Community Broadcasting Foundation Ltd (CBF)) with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). On the surface, the aim of ATSIC was to encourage self-determination, however, the decisions made by ATSIC were still controlled by the federal government. ATSIC had two arms: the first was to act as the government department responsible for the creation of policy and the development of programs and initiatives concerning Indigenous Australians, the second was to be an independent agency that would represent the concerns and needs of Indigenous Australians to the government. Indigenous people elected regional councils which, in turn, elected Commissioners to serve on a Board of Commissioners. The Minister at various times also had authority to nominate Commissioners to the Board. There has been significant debate about how successfully ATSIC represented the needs and concerns of Indigenous Australians and the answer to that question goes beyond the scope of this thesis. However, what ATSIC did do was to change the structure of the Indigenous public sphere. While the amalgamation of organisations reduced their overall number and this could be viewed as a negative development, a positive side-effect of this was that grassroots' organisations that had previously had to seek government funding independently could now access funding through ATSIC. In

essence, ATSIC worked as a buffer. Organisations such as FAIRA were boosted by the injection of funding that allowed them to begin to produce *Land Rights Queensland* (Forde 2004). Similarly, the Yamaji Language Centre used ATSIC funding to produce *Yamaji News* (Oakley 2004). Therefore, while ATSIC may or may not have been effective in influencing government policy or widely improving Indigenous people's lives (and at this stage there has been no significant analysis of the success or failure of ATSIC), it did provide the opportunity through funding for Indigenous organisations to more successfully communicate their actions throughout the Indigenous and dominant public sphere. While this again moves outside the scope of this thesis, the creation of ATSIC may have also produced a degree of natural attrition. Where services were duplicated, it is likely organisations melded or closed. ATSIC was a centralised source of government funding and its management of funds may have compressed and reduced the number of smaller, independent organisations. In addition, the extraordinary level of accountability required by organisations to apply for and justify funding caused many to fall by the wayside. In their place a range of organisations with specific roles such as the research organisation FAIRA and specific media organisations such as MIAMA (Mount Isa Aboriginal Media Association) were established. This concentration of Indigenous organisations was increased after ATSIC was dismantled by the Howard federal government in 2005 as access to funding for Indigenous organisations was removed. The removal of the ATSIC buffer now required Indigenous organisations to compete with mainstream bodies for government funding to carry out various activities. This access to limited funding affected the Indigenous print media as organisations were forced to cut back on non-essential projects such as the production of newspapers. Consequently, the production of *Land Rights Queensland* has been suspended and the publication of *Murri Views* and *Yamaji News* ceased. This finding, though, is primarily anecdotal; as yet, there is no research to confirm the impact of ATSIC on the Indigenous public sphere or the range of Indigenous social movements and organisations.

10.3 The impact of government attitude on Indigenous public sphere processes

The concentration of Indigenous organisations and the resulting reduction in Indigenous media impacts on Indigenous people's ability to participate democratically. Fewer Indigenous newspapers ultimately means fewer dissenting

Indigenous voices within the Indigenous and dominant public sphere. Hamilton and Maddison argue that rather than being an accidental outcome, this is a characteristic of Howard government's practice (2007, p. 2). The Howard government's actions provide evidence of the role government policy can play in relation to effective Indigenous public sphere activity. When Indigenous public sphere activity is strong and the level of political lobbying and activity generated is high, social change can occur if it is combined with a government attitude that is open to negotiation. Examples of this include the Whitlam government returning the deeds to the Gurindji people's traditional lands after the Wave Hill Walk-Off protest (Department of the Environment and Water Resources 2007b). Likewise under the Hawke/Keating federal governments, significant advances were made in the provision of land rights with Uluru being returned to the Pitjantjatjara people in 1985 (Department of the Environment and Water Resources 2007a) and the successful implementation of the Mabo and Wik legislation (ANTaR 2007). The Hawke government also established ATSIC in 1990 and the final *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* report was released during Keating's term as Prime Minister in 1991. During his 1992 Redfern Park speech, Prime Minister Paul Keating reminded all Australians that improving the lives of Indigenous people in Australia begins:

...the act of recognition. Recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the disasters. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion.

It was our ignorance and our prejudice. And our failure to imagine these things being done to us. With some noble exceptions, we failed to make the most basic human response and enter into their hearts and minds. We failed to ask - how would I feel if this were done to me? (Keating 1992)

In 1991, the Keating federal government also established the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. In contrast, over a 10 year period that a coalition of Indigenous leaders formed in 2007 have called a "living nightmare" (Graham 2007), the Howard government refused to apologise to the Stolen Generations, abolished ATSIC, scrapped the Aboriginal employment program CDEP, dismantled The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, watered down native title legislation and failed to significantly improve Indigenous health and education outcomes (Australian Medical Association (AMA) 2007; Graham 2007). Consequently, while a strong, active

Indigenous public sphere is essential to bring about social change, its capacity to do this is enhanced when combined with an open-minded, progressive government.

10.4 Visualising the shape and structure of the Indigenous public sphere

While Squires has focused on the interaction between subaltern and other public spheres, other scholars have considered what shape an Indigenous public sphere in Australia might have. This is important because the Indigenous public sphere is unique and its potential shape and structure influences engagement between it and other public spheres. The Indigenous public sphere has been described as both a “strange looking object – certainly not spherical” that fits into the “mediasphere” (Hartley & McKee 2000) and as “a series of parallel and overlapping public spheres” (Avison & Meadows 2000, p. 348). However, this study builds on these existing ideas by suggesting Avison and Meadows’s definition is the best fit. Regional and remote Indigenous communities may have their own languages and unique cultural identities.

Even urban Indigenous communities where communication is likely to be in English are distinct from each other because of their own history and cultural origins. Each community, whether remote, rural or urban, has its own elders, problems and needs. Consequently the wider Indigenous public sphere, as Avison and Meadows have suggested, appears to be made up of a series of distinct communities (or smaller spheres) that are linked by their own shared Indigeneity to form a larger, interconnected wider Indigenous public sphere (Avison & Meadows 2000). The evidence from this study develops this idea further by suggesting that rather than a series of one dimensional overlapping “horizontal” publics forming an overarching Indigenous public sphere, each of those “horizontal” publics is itself made up of layers.

As Fraser has argued about other subaltern publics, “the multiplicity envisioned here is vertical” (Fraser 2002, p. 15). Therefore, each of the overlapping spheres is stratified and this study has determined access to the different levels that make up each sphere is regulated and limited by cultural protocols such as men’s and women’s business, sorry business⁶⁷ or other cultural sensitivities. Access to outsiders may be

⁶⁷ Sorry business is the Aboriginal term for bereavement. During “sorry business” time communities may choose to isolate themselves from contact with the outside world.

limited or prohibited formally by mechanisms such as the permit system or unofficially by the choices made by Indigenous public sphere constituents to participate or not with outsiders. This framework of individual spheres within the wider Indigenous public sphere and the stratification within those individual spheres demands Indigenous print media must also operate at different levels. While the national newspapers can work effectively at the macro Indigenous public sphere level, newspapers that target specific communities provide an opportunity for locally relevant public sphere debate at a micro level and are an essential but severely diminished part of Indigenous public sphere processes.

Analysis of the creation and development of Indigenous institutions and organisations can be used to map the development of the Indigenous public sphere (and the Indigenous print media) and this analysis is important because the two are intrinsically linked. During the 1930s when Jack Patten launched *The Australian Aborigine Call*, very few Indigenous organisations existed and those that did, such as the Aborigines Protection Association (APA), were in their infancy. This study has found Indigenous newspapers and Indigenous organisations and social movements are connected, confirming Downing's assertion (2001). This study also identified a correlation between the numbers of Indigenous organisations and newspapers that were in existence by the late 1960s through to the late 1980s and political and social change. The political activity generated by these organisations, their members and publicised through their newspapers, helped to promote the activities of health, land rights and legal organisations. During this period, Indigenous people had a network of organisations lobbying for social, political and economic change. Indigenous organisations were providing legal and health advice and care to Indigenous communities. As has been discussed, *Koori Bina* criticised government policy and the *Black Australian News* promoted projects such as the *Aboriginal Breakfast Programme* (July 1972, p. 1) which provided a nutritional breakfast for Indigenous children. Similarly the *Black News Service* was promoting health information and advice while land rights newspapers such as *NQ Messagestick* and *Land Rights News* were informing readers of action being taken around the country to lobby for and legislate for land rights. Consequently, since the 1930s, this study has identified a direct correlation between the number of Indigenous organisations and the number of Indigenous publications being used to further Indigenous public sphere processes.

Yet as dominant public sphere policies and actions (such as dismantling ATSIC and mainstreaming funding to Indigenous organisations) have been implemented within the Indigenous political arena, the effectiveness of this network of organisations has waned. As within the United States Black public sphere, there are many dissenting and differing voices within the Indigenous public sphere (Dawson 1995, p. 200) and the range of institutions and organisations has reflected this diversity of ideas and action. Just as Dawson suggests there needs to be a range of voices and ideas within the US Black public sphere, so the myriad of voices and ideas within the Indigenous public sphere must have an outlet (1995, p. 200). Dawson argues a Black public sphere that is made up of a range of “institutions, communications networks and practices which facilitate debate of causes and remedies to the current combination of political setbacks and economic devastation facing major segments of the Black Community, and which facilitate the creation of oppositional formations and sites” no longer exists in the US (1995, p. 201). The same could be said today in Australia as organisations such as FAIRA have been relatively silenced by a lack of funding and support.

Greater access to broadcast technology, which in many ways more successfully complements the structure in the Indigenous public sphere, has also affected Indigenous public sphere processes. Meadows et al’s study of Australian community radio discusses the thriving network of Indigenous community media networks that exist. Radio and television communication fits more naturally with Indigenous oral traditions and the wider network of Indigenous radio stations have adopted many of the roles played by the Indigenous print media such as connecting the community to people who have moved away (such as prisoners to their families) (Meadows et al. 2007, p. 53). The authors found Indigenous community media helped to build self-image and protect language and culture and therefore empower communities (Meadows et al. 2007, p. 59). While the production of newspapers is largely impossible in remote communities, radio and television content can be produced while on location and includes vision of the participants speaking in their own languages. As a tool to build community identity and self-esteem or to protect culture and languages, this gives broadcast media an enormous advantage over print media. Similarly, Meadows et al’s study found that Indigenous radio plays an important educational role, both general and media education. The study highlighted cultural

education for children but also media education for young people (Meadows et al. 2007, p. 61). This puts control over the production of media (Meadows et al. 2007, p. 53) that disperses messages they choose to broadcast in the hands of the community which is another enormous advantage for radio over print media.

The advancement of broadcast technology has therefore impacted on the role print media plays within Indigenous communities. Radio, in particular, offers local production that can specifically focus on topics and problems the individual community identifies as being important, and that can be produced by Indigenous people themselves. Importantly, the community radio sector in Australia has received significant government funding and support since the early 1990s which has further enhanced its ability to reach out to remote and regional Aboriginal communities and audiences. This change has significant implications for the future of Indigenous print media. Newspapers such as the *Koori Mail*, *National Indigenous Times* and *Deadly Vibe* still have the advantage of producing a lasting message that can be viewed by people in the future and are portable and can be read repeatedly and in any location. They still provide an outlet for Indigenous ideas and voices and can be especially useful in pushing these ideas and perspectives into the dominant public sphere by attracting mainstream media attention. However, the local community and identity building role of print media that was carried out by newspapers such as the *N. Q.* and *National Messagestick* and the *Black News Service* has lessened. These newspapers were acting as linkages between communities and Indigenous organisations. They therefore connected the Indigenous community and were fulfilling an empowerment role and were educating Indigenous and non-Indigenous readers. This role is now often filled by locally produced television and radio. Consequently, the role of contemporary Indigenous print media, especially at a local level, has changed.

The adoption of technology such as broadcast media by Indigenous people to control the messages being circulated around and outside the Indigenous public sphere highlights a key theme from this research. While during the *Revolutionaries* phase, the exclusion of non-Indigenous campaigners was not universal throughout the Indigenous public sphere, it was a focus of the Black Power movement and perhaps resulted in an Indigenous and non-Indigenous community backlash against the Black Power movement (Buchanan 2005). Despite any backlash, newspapers produced

during this period do consistently illustrate the greater control being wielded by Indigenous campaigners such as McGuinness, Foley, Buchanan, O’Neil and Gilbert. They also show the demand for publications produced and edited by Indigenous people came from the Indigenous community too. An *Alchuringa* reader in a letter to the editor said: “It seems to be that we will never get a “VOICE” in our own magazine until one can be completely staffed; Aboriginal Editor, Aboriginal Journalist, Aboriginal Photographer”. The reader went on to demand that along with a “a black editor and black staff”, any financial support should be provided “without the gag implicit with the cheque!” (*Alchuringa* 1971). While the exclusion of non-Indigenous people from Indigenous publications and public sphere processes is perhaps no longer so forcefully upheld, the desire to control their own organisations is still a significant consideration for Indigenous people and has continued through the *Professionals’* phase. For instance, the calls for an Indigenous editor for the *Koori Mail* during its early years and more recently through the battle between the *National Indigenous Times* and the *Koori Mail* to prove which newspaper was truly Indigenous-owned both emphasise this ongoing need for Indigenous control. Interestingly, in contemporary Indigenous newspapers, many of the managers and editors are or have been non-Indigenous. Malezer reiterated how important it is for Indigenous people to control the messages being transmitted out from the Indigenous public sphere (Malezer 2005) and the adoption of broadcast technology that can be used to produce local community messages and information further exemplifies the ongoing importance of Indigenous control of the production and dispersal of their own messages although the presence of non-Indigenous people in the broadcasting sector, too, has been the cause of some debate. Consequently, while the issue of ‘who’ has access to the Indigenous public sphere and has permission to participate at an organisational level has changed over time, the battle by Indigenous people to obtain and retain control of their own institutions and media, and therefore the mechanisms within the Indigenous public sphere, has been a constant since the 1930s.

10.5 Identifying the key characteristics and functions of Indigenous print media within an Indigenous public sphere.

A key democratic role of media within society is to provide an opportunity for all voices to be heard. However, researchers have highlighted an additional range of

functions alternative publications may carry out within the dominant or subaltern public spheres. Earlier chapters produced a range of questions about the functions carried out by Indigenous publications, for example, whether Indigenous print media help to protect and build community identity. The next section of this chapter will address these issues.

10.6 Opening up and expanding Indigenous public sphere discussion and activity

10.6.1 Engaging the community

Given that Indigenous people have been largely excluded from Australian public sphere discussions regarding wider community issues or topics of specific interest to them (Bullimore 1999, p. 75; Meadows 1999, p. 40; 2001), a key requirement of an Indigenous public sphere should be to provide a space where Indigenous people can participate in conversations about topics of concern to them. A vital function for Indigenous newspapers then is opening up Indigenous public sphere discussion to a wide range of participants. One of the ways alternative media can do this is by encouraging their target community to participate in the production of their own newspapers and to suggest issues that should be covered (Atton 2002, pp. 16, 50; Forde 1997, pp. 122-123). According to Traber and Jacobs, alternative media enable marginalised and minority groups to have a voice and to provide a space for people to formulate strategies and debate topics that are important to them (Jacobs 2000, pp. 29, 36; Traber 1986, p. 106). While these are all important public sphere processes that can be performed by Indigenous print media, this can only happen if newspapers, or the journalists who work for them, have access to a wide range of Indigenous communities and networks. As has been pointed out, the reality is Indigenous communities are often situated in remote locations throughout Australia and Indigenous newspapers and journalists lack the resources to actively canvass each or even the majority of these communities. The issues and problems faced by individual communities are equally diverse and outside of letters-to-the-editor, only limited dialogue can take place between the newspaper and communities (Jones 2004).

Despite these limitations, over the decades, these newspapers have provided a space for the debate of issues of concern to Indigenous people and non-Indigenous sympathisers. Even if their only visible presence in the newspapers is through letters-

to-the-editor, this avenue has provided Indigenous people with access to a media outlet that would otherwise probably not exist. As with the general Australian population, Indigenous people were/are often unable to access meetings about topical issues and Indigenous newspapers provide community members with the outcomes of meetings and information about the discussion that took place (Weatherall 2004). This function keeps communities informed about government policy changes (from an Indigenous perspective), how they will impact on communities and individuals, and about the actions Indigenous organisations and individuals are taking to resolve those issues (Weatherall 2004).

Communities also have less observable access to Indigenous newspapers (and therefore indirectly to public sphere debates) through direct approaches to the journalists working for them. A number of interviewees recounted stories of community members identifying issues of concern to them that they would like to see covered in their newspapers (Bousen 2004; Howes 2004). It is therefore possible that the information that ends up in the newspapers is “the tip of the iceberg” in terms of public sphere processes. Journalists writing for Indigenous newspapers are hearing about the issues that are important to Indigenous people and communities but these processes would be largely invisible in terms of what is actually published in the newspapers. Nonetheless, these interactions are likely to influence the choices journalists make with regard to gauging news values. While editors have the final say on which stories are published, the community has the final say on what they will discuss. Therefore, community members and organisations do influence the stories that are ultimately included or not included within Indigenous newspapers. For instance, land rights is an important topic of discussion for Indigenous people and land rights newspapers are considered especially useful as an outlet for discussion of land rights issues because they target a specific and interested audience (Foley 2005). In contrast, however, other more sensitive topics may not be openly discussed. Indigenous newspapers can only cover issues that are brought out into the open. Aboriginal campaigner since the 1970s and a regular source for both Indigenous and mainstream media on Aboriginal issues Sam Watson suggests many Indigenous problems...

...are still down there in the shadows and Aboriginal people are still not displaying the guts or integrity to bring them out into the open...until we do

confront these hidden monsters within our own communities then we are not going to complete our healing process and move to the point where we can really begin to come to terms with the reality of our current situation (2004).

Watson argues that while in the past Aboriginal communities would have relied on storytellers and “wise people” to keep “our truth and our reality” in memory, since these traditional patterns had been irretrievably disrupted, Indigenous media must “reflect and tell these stories” (Watson, S 2004). It is clear then that while Indigenous newspapers have the potential to play an important community and public sphere role, communities still influence the topics opened up for discussion in the public realm. This is further evidence of tiers within the Indigenous public sphere. It is an example of the delineation between the public and private realms within the Indigenous public sphere. This study has recognised the importance for journalists working in this field to respect cultural values and develop strong community relationships. Ultimately, and perhaps more so than mainstream journalists because of the intimate community in which they work, if journalists working for Indigenous media organisations want to be viewed as safe and reliable people to speak to, they must remain acutely aware of the need to walk gently and respectfully.

10.6.2 Including Indigenous voices in public sphere debates

Journalists open up Indigenous public sphere discussions by including Indigenous voices. Other studies into alternative media have found alternative publications provide a “voice for the voiceless” or for those who are generally excluded from the mainstream media (Atton 2002, p. 12; Downing 1995, p. 43; Forde 1997, p. 126; Hackett & Zhao 1998, p. 203; Traber 1986, p. 108). The evidence from this study suggests this is one of the strengths of Indigenous print media within the Indigenous public sphere. While those Indigenous voices may still not be heard within the dominant public sphere, Indigenous newspapers do provide access to Indigenous public sphere discussions for a wider range of Indigenous “voices”. Circulation and readership figures discussed in the preceding chapters provide evidence that although Indigenous newspaper circulation figures may be low, readership figures for newspapers such as the *Koori Mail* may be as high as 100,000 people. Therefore, the reach of Indigenous newspapers can be deceptively high.

Still, while Indigenous newspapers can potentially reach significant numbers of Indigenous people and do include a wider range of Indigenous voices and stories in

Indigenous public sphere discussions, it is important that these voices and stories are both credible and relevant to these discussions. Including Indigenous voices regardless of whether they have anything significant to say runs the risk of “only create[ing] mediocrity” (Foley 2005). Foley continues by explaining:

Sometimes people who are too ordinary...I mean it's true that the *Koori Mail* seems to allow anybody who wants to say absolutely anything at all to have their stuff published in the letters section which is good, but sometimes it makes you wonder “why is this person getting a run”...(2005).

Similarly, while Indigenous people are often absent from mainstream media discussions of Indigenous issues, it is important for Indigenous newspapers not to make the mistake of excluding non-Indigenous voices that help to provide a broader debate of topics of concern to Indigenous communities. For instance, information from unions regarding Indigenous industrial relations should be included. Indigenous newspapers can be used to pressure unions to work towards improving Indigenous work conditions. Likewise, content should also not be limited to Indigenous voices from Australia but should include articles about the activities of the Inuit and other Indigenous people from around the world (Weatherall 2004). Accordingly, Indigenous newspapers provide access to public sphere discussions for people who would otherwise be excluded from debates; but those who are included should have valid information to bring to the conversation. Indigenous newspapers have the potential to bring information from a range of sources, including non-Indigenous sources, to the Indigenous public sphere. Therefore Indigenous newspapers can open up access to the Indigenous public sphere for organisations that have the potential to bring social change or to support Indigenous initiatives such as unions and other supportive non-Indigenous organisations.

10.6.3 The Audience-producer barrier

Meadows et al have argued one of the reasons journalists working in Indigenous media can successfully engage with the Indigenous community is because of the lack of an audience-producer barrier (2007 p. 53). Evidence from this study supports this idea with interviewed journalists suggesting their newspapers are “owned by the community” (Waharai 2004). Similarly, regardless of the *Koori Mail's* formal ownership, Cheadle argued the community consider it to be *their* newspaper. Therefore, the role of Indigenous newspapers goes beyond just producing news and is

more than just providing information from a wide range of sources. Indigenous newspapers (and those journalists and writers who work for them) must live up to the fact that they are seen as belonging to the community – the community has a cultural ownership of Indigenous publications (Bousen 2004; Cheadle 2004; Malezer 2005). This sense of ownership is important from a public sphere perspective because the connection Indigenous people feel to their newspapers influences the level of trust they have in the journalists who work for them. As a non-Indigenous journalist writing for the *Koori Mail*, it was not unusual to have sources tell me they would speak to me rather than mainstream journalists because I wrote for “their newspaper”. Similarly, this connection extended to some people not seeing me as an observer but as a participant. This is exemplified by people at a group meeting asking me (working as a journalist) to take the minutes of the meeting “since you are here taking notes”. As a further example of the different relationship between journalists working in the Indigenous arena and mainstream journalists, I took the minutes. Indigenous people will often telephone Indigenous newspapers and the journalists who work for them with story ideas and to share things their children or community are doing. Therefore building a trusting relationship is a vital part of working in the Indigenous arena. Journalists are not just writing news stories; they are seen as writing for a publication that belongs to the community. Therefore, even though they are working as journalists, they are viewed as and may act as public sphere participants. The roles are inseparable.

10.6.4 Facilitating political participation

Another justification for the existence of alternative media is that mainstream media no longer encourage political participation (Forde 1997, 1999; Johnstone, Slawski & Bowman 1976; Kellner 1989; Tomaselli & Louw 1989). Forde found alternative journalists had a strong sense of their public role within the public sphere and of the need to generate political participation and debate (Forde 1997, pp. 119 126).

Certainly newspapers such as *Abo Call*, *The Koorier* and other Indigenous newspapers from the 1960s and 1970s encouraged Indigenous people to become politically active, perhaps not in a mainstream sense by voting at federal and state elections, but by protesting and trying to influence public policy by harnessing mainstream support. Examples of this are McGuinness’ *The Koorier* which lobbied for Aboriginal control of Aboriginal organisations and Ross Watson’s *Black Nation*

which campaigned against the Brisbane Commonwealth Games. While a number of newspapers were focused on raising awareness and pressuring the various levels of government, Gilbert in *Alchuringa* and Rosser in the *Palm Island Smoke Signal* both complained about the lack of participation by Indigenous people in community meetings and protests (*Alchuringa*, December 1971-February 1972, *Alchuringa*, July 1972; Rosser ND). Similarly, all the land rights newspapers encouraged people to take political action although their focus was specifically on land rights. However, many contemporary newspapers have been more concerned with informing the community and raising self-esteem than with raising political consciousness and I would put *Koori Mail*, *Deadly Vibe*, *Yamaji News* and *Kurbingui Star* in this category. In contrast, the *National Indigenous Times* has a strong political focus and aims to raise Indigenous political awareness by encouraging Indigenous public sphere action and discussion but also dominant public sphere debate and action.

However, the type of political participation Indigenous newspapers should encourage is in dispute. Foley argues Indigenous newspapers should not try to encourage participation in contemporary, mainstream Australian politics because the two major political parties are “incredibly anti-Aboriginal” and “a good Koori newspaper must challenge” these parties. Therefore, Indigenous newspapers should be actively questioning and pressuring the major parties but Foley argues as things stand, “there is no future for Aboriginal people to be involved in the political process”. Consequently, Foley contends the role of Indigenous media is to pressure and challenge the major parties. He explains:

The political process itself has to be pressured ...the integrity of the Australian political system if it makes no allowances for the Aboriginal voice...then aren't we back to 1938 and assimilation? And if that's the name of the game, then we're in a revolutionary situation (Foley 2005).

The abolition of ATSIC provides an example of the lack of influence Indigenous people have had politically and historically. Indigenous people had little input into its creation and less into its demise (Foley 2005). Day argues one of the reasons organisations such as ATSIC, or previous government organisations such as the NAC are formed, is that these organisations fit in with the bureaucratic structure governments require. These organisations do not fulfil Aboriginal political needs or complement the structure of Aboriginal society. Day suggests:

Government tends to want to go to someone like ATSIC or they want to go to the NAC [National Aboriginal Council], somebody that fits in with their idea of a government...an Aboriginal sort of government or an Aboriginal body that can speak for everybody. [But] that doesn't fit in with an Aboriginal community...but government insists on this and at the moment they [Aboriginal people] don't have any sort of representation at a national level and I think Aboriginal issues have been completely forgotten from a government point of view (Day 2005)

Furthermore, Foley argues that the sense that ATSIC provided any real political power for Indigenous people was a sham. He argued ATSIC was really the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in a repackaged format and any suggestion that the power of ATSIC was vested with Aboriginal people was bogus. Foley argues the:

...pretence of Aboriginal control was being created by establishing an elected body over here, but the real power sits here, so ATSIC is a fraud. That's what we said at the time and so people shouldn't be surprised to discover 10, 15 years down the track, what we said then. We were accused of being radical and ATSIC was supposed to be the ultimate solution to all those problems that Aboriginal people had with the Department...(2005).

Foley's suggestion that ATSIC was "created" to mask where the real power lay with regard to Indigenous affairs was substantiated recently when the current federal minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mal Brough, blamed ATSIC for continuing Indigenous disadvantage in the areas of health, education and prison rates. Yet former ATSIC CEO Mick Gooda has said these problems were outside the control of ATSIC (*ABC Online* 2007). Therefore, ATSIC was created to provide government with a compatible Indigenous structure to work with and while on the surface Indigenous people appeared to have political power under ATSIC, as Foley has suggested, the reality was different. Mark Heward, who worked as a media officer for ATSIC, argues that any ineffectiveness on the part of ATSIC was not always there. He contends during the Hawke/Keating government periods, ATSIC was actually very effective and ATSIC's role in the negotiation of native title show "the Indigenous side of things actually ran a very good political race". Heward argues the work Indigenous people did at that time demonstrates that while:

[Indigenous people] did not get all they wanted ...there [was] an enormous amount of political ability there in the Indigenous community. They're very good at politics. Far better than the Labor party in many ways and I think the reason why the government was absolutely trying to destroy and smash the individuals and everything to do with ATSIC is because it was becoming too

dangerous; it was becoming too effective and it was running rings around the government in some respects (Heward 2005).

Heward further suggests that there were “a lot of lies” written about ATSIC and its achievements and that...

[I]n time, and particularly amongst Indigenous people and perhaps some others, ATSIC will be seen as nowhere near the failure that it’s been touted to be in the media. I mean it was not the success that everyone would want it to be, but it was not the failure it is condemned to be either (Heward 2005)

Regardless of the success or failure of ATSIC, what remains is the recognition that Indigenous people need to be “masters of their own destiny”, and that Indigenous newspapers are not providing the opportunity for this to become a reality yet (Watson, S 2004). Still, while Indigenous newspapers may not overtly encourage political participation, by discussing issues they *are*

“facilitating without being up front about it” (Heward 2005). For instance, a function of

Indigenous newspapers is to report, carry comment and inform the community on a whole range of issues, including political issues but as well as that they should be “in the face of government as media saying, hey, we’re here in your face” (Heward 2005). The *National Indigenous Times* is one of the few Indigenous newspapers that is specifically undertaking political and investigative reportage but overall, the contemporary Indigenous print media is not encouraging political participation “strongly or blatantly enough” but the potential is there for them to expand and develop this role (Bayles 2004).



Image 3 Tiga Bayles, Brisbane, 2004

10.6.5 Generating social and government policy change

It is not enough to encourage political participation; that political participation has to have a goal and a key public sphere process and major function for alternative media is to attempt to bring about government and social policy change (Atton 2002, pp. 14, 19; Downing 2001). Researchers have argued alternative media should work in opposition to the mainstream media and by allowing their community of interest the opportunity to act as “messengers” rather than “receivers” can acquire the hegemonic

power to bring about change, to change assumptions and social norms (Forde 1997, p. 118; Johnstone, Slawski & Bowman 1976, pp. 175-178; Rodriguez 2002, p. 3). Shah contends social control and social change are closely linked. The two work in harmony. Development or alternative journalists can harness power at a local level and use this power to change local conditions by using resources such as alternative media to “challenge the holders of power” (Shah 1999, p. 180). If these notions are applied to the Indigenous print media, there have been occasions when Indigenous newspapers have been used to bring about social and government policy change and change to local attitudes. For instance, during the lead-up to the 1967 referendum, Indigenous newspapers were used to transmit information about the campaign. Also, during the 1960s and 1970s, the concerted efforts of campaigners who also produced newspapers helped to establish Aboriginal legal and medical services and land councils. While these initiatives were not instigated by Indigenous newspapers, they came about because of the activities of the people who wrote the newspapers and used the newspapers to spread their own messages. People like Shorty O’Neil, Bruce McGuinness, Cheryl Buchanan and John Newfong, were the messengers and they used Indigenous newspapers to promote their messages and to bring about change in their own public sphere. Therefore, changes that took place in Indigenous affairs during this time, the demand for and partial reclaiming of control over a number of areas, have led to changes within the wider political public sphere too. Aboriginal legal services have brought land claim success and appropriate representation of Aboriginal people before the courts, and land councils have been a source of unified control for the people they represent.

However, some of the interviewees did not think the Indigenous print media had/has the power to exact government change. While most thought Indigenous newspapers *should* try to do this, some believed the limited range of these newspapers, just like the small Indigenous population, meant they did not have the political clout to pressure governments to change policy (Leavy 2004; Weatherall 2004). Government and mainstream society are influenced by popular opinion and unless the circulation and readership of Indigenous newspapers increases, it can wield only limited power. Of course, there is some oscillation of information and ideas from the Indigenous to the dominant public sphere that will influence people regarding issues of importance to Indigenous issues and this can undoubtedly lead to greater pressure within the

dominant public sphere. Generally though, the power of the Indigenous print media may have actually diminished in recent years because of the lack of general interest in Indigenous affairs as demonstrated by the lack of inclusion on the political agenda in the lead up to recent federal elections (Day 2005; Leavy 2004). The coverage of issues such as the demise of ATSIC, rape charges against former ATSIC chairperson Geoff Clark⁶⁸, fraud charges against ATSIC Deputy Chairperson Ray Robinson⁶⁹ and coverage of child abuse and drug use in Indigenous communities have added fuel to some mainstream attitudes that the problems faced by Indigenous people are largely self-inflicted and that large amounts of funding provided by governments goes into the wrong pockets and does not reach the people who need it. This is a prime example of a key role for Indigenous newspapers. They have the power and ability to inform and educate and to perhaps progress policy changes (Weatherall 2004).

Still, an important factor in whether social change can occur is the attitude of the government in power. Hamilton and Maddison argue the Howard Government specifically worked to silence dissenting voices (2007, p. 2). An example from the data of this is the raiding of the *National Indigenous Times* offices after it passed information to the *Australian Financial Review* and reported on government leaks itself (Ester 2007, pp. 101-103). Similarly, organisations such as FAIRA, who published *Land Rights Queensland*, have had their funding slashed during the Howard era, and can no longer publish their newspaper. If we consider when improvements in Indigenous lives have occurred; which governments were in power; and what type of response was being elicited from within the Indigenous public sphere it might suggest the three issues are connected.

For instance, during the 1970s, 80s and 90s while the Whitlam, Fraser, Hawke and Keating governments were in power, a number of significant advances were made in the Indigenous affairs arena. These include the creation of Aboriginal health services, legal and land rights organisations and a wide range of other Indigenous support services. There were also advances in land rights legislation and the provision of

⁶⁸ Geoff Clark is an Aboriginal politician who chaired ATSIC from 1999 until ATSIC was abolished by the Howard government. Clark was the subject of corruption allegations during his leadership of ATSIC and was charged with rape by the Victorian Police. These charges were dropped but a civil case found him responsible for pack rapes during 1971. He has appealed this decision.

⁶⁹ Ray Robinson. Ray "Sugar Ray" Robinson was the deputy chair of ATSIC.

racial discrimination legislation. These advances coincide with the Indigenous public sphere being in a satellite phase during which strong, political lobbying and protesting was undertaken by Aboriginal campaigners. These campaigners published a wide range of independent publications to support their efforts, to act as a communication mechanism between various separate but similar Indigenous organisations, to promote their activities throughout the Indigenous community and to oscillate their messages between the Indigenous and dominant public spheres. What this suggests is that social change is most likely to occur when the Indigenous public sphere is at least in a counterpublic sphere, when Indigenous campaigners are actively and strongly pushing for social change and the government in power is open to negotiating and interacting with minority groups. The implications for Indigenous newspapers are that regardless of their limited circulation, if they are promoting strong political messages, and Indigenous organisations are networking to oscillate consistent messages from the Indigenous public sphere through to the dominant public sphere – and if there is a receptive government in power – change can occur. This happened during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Without doubt there was conflict and Indigenous campaigners were involved in confrontations with government but they also achieved a number of their aims. Consequently, Indigenous newspapers, despite their small circulations, can provide information with the potential to influence public opinion, to keep the Indigenous population informed and therefore to impact on public sphere processes.

10.7 Other Indigenous media functions

Along with the roles and functions already discussed, major functions fulfilled by Indigenous print media include challenging mainstream media and dominant public sphere ideas, stereotypes and misrepresentations and seeking to improve relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

10.7.1 Challenging mainstream media and dominant public sphere ideas

Scholars have suggested alternative media should put forward ideas that are oppositional to the mainstream media and they should challenge “established mediascapes” and break down inappropriate and undemocratic social codes (Atton 2002, pp.13-19; Downing 2001; Rodriguez 2002, pp. 13, 20). A number of people working in the Indigenous print media did not believe this was a significant part of

their role. In fact, the word oppositional was seen as too confrontational and a number of interviewees said they preferred the idea that the Indigenous print media was presenting an alternative, rather than “oppositional” view (Day 2005; Forde 2004; Howes 2004; Jones 2004; Knowles 2005; Montcrieff 2004; Quillam 2004; Watson, R 2005). Some journalists working in the Indigenous print media expressed distaste at writing conflict-based stories and this negativity towards the Indigenous print media playing an oppositional role may be related to cultural influences.

Instead of taking an oppositional stance, a better suggested function for Indigenous print media is to try to break and promote stories that are of importance to Indigenous people and are told from an Indigenous perspective in mainstream newspapers (Day 2005; Weatherall 2004). Day says this was one of his goals as editor of *Bunji* (Day 2005). However, Indigenous newspapers must also be proactive and there is therefore a need for them to take an oppositional stance to mainstream media messages when required (Malezer 2005). There is a distinction between being oppositional for its own sake and relying heavily on conflict-driven stories and providing information that is oppositional to the stories being broadcast and published in mainstream newspapers. Indigenous newspapers do need to ensure through their coverage that Indigenous voices are included in mainstream media discussions about government policy or topics affecting Indigenous Australians. While regional radio offers a perfect outlet for information at a local level, one of the strengths of Indigenous print media is that they can be accessed by mainstream readers, journalists and policymakers. By including Indigenous perspectives on current issues, whether or not they specifically involve Indigenous Australians, Indigenous newspapers can encourage the dissemination of oppositional ideas and information generated within the Indigenous public sphere outwards into dominant public sphere debates. They can provide the conduit through which Indigenous ideas can leach out of the Indigenous public sphere and into the dominant public sphere and potentially impact on public opinion.

As evidence of the healthy and varied attitudes within the Indigenous public sphere, other interviewees thought opposing mainstream media messages were not only a function of Indigenous newspapers but also it should be their “raison d’etre”. This was certainly O’Neil’s position. O’Neil wrote and edited the *North Queensland Palm Islander*, *NQ Messagestick* and *National Messagestick* and used them to challenge

dominant public sphere messages and were staunchly political newspapers: “That’s what they exist for. That’s their whole existence” (O’Neil 2006). Foley also said Indigenous newspapers should “absolutely” be oppositional to ideas presented by the mainstream media (Foley 2005) and this attitude was prevalent in Indigenous newspapers produced from the late 1950s through to the late 1980s. Indigenous newspapers such as *The Koorier*, *Alchuringa*, *Black News Service*, *Black Nation*, *North Queensland Palm Islander*, *Koori Bina* were staunchly political and oppositional to mainstream media messages and government policy. They campaigned across both the Indigenous and dominant public spheres for change. Even less militant newspapers such as *AIM* took an oppositional stance to policy that was likely to impact negatively on Indigenous people.

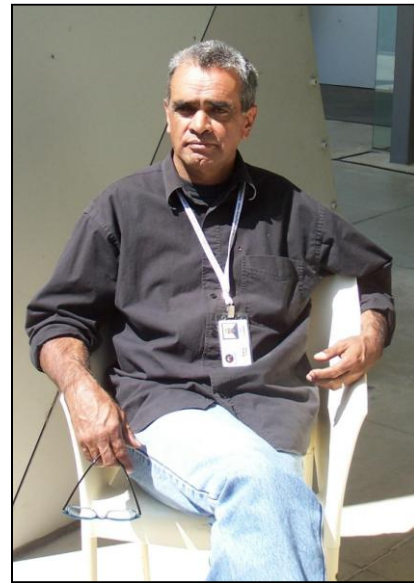


Image 4 Gary Foley, Melbourne, Victoria, 22 February 2005.

From the 1990s onwards though, the oppositional stance presented by newspapers such as *The Koorier* has given way to a softer, less confrontational posture that has at its core building Indigenous self esteem and presenting positive role model stories. Examples of newspapers that fit this mould include *Yamaji News*, *Deadly Vibes* and *Kurbingui Star*. It was editorial policy for *Yamaji News* and *Kurbingui Star* to avoid political or confrontational news and journalists working for these newspapers actively avoid confrontation (Montcrieff 2004; Oakley 2004; Waharai 2004), although some journalists working for apolitical publications found the lack of confrontation frustrating (Keane 2004). However, this lack of confrontation does not diminish the importance of these newspapers within the Indigenous public sphere. While these newspapers may not be directly opposing mainstream media messages, by presenting positive images of Indigenous people and promoting affirmative messages, they are often offering an oppositional position to mainstream media messages and helping to build self-esteem within the Indigenous public sphere.

A contemporary exception to this non-confrontational stance is the *National Indigenous Times*. Editor Chris Graham is acutely aware of the *National Indigenous Times* limited circulation and therefore limited potential to change mainstream views and this has led him to pass important stories to mainstream newspapers to ensure the message reaches as many people as possible (Graham 2004). In doing this, Graham is following in the footsteps of *Land Rights Queensland* and *Bunji*, whose managers and editors knew they needed to project information out of the Indigenous public sphere to exact changes to mainstream public opinion. *Land Rights Queensland* was very successful at pushing Indigenous ideas and voices into the dominant public sphere and in encouraging mainstream media organisations to rely on them for providing access to Indigenous stories and sources (Forde 2004; Malezer 2005). Consequently, there are newspapers operating within the Indigenous public sphere that have and do take a strong, oppositional stance to mainstream media messages. Newspapers such as *Land Rights Queensland*, *Bunji* and the *National Indigenous Times* have all shown it is possible for Indigenous newspapers to promote Indigenous public sphere messages and encourage mainstream media to disperse them throughout the dominant public sphere. In this way, they are successfully lobbying for social change and improved conditions for Indigenous Australians.

10.7.2 Improving relations between Indigenous people and the dominant group

Atton suggested alternative newspapers should try to improve the “social relations between these people and the dominant group” but within the Indigenous public sphere, this idea is controversial. While a number of interviewees, including the *Murri Views* and *National Indigenous Times* editors, said encouraging reconciliation was an important focus for them (Bousen 2004a; Carriage 2004; Graham 2004; Knowles 2005; Montcrieff 2004; Quillam 2004; Watson, L 2004; Watson, R 2005) this was not the view across the board. Some interviewees (Cheadle 2004; Foley 2005; Forde 2004; Howes 2004; Leavy 2004) believed promoting reconciliation should be driven by the non-Indigenous community and mainstream media. Buchanan cited the reconciliation movement as bringing about the “death of struggle” as the argument “we’re all Australians” was pushed by the “propaganda machine”(Buchanan 2005). Therefore, promoting reconciliation should not fall exclusively on Indigenous media

although some interviewees believed it was an issue Indigenous media could influence.

This attitude is not necessarily shared by mainstream media. In fact, within the mainstream media, there appears to be an implicit attitude that any effort towards reconciliation and ideas such as the negotiation of a treaty, should primarily come from the Indigenous community. This was evident in the coverage of Corroboree 2000 where mainstream media placed the responsibility for negotiating a treaty squarely in the hands of Indigenous Australians (Burrows 2000). However, Foley argued the main problem “confronting Aboriginal Australia” is not reconciliation but “racism” (2005). Rather than Indigenous Australians driving the reconciliation agenda through their newspapers and from within the Indigenous public sphere, Foley suggests white Australians need an “attitude change”. O’Neil shared Foley’s view and contended this racist attitude had become more evident when the Howard Government came to power because it attracted the “red necked vote” (2006). Foley explained racism (in the form that is a problem for the Aboriginal community) is a creature that resides in white Australia, not with Indigenous Australians, hence it is the responsibility of white Australians to address that problem in their own community and do something about it (2005). Therefore, while some researchers have suggested alternative newspapers can play a role in promoting reconciliation, some interviewees argue this is a responsibility that should be promoted from within the dominant public sphere rather than from the Indigenous print media and needs to begin with attitudinal change from mainstream Australia.

Historically, however, attitudes from within the Indigenous public sphere circulated through the Indigenous print media during the 1970s and 1980s have hampered the reconciliation process. For instance, the divisiveness that existed between Indigenous and non-Indigenous campaigners during the 1960s and 1970s and was driven by the Black Power movement and has been accused of adding to the lack of engagement many non-Indigenous people feel towards Indigenous affairs. The movement during the 1960s and 1970s to remove non-Indigenous people from Indigenous organisations was “abusive and segregationist” and people are now “too frightened to defend or fight for Aboriginal people because it’s not really correct in society” (Day 2005). The fact that Day was a white man who was heavily involved in Aboriginal affairs during

the 1970s was at odds with his own Black Power persona. However, he believes he was protected because he was “regarded as one of the leading black powerists” and he “used the language of it”.

I suppose the fact that I was working with Aboriginal people was a bit contradictory to it but I think, how many people would you find that can somehow get an understanding of what Aboriginal aspirations are, without interfering with it and redirecting it? (Day 2005).

Day believes non-Indigenous people should not be excluded from working in Indigenous affairs, although they should not be taking jobs away from Indigenous people. He uses the example of South Africa where “they got what they wanted through working through Black and white. It’s really what the A.N.C. (African National Congress) was about” (Day 2005). Consequently, while Indigenous newspapers can provide Indigenous people with a medium through which they can speak and in doing this Indigenous newspapers can encourage the reconciliation process, their primary purpose should be to help Indigenous people to improve their lives (Keane 2004). Malezer argued that “heal[ing] troubled minds and troubled souls...that’s more important” (2005). In summing up, while the racism existing in Australia may have its roots at a much earlier time than the 1960s and 1970s, the push by the Black Power movement, particularly to exclude non-Indigenous campaigners may have discouraged some non-Indigenous campaigners from participating in the battle against the many forms of inequality Indigenous people have and continue to endure. The focus for Indigenous newspapers should be to help Indigenous people to fight this battle and to heal.

10.8 News values

As has been discussed, journalists working in the Indigenous print media are aware of the role they can play in dispelling tainted ideological messages about Aboriginal people. Alternative journalists, including those who write for the Indigenous print media, tend to utilise a quite different range of news values to mainstream journalists. The findings show the news value of ‘conflict’ is less important and reflects a cultural distaste for conflict. Journalists writing for Indigenous newspapers are also less driven by timeliness and do not value the same “prominent people” as mainstream journalists. A major difference though, is their differing view of which stories have ideological news value (Chibnall 1977, p. 12). While Christine Howes, who has been

a major force behind the lobbying against the level of government restitution for Indigenous stolen wages, has often found it difficult to obtain mainstream media coverage for this issue, she has been able to obtain Indigenous print media coverage. The *National Indigenous Times* has been particularly proactive in pushing this issue and in recognising its ideological value (Graham 2004). Still, while journalists writing for Indigenous newspapers *may* recognise the ideological worth of the stories *they* cover, unless they can have those stories picked up by mainstream media they are unlikely to be able to dispel the damage done by mainstream media coverage.

Mainstream journalists tend to produce “black and white” news and provide little discussion of the shades of grey involved in the discussion of issues. This contrasts with Forde’s findings in her study of the alternative media where providing contextual information was viewed as very important by journalists in this field (Chibnall 1977, pp. 23-29; Forde 1999, p. 74). This study replicates Forde’s findings and has shown many of the stories published in newspapers such *Identity*, *Koori Bina*, *Black News Service*, *Land Rights News* and *Land Rights Queensland* provided in-depth coverage of issues that had been ignored or covered superficially by mainstream newspapers. Examples include *Koori Bina*’s coverage of the Aboriginal housing situation or *Identity*’s reporting of the attitudes of those involved in the Black Power movement. Similarly, land rights newspapers provided in-depth coverage of native title issues and legislation that Indigenous people were unlikely to find anywhere else. *Pugganna News* focused heavily on issues involving Tasmanian Aboriginal people such as identity and this counteracts the often negative mainstream media coverage of the same subject. Contemporary newspapers, the *Koori Mail* and *National Indigenous Times*, have both provided wide coverage of the Stolen Wages issue. Therefore Indigenous newspapers within the Indigenous public sphere have filled information gaps and corrected misinformation propagated by mainstream media in the dominant public sphere.

Another interesting point regarding the difference between important mainstream and alternative news values is that mainstream journalists may focus on “big” events, those that are deemed to be too far removed from the journalists’ audience from a cultural or emotional perspective may be ignored (Manning 2001 p. 61). Again, this has specific bearing on the coverage of Indigenous issues such as the abuse of

children in Indigenous communities. While this is a hugely important issue for society rather than just Indigenous people, the problem might be considered too complex or too difficult by mainstream media journalists and they will ignore it. Certainly, Indigenous leaders have been talking about this problem for a number of years but largely mainstream media had disregarded this topic. This concern became newsworthy only when a high profile person such as the Northern Territory Crown Prosecutor Nannette Rogers spoke publicly on the ABC program *Lateline* (Jones, T 2006). Child abuse on Indigenous communities then received extensive mainstream coverage. Still, as has happened in the past, this issue was allowed to *again* slip off the mainstream news agenda and little was done to resolve the problem. When the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sex Abuse released the 2007 *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle "Little Children are Sacred"* report, the federal government put forward its "intervention" program in response (Wild & Anderson 2007). Initial mainstream media coverage was ferocious until the initial furore was over and then the story again dropped off the news agenda. Unfortunately, in both these cases only high profile Indigenous voices were heard and the debate was dominated by politicians arguing about whose actions were correct. Little in-depth explanation about the Howard Government's intervention was published in the mainstream media. The coverage tended to focus on the conflict rather than debating the programs potential effectiveness or alternative solutions put forward by Indigenous communities and organisations.

This situation illustrates the level to which Indigenous people are excluded from public sphere discussions and highlights how Indigenous newspapers, within the Indigenous and dominant public spheres, can ensure Indigenous voices are heard at some level. Debate regarding an issue that has such impact on Indigenous communities should not be limited to white bureaucrats and politicians seeking to get political mileage. Rather the public should hear from Indigenous people who can bring their knowledge and ideas for solutions to the table. Nonetheless, Indigenous voices have been excluded from public sphere debates taking place within mainstream media and also from discussions organised at a parliamentary level to canvass a range of ideas and opinions. For instance, after Nanette Rogers spoke publicly on the ABC's *Lateline* program (Jones, T 2006), the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Mal Brough, organised a summit regarding violence on

Indigenous communities but did not plan to invite Indigenous people to participate (*ABC Newsonline*, 18 May 2006). Similarly, the Howard Government's Northern Territory intervention plans have been criticised by Indigenous elders, GPs and church organisations because Indigenous communities have not been consulted about the process (*ABC News*, 28 June 2007; Sweet in *Crikey*, 9 August 2007). While both of these situations were playing out, newspapers such as the *National Indigenous Times* have provided coverage of a range of voices with direct knowledge and first hand experience of the situation at a grassroots level (National Indigenous Times 9 August 2007; Ravens 2007). In fact, Graham sums up the problem with the mainstream reportage of Indigenous issues in his editorial, "The failures of fishbowl journalism" in which he describes mainstream media coverage of Indigenous issues as "lazy, uninformed and reactive". He continues by arguing mainstream media coverage includes "no follow-up, no deep analysis and rarely an opportunity for Aboriginal peoples' voices to be heard" (Graham 2006). It is clear then that while Indigenous newspapers cannot ensure Indigenous voices are heard within the dominant public sphere, they provide at least the opportunity for their ideas and opinions to be circulated around the Indigenous public sphere with the potential for their voices to reach a wider mainstream audience. In this way, they enable Indigenous people to participate at some level in public sphere processes by potentially influencing wider public opinion and therefore policies implemented.

10.9 Sources

Tomaselli and Louw found those participating in the South African alternative media were often "ordinary people" rather than "newsmakers" (1989, p. 204). The findings of this study confirm this idea too. While many of the non-Indigenous journalists who write for Indigenous publications *do* have journalism training and do consider themselves to be journalists or "newsmakers" (Bousen 2004; Cheadle 2004; Condie 2004; Forde 2004; Graham 2004; Johnson 2004), many of the Indigenous people who have been involved, both from a historic and contemporary perspective, do not consider themselves journalists. Rather they consider themselves to be activists (Anderson 2006; Buchanan 2005; Foley 2005), or journalists who are also Indigenous community members (Giles 2004; Keane 2004; Malezer 2005; Middleton 2004; Moncrieff 2004; Oakley 2004; Quillam 2004; Watson, R 2005) working towards improving the lives of their own people.

Regardless of their racial background, most writers for Indigenous newspapers agree the most important people for them to speak to are people in the Indigenous community. Yet the range of voices is still limited. Those who have extreme views, for instance, are less likely to be heard (Weatherall 2004). Weatherall explains:

There are a number of views right? And you may have quite an extreme view that is probably very proactive or a very politically black conscience view. In regards to say repatriation, just for the sake of talking, they may run Rodney Dillon [a relatively conservative Aboriginal source] in the *Koori Mail* or in any other Indigenous newspaper, but they don't talk to Michael Mansell or Bob Weatherall to get another perspective (Weatherall 2004).

Therefore, even in Indigenous newspapers, readers are not being provided with a wide range of attitudes on topics of concern and Indigenous journalists need to canvass a wider range of opinions to produce more balanced stories (Weatherall 2004). While the narrow range of accessible voices could perhaps be alleviated by journalists working more closely with the Indigenous communities that are local to them, the travel this would require and the lack of resources experienced by both Indigenous journalists and Indigenous publications is likely to hinder this process. Therefore, unless journalists can develop strong connections to communities it is impossible for Indigenous newspapers to accurately and widely represent Indigenous communities within the Indigenous public sphere.

Similarly, there are differing ideas regarding the choice of appropriate spokespeople for the Indigenous community. As has been discussed previously, those considered to be "Aboriginal leaders" by the mainstream community are often not the people the Indigenous community consider to be their spokespeople and Indigenous culture does not recognise the existence of "leaders" (Malezer 2005; O'Neil 2006; Watson, R 2005). It is therefore important that Indigenous newspapers canvass a diverse array of community members and ensure those who are being included are relevant to the Indigenous community. In this way, Indigenous newspapers can enhance the Indigenous public sphere processes by facilitating the inclusion of a range of community members and their opinions and ideas. Just as Schultz argued citizens within the dominant public sphere need access "to a wide range of information, to enable them to form opinions and make responsible political judgements" (1998, p. 23), this is no less true within the Indigenous public sphere. A key public sphere function for Indigenous newspapers is to provide this range of information to enable

Indigenous people to make informed and responsible judgements within their own public sphere.

This study has found that similarly to mainstream media, Indigenous publications rely on organisations within the Indigenous public sphere to generate news stories and this is the case across all time periods. In the 1930s, the *Abo Call* was used as the mouthpiece for the Aborigines Progressive Association (APA). Stories promoting their activities were common. This continued into the 1950s, early 1960s and as with mainstream media, those included in stories published in *Smoke Signals* or *Churinga*, regardless of their racial background, were likely to have some connection to the organisation producing the newspaper. This suggests while the people included in these Indigenous newspapers were different from those likely to be chosen to speak on Indigenous issues in the mainstream, they were still chosen because of their perceived credibility as authorised 'knowers'. This study shows those considered to be appropriate sources are also determined by their political associations. For instance, analysis of *Identity* has shown more radical sources such as Foley, Walker and McGuinness were favoured by Newfong when he edited this newspaper. Newfong had strong connections to the black power movement and these sources also fitted with his desire to produce a strong, political newspaper. Each of these people was pushing the envelope politically by organising and engaging in protests and rallies and by generating media attention. More moderate community sources were less likely to be called upon to comment in *Identity* articles. In contrast, when Davis took over as editor, the newspaper reverted to a more moderate, apolitical stance and these more radical sources no longer received coverage. This shows during these early public sphere phases, the messages being promoted were governed by the attitudes of those in charge of the means of production.

Contemporary newspapers have moved towards a more objective stance but also, the managers and editors of these newspapers are not also creating the news. Newfong, McGuinness, Anderson and Buchanan were all actively creating news. They were behind the protests both the newspapers they edited and mainstream media were covering. Today, editors and managers of newspapers such as the *National Indigenous Times*, *Koori Mail*, *Murri Views* and *Yamaji News* are/were professional journalists. Their role is/was to write about news events and not to create them. This

distinction reiterates the point made by Bill Day when he said he was a “creator” rather than a “reporter” of news. Perhaps the downside of this change is that contemporary newspapers, while having a more professional style and appearance, lack the passion and excitement of their earlier counterparts. As has been discussed previously, political changes to the way organisations operate within the Indigenous public sphere have changed Indigenous public sphere processes. Indigenous people no longer protest in the way they did in the 1960s and 1970s. Instead, after the creation of ATSIC, they lobbied through bureaucratic channels. Instead of causing disruptions in the streets, Indigenous leaders talked with bureaucrats in meetings. The activity within the Indigenous public sphere has therefore changed and the nature of their media has changed with it.

10.10 Strengths and weaknesses of the Indigenous print media

For all its resource and funding problems, the Indigenous media is an essential service and has a role to play in the fight against discriminatory racism (Malezer 2005). The Indigenous community, like any other community, is entitled to its own media and it is essential not only for the Indigenous community but for the mainstream community to gain access to and have an understanding of the Indigenous community (Watson, R 2005). The Indigenous media’s processing of information to this end, is an example of the Indigenous public sphere processes in action. Indigenous print media not only provide a voice for Indigenous Australians but they also cover the issues mainstream media “are too lazy to touch” (Heward 2005). When the coverage offered by the *National Indigenous Times* and the *Koori Mail* and Indigenous broadcast services such as CAAMA are combined, they provide a range of information to Indigenous public sphere participants that mainstream does not offer (Heward 2005). Heward, who was a media officer for ATSIC, said he and other people within ATSIC were conscious of the need to use Indigenous media to reach the Indigenous community to carry ATSIC’s messages (2005). He explained:

There is a huge demand among Indigenous people for information presented differently to the way the mainstream media does and that’s where I think Indigenous media comes in (Heward 2005).

Similarly, Keane argued Indigenous media speak directly to Indigenous Australia (2004). “They’re our readers, they’re the people we’re talking to” but the Indigenous

print media are also essential as a way of “fostering” a better understanding of Indigenous people in the mainstream community (Keane 2004). The Indigenous community’s need for its own media is not diminishing but is growing because of the globalisation of mainstream media and the lack of focus on community issues.

Malezer reasoned Indigenous media provide:

...a service Aboriginal people badly need and they need even more so because of the way the mainstream media is going. Mainstream media is becoming much more global and there is less community based media. Mainstream media also is more economic based media. It is also becoming much more of a white medium, not being cultural and so on...mainstream media is becoming very hostile and judgemental and in fact negative and aggressive to Aboriginal people. And rather than trying to fight that and getting involved with the mainstream media, because arguing with media is a no-win situation, we need to use alternative media and to rely upon different systems (Malezer 2005).

Despite being important Indigenous public sphere tools, Indigenous media tend not to collaborate with each other and this affects their ability to promote unified and targeted messages. Downing (2001) talked about the need for alternative media to collaborate but this does not happen to any great extent within Indigenous print media. In fact, since the *National Indigenous Times* was launched, there has been rivalry between the two national newspapers. Knowles (2005) said the lack of unity across the Indigenous “mediasphere” (Hartley & McKee 2000) has weakened the Indigenous position and worked in government’s favour. Knowles (2005) contends:

They can smell it ... it’s scattered...unless you put the jigsaw puzzle together you won’t see the whole picture...a known fact that minority groups can have change, they can make change happen. It it’s in unity, doing it by yourself or just with a handful of others and they others aren’t interested in doing it, well it won’t succeed.

In saying that, *Murri Views* had a contra agreement with *Imparja* to advertise each other’s services and the *National Indigenous Times* works with a number of other Indigenous media organisations to promote newspapers and spread their messages. For instance, Graham has a copy-sharing agreement with the *Torres News* and is often heard on Aboriginal community radio station 4AAA. Bayles, the General Manager of 4AAA, agreed Indigenous media organisations needed to work more closely with each other and to cross promote their independent media outlets (2004).

We’re the pioneers. We’re getting into white homes where there’s not been a black fella’s foot inside their gate, let alone inside their house. When we’re in

there we should be saying “check out our print media”....I think we’ve got to promote that more than we ever have.

Still, despite agreement there should be more group effort, in the main, the notion that the Indigenous media, including Indigenous radio stations, tend not to collaborate was confirmed by Heward who said Indigenous radio stations tend to “operate virtually in isolation”. The Indigenous community is “fairly localised” in Queensland, and their media tends to “reflect that” (Heward 2005). This dislocation between communities and Indigenous organisations correlates with my earlier description of the Indigenous public sphere as a web of overlapping spheres that not only spread out horizontally but also vertically. The connection between communities may be tenuous due to geographical, financial or resource restraints and this causes problems for the idea of a national identity for Indigenous print media and media in general who may want to canvass a range of different Indigenous perspectives. The final chapter will bring together the major findings of this work and look to the future of research and practise in this important field.

Chapter 11: Conclusion

This study began with the recognition that, in 2009, Indigenous Australians are still one of the most disadvantaged and ‘unheard’ groups of people in Australian society. They endure poor education and health care; in many communities they lack decent housing and while comprising of only two percent of the total Australian population, Indigenous Australians make up 22 percent of Australia’s prison population (Krieg 2006). These facts and the questions they raise provide the justification for this study. To understand this disparity, this study has considered how Indigenous print media produced over the last 80 years have contributed to communicating Indigenous community needs, ideas, and demands and ultimately, how they have and are helping to change Indigenous people’s circumstances. To answer this question, I have used the notion of the public sphere to ascertain whether or not Indigenous print media have helped to establish and/or develop an Indigenous public sphere—a space where Indigenous people can discuss issues of concern to them and to strategise about how to exact change. I have also considered what functions and processes Indigenous print media perform within an Indigenous public sphere and how these functions/processes have affected the Indigenous community and their democratic place in society. In other words, have public sphere processes undertaken by Indigenous print media improved Indigenous people’s democratic power and/or life conditions?

11.1 Public sphere structure and processes

One of the first conclusions that can be drawn from this study is that an Indigenous public sphere certainly does exist, and always has in its various guises and phases. An important finding to come from this study is further confirmation of Avison and Meadows’ (2000, p. 348) suggestion that the Indigenous public sphere is made up of many, horizontal overlapping spheres. This study builds on their idea and further contends that these spheres also have depth and are comprised of layers. The level of access afforded to specific Indigenous community processes depends on the individual’s/or organisation’s connection and status (trust, commitment, knowledge of and respect) by and within the Indigenous community.

Furthermore, and in line with Squires’ (1999) study of the Black public sphere in the United States, I have found the Indigenous public sphere is not in a static form but it evolves and changes in response to the political and social environment in which it

exists. Just as Squires (1999, 2002) found counterpublic spheres transition through four distinct phases, I found the Indigenous public sphere could be broken into four different stages: the Trailblazers, the Revolutionaries, the Land Rights phase and finally, the Professionals phase. Indigenous public sphere processes evolved as more participants became involved and as their needs and goals became clearer and more developed. This was exemplified in this study through the discussion of how Indigenous public sphere participants formed their own organisations from the 1920s onwards, with the highpoint of this activity taking place from the late 1960s through to the 1980s. Many Indigenous organisations produced their newspapers to promote their activities and to engage with their community, at a local, regional and/or national level and to advance their ideas into mainstream community discussions and media.

Another important conclusion from this study is that the complexity of the Indigenous public sphere reflects the complexity of the Indigenous community and this may offer an explanation for why it is perhaps difficult for journalists, newspapers, organisations and governments to engage with the Indigenous community. This complexity also highlights one of the differences between journalists working in the Indigenous public sphere and those operating in the wider Australian community. There is no “one size fits all approach” for working with Indigenous communities. Every community, whether remote, rural or urban, is unique. Each has its own history. Each may have its own language and/or culture. For instance, journalists Giles and McNamara explained how important it was for them to develop successful relationships with communities. Success for journalists working in the Indigenous arena depends on more than just ‘earning their stripes’. It depends on showing they have integrity and are prepared to work with people, and showing through their actions they are, to use an Australianism, “fair dinkum”⁷⁰. Community acceptance will not happen over the length of an interview. It takes time, and even then, if the journalists do not belong to that community and/or are not Indigenous they may only be allowed access certain levels. Therefore, gaining acceptance requires significant investment from journalists and working in the Indigenous arena requires them to go beyond “getting the story”. Unfortunately, journalists working for mainstream media organisations often do not have the time, the awareness or the inclination to make this investment. Similarly, for organisations and governments, the investment may go

⁷⁰ Fair dinkum. Genuine, honest and true.

beyond what their structure can accommodate. This may hinder their ability to engage with Indigenous communities, and hinder the access to public sphere processes that they are afforded.

11.2 The changing focus within the Indigenous public sphere

The findings of this thesis have shown the focus for each generation of campaigners, while sharing many similarities, has also exhibited differences. For the “Trailblazers” the focus was establishing Indigenous organisations and lobbying for wider understanding of the problems facing Indigenous people and pushing government for policy change. While “Trailblazers” such as Groves pushed for control of Indigenous control of organisations, the “Revolutionaries” took this push a step further. A stronger goal for the “Revolutionaries” was encouraging mass political activity both within and outside the Indigenous public sphere. They, like many of their counterparts globally, were driven by the desire to challenging the system and promote government and institutional responses. No longer satisfied to wait for white Australians to deliver social change to Indigenous people, the “Revolutionaries” took matters into their own hands. If change was going to happen, it would only occur if they could initiate pressure and through their actions force action. In some ways, the land rights publications published during the 1980s and 1990s acted as a bridge between the “Revolutionaries” and the later “Professionals”. Non-Indigenous people were allowed access to public sphere processes and were permitted to be involved with the battle for land rights. While the “Revolutionaries” challenged the system and found ways to exert political pressure, a significant trait of the *Professional’s* era is their active avoidance of generating conflict. The major aim for the “Professionals” has been building Indigenous community self-esteem.

A problem with the “Professionals” motivation is that in the 21st century, Indigenous people still suffer significant disadvantage. Therefore, a balance has to be found between building Indigenous self-esteem and working to generate change. Since Indigenous print media editors and journalists recognised the potential to be “preaching to the converted” a key strategy for encouraging dominant public sphere support must be to take advantage of their enhanced cultural knowledge and their ability to access deeper levels within the Indigenous public sphere to encourage

mainstream media to pick up more Indigenous stories. Historically, Indigenous print media have successfully attracted the attention of mainstream media and in this way have managed to present Indigenous ideas and perspectives.

This perhaps highlights one of the conundrums for Indigenous print media; deciding which role to focus on. Should they focus on building community esteem, or push for political change? I would argue there is a place for both functions within the Indigenous public sphere and this is demonstrated by the *Koori Mail* and the *National Indigenous Times*. The *Koori Mail*'s main focus has been to promote positive stories, ideas and practices and through their coverage to try to dispel inaccurate and stereotypical attitudes operating both within the Indigenous and mainstream communities and often perpetuated by mainstream media. While from a mainstream journalism perspective, positive "feel good" stories may have low news value, for Indigenous newspapers stories about young people's sporting and school achievements provide role models for people to emulate. In acting as a counterbalance to the more (negative) common mainstream media presentations of Indigenous people, the *Koori Mail* presents images of young people taking community leadership roles, becoming national sporting heroes or obtaining a doctoral degree from Harvard which provides important positive alternatives. Dispelling the myths and promoting positive images of Indigenous Australians also may help to develop Indigenous self-esteem and create a stronger sense of shared Indigeneity. In contrast, the *National Indigenous Times* has undertaken a stronger political role and has been an entry point for people involved in government to obtain coverage of issues or problems they are lobbying to change. Both roles are equally valid and important and Indigenous newspapers have the potential to cover both simultaneously or independently.

11.3 Motivating discussion from Indigenous perspectives

Archival research and analysis of Indigenous newspapers from 1938 through to the present day, combined with interviews with a range of Indigenous print media participants and community members show Indigenous newspapers have opened up discussions within the Indigenous public sphere. People like Herbert Groves, John Newfong, Cheryl Buchanan, Shorty O'Neil, Les Malezer, Kirstie Parker and Chris Graham (to mention just a few) have used Indigenous newspapers to generate and

illustrate discussions that have and are taking place or need to take place in the Indigenous public sphere. Buchanan suggested that no issue was taboo for her and O'Neil explained his travels through communities picking up stories about local problems and events. The varying goals adopted by participants such as: connecting communities and improving community self-esteem, or taking a more political stance and seeking to shame, bully, cajole and encourage Australians and Australian governments to insist on or make changes to improve Indigenous lives is evidence of the health and diversity of action within this public sphere.

Analysis of the chosen sample of newspapers demonstrates they have opened up discussions covering a wide range of topics from land rights, to health and education concerns, to work and employment conditions, and explanations of existing government policy and legislation. Newspapers such as *Abo Call*, *The Koorier*, *Identity* and contemporary newspapers such as the *Koori Mail* and *National Indigenous Times* have and do provide Indigenous perspectives on a range of topics including discussions about living conditions on Aboriginal missions and reserves, the poor education outcomes for Indigenous people and the reasons behind Indigenous strategies such as the Aboriginal Tent Embassy protest and Stolen Wages campaign. While these topics may be discussed in mainstream media, Indigenous people have little or no say in how they are presented or who (if anyone) from the Indigenous community speaks. Indigenous newspapers are more likely to focus primarily on gathering the community viewpoint and to select participants that the community considers appropriate. Still, regardless of the coverage Indigenous and mainstream media give to these issues, some mainstream Australians still do remain ignorant and unaware.

A key conclusion from this study is that Indigenous print media have helped to generate mainstream attention for campaigns emerging from within the Indigenous public sphere. However, the attention generated was not always positive. For instance, campaigns such as the Tent Embassy protest and the 1967 referendum were very successful in gaining mainstream media attention and therefore getting Indigenous issues on the news agenda. However, while the 1967 referendum did this in a positive way, Tent Embassy coverage was more negative. Since mainstream media tends to present things in black and white terms, the reasons for the Tent Embassy, the

Aboriginal perspective, was missed by many Australians. It gained media attention but may have just added to the stereotype of Aboriginal people as ‘activists’, ‘fire-brands’, and ‘trouble-makers’. This highlights another significant assertion drawn from this study, that those involved with these activities were ‘creators’ of news. They wrote about their own organisation’s activities in Indigenous newspapers and gained the attention of journalists writing for mainstream organisations. By doing this, they engaged with dominant public sphere processes and they raised public awareness. They made themselves heard through their actions and through their use of Indigenous print media. This is a distinct difference between the early writers of Indigenous newspapers and their contemporary counterparts and mainstream media journalists.

11.4 Encouraging broader political awareness, participation and generating social change

Still, despite the role these newspapers have played in generating discussion within and outside the Indigenous community and at both a community and a national level, in 2009 many Indigenous people still have poorer health, education, employment and wealth outcomes. It is therefore not enough to be on the mainstream news agenda through particular media events—Indigenous affairs need to stay on the news agenda and a range of Indigenous voices have to be consistently included. This is one way the Indigenous print media has proved to be useful in the past and must prove to be useful in the future. *Land Rights Queensland* provides an excellent example of how Indigenous newspapers can more shrewdly and efficiently encourage mainstream media attention. They provided an in-road for mainstream journalists to Indigenous sources and newsworthy stories. They used their combined knowledge of both mainstream media AND Indigenous affairs, people and culture to effectively promote Indigenous perspectives both through their own publication and mainstream publications. In this way, they too generated wider public awareness but they did it without the need to stage major political action. Similarly, the *National Indigenous Times* has become a political voice for Indigenous people. ATSIC staff felt comfortable in contacting the newspaper about political activity and leaking documents about policy changes that would affect ATSIC. The *NIT* staff recognised the limitations of their own publication because of its smaller circulation and they passed a national story about government leaks to the more influential *Australian*

Financial Review (AFR). The *NIT* recognised the need to bridge the Indigenous and dominate public spheres, to promote information about Indigenous affairs to the wider community. They also acknowledged the need to be “fair dinkum” about their role within the Indigenous public sphere and to move beyond “getting the story”.

By bridging the gap between Indigenous public sphere activity and dominant public sphere activity, Indigenous print media journalists increase the ability of Indigenous people to participate democratically. While media savvy Indigenous politicians and speakers such as Charles Perkins, Noel Pearson, Patrick and Michael Dodson may get a hearing in mainstream newspapers other Indigenous people who have less understanding of deadlines and the need for succinct, snappy responses remain largely invisible. Journalists working in the Indigenous print media have a greater understanding of *who* is appropriate to speak on particular topics according to the Indigenous community’s judgement. Journalists working in the Indigenous print media also place a higher value on including grassroots Indigenous community voices as a first priority. By giving higher priority to Indigenous community voices, Indigenous newspapers allow the community to drive their own public sphere communication processes. In turn, this empowers the community. This knowledge, if used wisely as previously discussed, gives Indigenous print media an edge over mainstream media that they can use to their and the community’s advantage. This is a source of empowerment for Indigenous sources and promotes appropriate Indigenous messages. While Indigenous newspapers can help to bridge the gap between the Indigenous and dominant public sphere by acting as a conduit through which mainstream media can access appropriate sources, they also connect Indigenous communities and organisations. This is an equally valid function because while this study has discussed the diversity of communities that exist within the Indigenous public sphere, each of these communities is connected by their shared Indigeneity. They may speak different languages, have different cultural practices and individual problems and concerns but they have all been affected by colonisation and many continue to live under poor conditions and lack the same level of benefits enjoyed by most mainstream Australians. Indigenous newspapers therefore provide an opportunity for Indigenous individuals and communities to share amongst themselves information about the problems they face, the solutions they have found and the campaigns they have undertaken and their success or failures. Indigenous print media

provide an opportunity for people to pool their ideas/resources and work towards shared goals such as their battle for land and citizenship rights. Indigenous print media also enable people and communities to experience their connectedness and link similar organisations so they can present united and consistent messages and build and present a united, if diverse, front to the mainstream community. One of the strengths of the “Revolutionaries” phase, identified by the study, was the network forged by a range of individuals and organisations. The use of this network meant they were presenting consistent messages which led to success as many Indigenous individuals, organisations and communities effectively pulled together to establish an Aboriginal network fighting for health, legal and land rights. In a variety of ways, Indigenous print media have publicised and promoted Indigenous public sphere processes both by organising protests that will attract mainstream media attention or by using their media knowledge to bridge the gap between Indigenous and dominant public sphere processes. However, regardless of how well Indigenous print media fulfil this function, to achieve change and to improve Indigenous peoples’ social, political and economic lives, governments have to respond positively.

11.5 Interacting with government

That Indigenous public sphere processes are influenced and perhaps reflect the environment in which they exist demonstrates the importance of both Indigenous participants and those with the power to exact change ensuring conditions facilitate that change. During the 1930s, the government resisted pressure from the Aborigines Progressive Association by taxing the *Abo Call* out of existence. During the “Revolutionaries” phase when Aboriginal campaigners were actively challenging the establishment, they were monitored by ASIO and the Federal police. Similarly, in Queensland legislation was passed to give the government the power to detain protestors. Furthermore, when the *NIT* passed leaked papers about the government’s plans for ATSIC, Australian Federal Police raided the small, independent newspaper *National Indigenous Times* instead of the large, influential media organisation, *Australian Financial Review* (owned by the major media chain, Fairfax). Consequently despite continued Indigenous public sphere activity to push for change, government responses have at times hampered progress. In contrast though, there have been periods when many advances have been made in Indigenous affairs such as the passing of the Mabo and Wik legislation, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal

Deaths in Custody, the *Bringing Them Home* report, the establishment of the Reconciliation council and the formation of ATSIC. This illustrates how important it is for the desire for change to come from within the Indigenous public sphere and from governments. When there is engagement from both sides, positive action has been achieved.

A roadblock to successful interaction appears to come from structural differences. Western bureaucracies are not structured and do not operate in a way that fits with the structural and cultural requirements of Indigenous society. Consequently, working successfully with Indigenous communities requires being prepared to find new ways. Despite the difficulties, a major conclusion drawn from this study is that the small size of the Indigenous population means encouraging and facilitating awareness of Indigenous attitudes and conditions within the mainstream community is essential if governments are to be persuaded to: a) change policy and legislation to bring about improvements and b) to implement changes produced after consultation with Indigenous communities. Without this link and without this engagement Indigenous voices are, as Meadows suggested, little more than *Voices in the Wilderness* (2001). Indigenous newspapers and Indigenous media in general, have, can, do and must play a role in facilitating this engagement.

The study suggests, then, that Indigenous newspapers provide opportunities for local people to communicate, initiate and activate local solutions—and that they are even more able to affect change through these actions if government is listening and responsive. Essentially, while Indigenous people can debate issues within their own public sphere using their media, the mechanisms necessary to translate that discussion to action between Indigenous people and government are not yet consistently in place.

11.6 Perceptions and functions of contemporary Indigenous media

It is important to reiterate that Indigenous media fulfil a dual function. On one hand they facilitate communication between the Indigenous public sphere and the dominant public sphere; and on the other hand they work to build and develop Indigenous community esteem and to link the many Indigenous communities and organisations together. A component of Indigenous self-esteem is the protection of identity and culture. This study has shown the Indigenous media is no longer limited to Indigenous

newspapers and now includes a wide range of broadcast media. Improved technology means broadcast media/programs can be produced at a local level, in the local language and with images or the voices of local Indigenous people. This gives broadcast media significant advantages over print media. Still, while newspapers are far less immediate than broadcast formats and they take longer to produce and must then be distributed to their readers, they are not obsolete. Without Indigenous print media the ideas and strategies employed by Indigenous campaigners since the 1930s would not be available for researchers now. Indigenous newspapers have provided a long-lasting historical record and this continues to be one of their strengths. They are produced en-masse making it likely at least some copies will survive. Those copies are also easily transportable. People who are no longer living in a remote community can still see photographs of their relatives and friends in Indigenous newspapers. Similarly, many non-Indigenous Australians cannot or do not access Indigenous broadcasts and it may be that the community would not want them to access culturally sensitive information. Yet there are other topics that need to be discussed in the wider Australian community to ensure Indigenous people have a voice and can raise awareness of issues of concern to them and their own perspectives on those topics. Indigenous and non-Indigenous people across Australia and globally can access Indigenous newspapers through local newsagents, libraries or subscription and those newspapers and the ideas and voices in them are also available to mainstream journalists providing the opportunity for those stories to be circulated in mainstream media. Both national newspapers now have an Internet presence and an online archive. Therefore, Indigenous print media play an important role within the Indigenous public sphere and their value has not been diminished by broadcast media. Consequently, it is important that Indigenous newspapers continue to be produced and that funding in its various forms continue to be provided to Indigenous organisations to ensure this important contributor to the Indigenous public sphere continues.

Contemporary Indigenous print media have been criticised for their 'soft' approach and this highlights the need for a different scale to be applied when judging Indigenous newspapers. In many cases Indigenous newspapers have had little or no commercial value but have exhibited strong community significance. Indigenous newspapers do fulfil important esteem building and community networking functions. Similarly, the tendency of some mainstream journalists to deride the work of

journalists working for Indigenous publications as lacking credibility is short-sighted and simplistic. While Indigenous newspapers do need to ensure they maintain strong journalistic standards, journalists working for Indigenous newspapers are no less skilled than journalists working for mainstream organisations. Journalists working for Indigenous newspapers must develop and maintain strong connections with the Indigenous community and be especially careful to conform to ethical standards as they apply in the various communities. The Indigenous community is small and any failure to operate ethically within such a small sphere is likely to result in long-term damage to the journalist's ability to carry out their work. Equally, Indigenous journalists have to walk a tightrope between meeting their community responsibilities and their responsibilities as journalists. Rather than looking on journalists in this field with scorn, mainstream journalists could improve their own work in the Indigenous arena by developing connections with the editors and journalists writing for Indigenous newspapers. Mainstream media stories regarding Indigenous events and issues often rely on a small field of Indigenous sources and often those quoted are not part of the community being discussed. Therefore by fostering bonds with Indigenous media organisations, mainstream media outlets could strengthen their own coverage of Indigenous affairs. Fostering such bonds would also provide networks through which to try to encourage the publication of Indigenous perspectives and positive stories.

Attempts by Indigenous newspapers to present a more professional front may actually be detrimental to their community role. As newspapers are produced by professional journalists and editors, the links to the Indigenous communities may become more tenuous. Certainly, this study has shown that while the early newspapers were produced by active participants in Indigenous public sphere activities, or “creators of news”, they are now more likely to be produced by observers in the guise of professional journalists, “reporters of news”. Patten, Groves, McGuinness, Foley, Newfong and Buchanan were more than journalists who wrote about the activities of other Indigenous campaigners. They were generating the activity themselves; they were challenging the system and working with their communities to create political activity. In turn, they became mentors for the young campaigners coming up behind them. Patten and Ferguson were mentors for Onus, Gibbs, Nicholls and Groves. They and their followers became mentors for McGuinness who in turn inspired Foley,

Walker, Langton and Anderson. Who are the mentors producing contemporary Indigenous newspapers? Indigenous newspapers were once a tool for Indigenous campaigners; they are now spectators rather than participants. Unless the Aboriginal activists who are working in communities see the value of working with Indigenous newspapers to promote their activities, it is unlikely they will engage with them. In the past, newspapers that had a connection to or shared the same political attitudes were favoured by campaigners. How this changing role will impact on present and future Indigenous public sphere activity is an area for future researchers to consider.

11.7 Limitations of the study

This study has been an attempt to understand how Indigenous print media have initiated and enhanced Indigenous public sphere activity. It does not claim to cover every Indigenous newspaper ever produced but rather it is a sample taken from a large field. Similarly, there is no claim that the people interviewed for this study represent all Indigenous perspectives. Many of the people who have participated in the production of Indigenous newspapers have passed away or were unavailable to comment because of their geographic location or my inability to find them. Similarly some people chose not to participate. The archival research that provided useful background information and supportive evidence was limited because many of the files belonging to participants are not yet open for public viewing. Similarly, government activity relating to contemporary Indigenous newspapers such as the *National Indigenous Times* will not become available for more than twenty years. While these factors limit the scope of this study, they do not diminish its validity. Many key participants were interviewed and the newspapers they or their peers produced are still available for analysis and archival material has provided supportive evidence to substantiate suggestions made by interviewees.

Yet this study is in part based on the memories of participants and as such is limited to their recollections, their retrospective interpretations and their willingness to share their knowledge and information about their motivation. Their interpretations of events and issues are not representative of the whole of the Indigenous community and indeed, may in some cases not be entirely accurate. They are each individual's point of view. Yet the interpretation of events many of the interviewees participated in

and their motivation and reasons for taking part still affords us a view of Australian history and alternative media production practices that we would otherwise lack.

11.8 Future research

This study offers only a sliver of understanding about Indigenous public sphere processes. There is still limited research into the role and structure of Indigenous organisations after the 1960s. Who, why, when and what were they established to achieve and how well did they do this? How were they networked together and how successful were they in achieving their goals? While this study has considered many of the publications they produced, it has not analysed the structure and functions of the organisations themselves. It has also not evaluated their success. Similarly, research into the strengths and weaknesses of ATSIC as a bridge between the Indigenous and dominant public sphere may provide essential information and advice for an improved Indigenous body that can further Indigenous self-determination and enable government to link to the many Indigenous communities.

Furthermore, while this study has briefly discussed the way Indigenous newspapers have presented issues of concern to the Indigenous community, it would be interesting to see the outcomes of a comprehensive content analysis of Indigenous newspaper content vs. mainstream newspaper content. For instance, how did the *Black Australian News* coverage of the Tent Embassy compare to coverage provided by *The Australian* or/and *The Sydney Morning Herald*? Similarly, while this study has a historical *focus*, a full historical investigation, using an appropriate historical approach, of the history of Indigenous media that includes a comprehensive analysis of archival material unavailable during this study would provide another dimension to our understanding of these publications. Further historical analysis of Indigenous organisations from the 1920s onwards would enhance our understanding of their activities and the actions they took to generate change. Interviews with organisation participants and politicians, and other major players in the political field would add another layer to our understanding of the role these organisations and Indigenous campaigners have played.

Finally, the Indigenous newspapers that have formed the basis of this investigation have provided a unique view of Australian history. They have given us a glimpse of

the way Indigenous people lived from the 1930s onwards and the battle campaigners such as Jack Patten, Bert Groves, Cheryl Buchanan, Michael Anderson, Shorty O'Neil, Gary Foley and others have fought to try to improve the lives of their people. These newspapers have also provided a catalogue of the many non-Indigenous people who have joined this ongoing battle. These newspapers have illustrated the difficulties they faced, and their tenacity in never giving up. It is sad but interesting to note that some of the themes covered by *Abo Call* during the late 1930s are not so different from the themes covered by the *Koori Mail* in 2009. These newspapers have also chronologised government actions and reactions since the 1930s from an Indigenous perspective. In doing so, they may offer us clues as to how governments and the Indigenous community can work more efficiently together. A strong message from this study is that if both sides are open-minded and willing, change can occur. The Indigenous newspapers of the future will catalogue who the Indigenous campaigners of this century are and the ways in which they seek to improve Indigenous lives and to engage with or engage in battle against the governments of their day. The production of those newspapers must be ensured because they will provide researchers of the future with the opportunity to look back through history and to gauge what, if any, lessons we have learned from the past.

While this study has shown the functions of Indigenous print media has evolved over time and that broadcast media is more efficient in some areas, Indigenous print media still provide an important link between the Indigenous and dominant public spheres. They provide a voice for Indigenous people and have the potential to enhance mainstream and Indigenous relations by linking mainstream journalists to Indigenous sources and communities and alerting mainstream journalists to topics of concern to Indigenous Australians. History shows Indigenous newspapers have played an important role in promoting the messages of Indigenous campaigners and their activities. Contemporary Indigenous newspapers cannot avoid their political role if they are to help bring about improvements to Indigenous lives. Similarly, they must ensure they are reaching out and connecting in with today's Indigenous heroes. They can only become the mentors of the generation that follows if that generation can hear their voices and read their words. Governments need to ensure funding is not only provided to develop and maintain a strong broadcast network but also a print network.

A print network that also operates at a local level and can connect in with the national newspapers and from their disperse ideas, information and achievements throughout the Indigenous public sphere. The funding to build such a network must be provided without strings and with no pressure over editorial control. While ATSIC may not have been a perfect mechanism, it did offer Indigenous Australians the opportunity to elect the people they wanted to speak for them. This study has also shown it also operated as a buffer between government and Indigenous organisations. The re-establishment of such a mechanism is essential if government is to have access to the wide range of ideas circulating the Indigenous public sphere. A network of Indigenous print and broadcast media would be an invaluable source of feedback to such an organisation and would perhaps help to resolve some of the criticism directed at ATSIC. Any mechanism the government establishes to advise them and to work with them and the wider Indigenous community must have access to wider Indigenous public sphere debates. Ultimately, in 2008 it is a disgrace that in one of the wealthiest countries in the world, many Indigenous people live in third world conditions and they have no culturally sensitive mechanism through which to engage with the democratic process. Indigenous print media have a continuing responsibility to ensure mainstream Australia is not allowed to continue to turn a blind eye.

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List of abbreviations

AAF	Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship
AAL	Aborigines Advancement League
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AEC	Australian Electoral Commission
AFR	Australian Financial Review
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
AIM	<i>Aboriginal-Islander-Messenger</i>
AJA	Australian Journalists Association
AMA	Australian Medical Association
ANTaR	Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation
APA	Aborigines Progressive Association
APF	Aboriginal Publications Foundation
ASIO	Australian Security Intelligence Organisation
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
AUS	Australian Union of Students
BNS	Black News Service
BRC	Black Resource Centre
BRACS	Broadcasting for Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme
BWHC	Bygal Weahunir Holding Company
CAAMA	Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association
CBF	Community Broadcasting Foundation Ltd
CDEP	Community Development Employment Projects
DAA	Department of Aboriginal Affairs
DCITA	Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
DOGIT	Deed of Grant in Trust
FAIRA	Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action
FCAA	Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement
FCAATSI	Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders
GESC	Greater Economy Steering Committee (Torres Strait Islands)
IBP	Indigenous Broadcasting Program
LRN	<i>Land Rights News</i>
LRQ	<i>Land Rights Queensland</i>
MEAA	Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance
MIAMA	Mount Isa Aboriginal Media Association
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NAC	National Aboriginal Conference
NACCHO	National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
NAIDOC	National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee
NG	Ngaanyatjarra Media
NIT	<i>National Indigenous Times</i>

NSW	New South Wales
NTC	National Tribal Council
PAKAM	Pilbara and Kimberly Aboriginal Media
PAW	Warlpiri Media
PY	Pitjantjara Yankunyatjatarra Media
RIBS	Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services
RIMO	Remote Indigenous Media Organisations
SBS	Special Broadcasting Service
SMH	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>
TEABBA	Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association
TSI	Torres Strait Islands/Islander
TSRA	Torres Strait Regional Authority
VAAL	Victorian Aborigines Advancement League
YLAC	Yamaji Languages Aboriginal Corporation

Appendix 1: List of newspapers studied

	Publication dates (if known)	Name	Place published	Editor/s	Organisation
1	April 1938-Sept 1938	<i>The Australian Abo Call</i>	Sydney, NSW	John T. Patten	Aborigines Progressive Association (APA)
2	1953-1957	<i>Westralian Aborigine</i>	West Australia		Coolbaroo League
3	1958-present day	Torres News	Torres Strait Islands	Corey Bousen Mark Bousen	
4	1961-1972	<i>Smoke Signals</i>	Fitzroy, Victoria	Stan Davey G. M. Bryant	Victorian Aborigines Advancement League (VAAL)
5	1964-1969	<i>Churinga</i>	Sydney, NSW	Herbert Groves	Aborigines Progressive Association (APA)
6	1965-?	<i>Irabina</i>	Sydney, NSW		Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs
7	1969-?	<i>Origin</i>	Adelaide		Australian Wildlife Protection Council
8	1968-1971	<i>The Koorier aka National Koorier and Jumbunna</i>	Victoria	Bruce McGuinness	Aborigines Advancement League (AAL)
9	1971-1983	<i>Bunji</i>	Darwin, Northern Territory	William Day	Gwalwa Darankiki
10	1971-1982	<i>Identity</i>		Barrie Ovenden John Newfong Michael Anderson Jack Davis Les Malezer	Aboriginal Publications Foundation (APF)
11	1971-?	<i>Alchuringa</i>	La Trobe University, Victoria	Kevin Gilbert	Land Rights Club
12	1972	<i>Black Australian News</i>	Gladesville, NSW	Michael Anderson	Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs
13	1974-?	<i>Palm Island Smoke Signal</i>	Palm Island	Bill Rosser	
14	1975-?	<i>Black News Service</i>		Cheryl Buchanan	Black Resource Centre (BRC)
15	1975-?	<i>Black Liberation</i>		Cheryl Buchanan	Black Resource Centre (BRC)
16	1975-1979	<i>Aboriginal and Islander Forum</i>		Jack Davis	Aboriginal Publications Foundation (APF)
17	1976-1985	<i>Central Australian Land Rights News</i>	Alice Springs		Central Land Council (CLC)
18	1976-1985	<i>Land Rights News</i>	Northern Territory		Northern Land Council (NLC)
19	1985- present day	<i>Land Rights News</i>	Northern Territory		Northern Territory Land Councils
20	1976-?	<i>Harmony</i>			Aborigines Advancement Council

21	1976-1979	<i>Koori Bina</i>	Sydney. NSW	Marcia Langton, Roberta Sykes, Sue Chilli	
22	1976-1979	<i>Black Action</i>			Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre/Aboriginal Information Service
23	1976-1985	<i>NQ Messagestick</i>	Townsville	Shorty O'Neil	North Queensland Land Council
24	1979-1982	<i>Aboriginal-Islander- Message (AIM)</i>	Sydney	Gabrielle Dalton	Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Scheme (AISDS)
25	1982-1985	<i>Black Nation</i>	West End, Queensland	Ross Watson	
26	1983-?	<i>Koorier 2, News Pictorial</i>	Fitzroy, Vic.	Robbie Thorpe	Koorie Information Centre
27	1984-?	<i>National Messagestick</i>	Alice Springs	Shorty O'Neil	National Federation Land Councils
28	1989-?	<i>Koorier 3</i>	Thornbury, Vic.		Aborigines Advancement League
29	1991-present day	<i>Koori Mail</i>	Lismore, NSW	Janine Wilson Dona Graham Todd Condie Barry Cheadle Kirstie Parker	Owen Carriage then Bygal Weahunir Holding Company
30	1992-1999	<i>Pugganna News</i>	Tasmania		Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre
31	1994-2002	<i>Land Rights Queensland</i>	Brisbane	Various	FAIRA
32	1995-2005	<i>Yamaji News</i>	Geraldton, W.A.	Paige Finci	Yamaji Languages Aboriginal Corporation
33	2002-present day	<i>National Indigenous Times</i>		Chris Graham	
34	2003-2008	<i>Kurbingui Star</i>	Zillmere, Qld.	Aroha Warahai	Kurbingui Youth Development Association Inc.
35	2004-2005	<i>Murri Views</i>	Mt Isa, Qld.	Ed Knowles	Mt Isa Aboriginal Media Association

Appendix 2: List of completed interviews

	Name	Role	Date of Interview	Identifies as
1	Christine Howes	Journalist <i>Koori Mail</i> , Journalist/Editor <i>Land Rights Queensland</i> Journalist <i>Murri Views</i>	21 July 2004	Non-Indigenous
2	Susan Forde	Editor/Journalist <i>Land Rights Queensland</i> Journalist <i>Koori Mail</i>	23 July 2004	Non-Indigenous
3	Chris Graham	Editor <i>National Indigenous Times</i>	16 August 2004	Non-Indigenous
4	Tamara Giles	Journalist <i>National Indigenous Times</i>	18 August 2004	Indigenous
5	Barry Cheadle	Editor <i>Koori Mail</i>	25 August 2004	Non-Indigenous
6	Todd Condie	Editor <i>Koori Mail</i> Journalist <i>Land Rights News</i>	30 August 2004	Indigenous
7	Jack Horner	Author and campaigner	1 September 2004	Non-Indigenous
8	Steve Gordon	Manager <i>Koori Mail</i>	8 September 2004	Non-Indigenous
9	Wayne Quillam	Photojournalist <i>Koori Mail</i> <i>National Indigenous Times</i> <i>Yamaji News</i> <i>Land Rights News</i>	9 September 2004	Indigenous
10	Owen Carriage	Campaigner Editor/Owner <i>Koori Mail</i> Owner <i>National Indigenous Times</i>	15 September 2004	Indigenous
11	Darren Moncrieff	Journalist <i>Koori Mail</i>	4 October 2004	Indigenous
12	Solua Middleton	Journalist <i>Koori Mail</i>	5 October 2004	Indigenous
13	Kerryn Little	Journalist <i>Koori Mail</i>	14 October 2004	Indigenous
14	Kelly Oakley	Journalist <i>Yamaji News</i>	21 October 2004	Indigenous
15	Brian Johnson	Journalist ATSIC Media Officer <i>National Indigenous Times</i>	6 November 2004	Non-Indigenous
16	Bob Weatherall	Campaigner/Source	9 November 2004	Indigenous

17	Sam Watson	Campaigner/Source	9 November 2004	Indigenous
18	Gavin Jones	Editor <i>Deadly Vibe</i>	15 November 2004	Indigenous
19	Jake Keane	Journalist <i>Deadly Vibe</i>	15 November 2004	Indigenous
20	Grace Bond	Indigenous community member	16 November 2004	Indigenous
21	Faith Bandler	Campaigner/source	30 November 2004	Non-Indigenous
22	Tiga Bayles	Campaigner/Radio Producer 4AAA	15 December 2004	Indigenous
23	Brett Leavy	Media producer	20 December 2004	Indigenous
24	Gary Foley	Campaigner Various publications	22 February 2005	Indigenous
25	Corey Bousen	Editor <i>Torres News</i>	24 February 2005	Non-Indigenous
26	Cheryl Buchanan	Campaigner Editor <i>Black News Service</i> <i>Black Liberation</i>	14 February 2005 4 May 2005	Indigenous
27	Ed Knowles	Editor <i>Murri Views</i>	3 March 2005	Non-Indigenous
28	Trish McNamara	Journalist <i>Murri Views</i>	3 March 2005	Indigenous
29	Les Malezer	Campaigner Editor <i>Land Rights Queensland</i>	4 March 2005	Indigenous
30	Mark Heward	ATSIC Media Officer	6 March 2005	Non-Indigenous
31	Sue Parnell	Manager <i>Kurbingui Star</i>	18 April 2005	Non-Indigenous
32	Lindsay Watson	Journalist <i>Kurbingui Star</i>	18 April 2005	Non-Indigenous
33	Aroha Warahai	Editor <i>Kuringbui Star</i>	10 May 2005	Maori
34	Ross Watson	Editor <i>Black Nation</i>	20 September 2005	Indigenous
35	Steve Kinnane	Academic <i>Westralian Aborigine</i>	20 September 2005	Indigenous
36	William Day	Editor <i>Bunji</i>	20 December 2005	Non-Indigenous
37	Michael Anderson	Editor <i>Identity</i> Editor <i>Black Australian News</i>	31 January 2006	Indigenous
38	Shorty O'Neill	Campaigner Editor <i>North Queensland Messagestick</i> Editor <i>National Messagestick</i>	5 April 2006	Indigenous

Appendix 3: List of newspapers analysed

[This is a alphabetic list of the publications studied during this research project. Information about the publishers/place of publication/editors and occasionally dates have been gathered from the actual publications but where this is not provided on the actual publication the information has been acquired from the National Library of Australia, State Library of NSW and AIATSIS catalogues]

Title	Year	Publisher	Place	Vol/No	Date	Editor if known
<i>Aboriginal and Islander Forum</i>	1975	Aboriginal Publications Foundation	Perth	Vol. 1, No. 1	April	Jack Davis
	1975				August	Jack Davis
<i>Aboriginal-Islander-Messenger (AIM)</i>	1979	Aboriginal/Islander Skills Development Scheme	Glebe, NSW		May	Roberta Sykes Gabrielle Dalton Paul Bayfield
	1979			No. 7	September	
<i>Aboriginal Way</i>	1998	Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement	South Australia	Issue. 1	May	
<i>Alchuringa</i>	1971-1972	Official journal of the National Aboriginal Theatre Foundation and the Aboriginal Tourist and Economic Development Association. Published by Breda Publications	Sydney	Vol. 1. No. 1	Dec – Feb	Kevin Gilbert
	1972			Vol. 1. No. 1	March-May	Kevin Gilbert
	1972			Vol. 1. No. 3	June – August	Kevin Gilbert
	1973			Vol. 1. No. 4	January-March	Kevin Gilbert
<i>Alchuringa</i>	1977	Land Rights Club	La Trobe University, Victoria	No. 1		
<i>Australian Abo Call: The Voice of the Aborigines</i>	1938	Aborigines Progressive Association (APA) Published by J. B. Milne	Redfern, NSW (according to NLA)	No. 1	April	J. T. Patten
	1938				May	J. T. Patten
	1938				June	J. T. Patten
	1938				July	J. T. Patten
	1938				August	J. T. Patten
	1938				September	J. T. Patten

<i>Black Action</i>	1976	Aboriginal Information Service aka Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre	Launceston, Tasmania and Glebe (Hobart), Tasmania		November	
	1977				Feb-March	
	1977			No. 7		
	ND			No. 8		
	ND			No. 9		
	ND			No. 10		
	ND			No. 14		
	ND					
<i>Black Australian News</i>	1972	Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs	Gladesville, NSW	Vol. 1. No. 1	June	
	1972			Vol. 1. No. 3	July	Michael Anderson
	1972			Vol. 1. No. 4	ND	Michael Anderson
<i>Black Nation</i>	1982		Brisbane	No. 1	August	Ross Watson
	1985				November	Ross Watson
<i>Black News Service</i>	1975	Black Resource Centre (BRC)	Fitzroy, Victoria, Australia and Brisbane Australia	Vol. 1, No. 1	3 April	Cheryl Buchanan
	1975		Fitzroy, Victoria	No. 5	29 August	Cheryl Buchanan
	1975		Brisbane	No number	7 November	Cheryl Buchanan
	1975				December	Cheryl Buchanan
	1976				December	Cheryl Buchanan
	1978			Vol. 4, No. 1	ND	Cheryl Buchanan
	ND			Vol 1. No. 4		Cheryl Buchanan
<i>Black Knight</i>	1975		Brisbane		11 August	Bill Rosser
	ND			No. 2		Bill Rosser
	ND			No. 4		Bill Rosser
<i>Black Liberation</i>	1975	Black Resource Centre (BRC)	Victoria	No. 1	November	Cheryl Buchanan
	1976			Vol. 2, No. 1	April	Cheryl Buchanan
	1976			Vol. 2. No. 2	October	Cheryl Buchanan
<i>Black Reaction</i>	1976	Aboriginal Information Centre	Hobart and Launceston, Tasmania		September	Geraldine Richardson (period of editorship unknown)
<i>Bunji</i>	1971	Gwalwa Daraniki	Darwin		August	William Day
	1972				March	William Day
	1972				October	William Day

	1973				July	William Day
	1975				April	William Day
	1975				July	William Day
	1978				June	William Day
	1981				August	William Day
	1981				October	William Day
	1983			Vol. 12. No. 3	September	William Day
	1983			Vol. 12. No. 4	November	William Day
	1971- 1983			Issue list		William Day
	ND					William Day
<i>Churinga</i>	1964	Aborigines Progressive Association (APA) Published by Breda Publications	Sydney	No. 1		Herbert Groves
	1965				December	Herbert Groves
	1966				May-June	Herbert Groves
	1968			Vol. 1. No. 8	February	Herbert Groves
	1968				June- August	Herbert Groves
	1968- 69			Vol. 1. No. 10	Dec-March	Herbert Groves
	1969			Vol. 1. No. 11	Dec-Feb 1970	Herbert Groves
	1970				May	Herbert Groves
<i>Harmony</i>	1976	Aboriginal Advancement Council		Vol. 1. No. 1	July	
<i>Identity</i>	1971	Aboriginal Publications Foundation Inc	Sydney	Vol. 1. No. 1	July	Barrie Ovenden
	1972		Sydney	Vol. 1. No. 6	November	John Newfong
	1973		Sydney		July	John Newfong
	1973		Sydney		August	Michael Anderson and Jack Davis
	1974		Perth		July	Jack Davis
	1974		Perth		October	Jack Davis
	1975		Perth		January	Jack Davis
	1975		Perth		July	Jack Davis
	1976		Perth	Vol. 2. No. 9	July	Jack Davis
	1977		Perth		April	Jack Davis
	1977		Perth		October	Jack Davis
	1978		Perth		July	Jack Davis
	1979		Perth	Vol. 3, No. 10	October	Jack Davis

<i>Identity</i>	1979		Canberra	Vol. 3. No. 11	Nov-Dec	John Newfong
	1980		Canberra		October	John Newfong
	1981		Canberra	Vol. 4. No. 3	March	Les Malezer
	1981		Canberra		June	Les Malezer
	1982		Canberra		January	Les Malezer
<i>Irabina</i>	1968	Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs	Sydney		August	
<i>The Koorier</i>	ND	Victorian Aborigines Advancement League	Fitzroy, Victoria	Vol. 1, No. 2		Bruce McGuinness
	1969			Vol. 1, No. 6	April	Bruce McGuinness
	1969			Vol. 1. No. 8		Bruce McGuinness
	ND			Vol. 1, No. 9		Bruce McGuinness
	1969			Vol. 1, No. 10		Bruce McGuinness
	1969			Vol.1. No. 11		Bruce McGuinness
	ND			Vol.1. No. 14		Bruce McGuinness
<i>Koori Bina</i>	1976	Black Women's Action Group	Sydney		June	Naomi Myers, Marcia Langton Roberta Sykes and Sue Chilli
	1977			Vol.1, No. 5	January	
	1979			Vol. 3, No. 2		
<i>Koori Mail</i>	1991	Owen Carriage	Lismore, NSW	Vol.1.	23 May	Janine Wilson
	1991				19 June	Janine Wilson
	1991				3 July	
	1991				17 July	
	1991				14 August	
	1991				6 Nov	
	1991	Bygal Weahunir Holding Company			21 Nov	Dona Graham (date of change unknown) editor until Condie took over in 1994.
	1992				11 March	
	1992				6 May	
	1992				3 June	
	1992				18 November	

	1992				4 Nov	
	1993				10 February	
	1993				24 February	
	1993				24 March	
	1993				19 May	
	1993				22 September	
	1993				6 October	
	1994				26 January	Todd Condie
	1998				14 January	Todd Condie
	2001				17 Oct-14 Dec 2005 inclusive	Todd Condie Barry Cheadle
<i>Koorier 2: News Pictorial</i>	1983	Koori Information Centre	Fitzroy, Victoria	No. 1	July	Robbie Thorpe (involved in production but unsure of role)
	ND					
	1986			Vol. 1. No. 3		
				Vol. 1. No. 4		
<i>Koorier 3</i>	1989	Aboriginal Advancement League	Victoria		May	
	1989				September	
	1989				December	
	1990				June	
<i>Kurbingui Star</i>	2004	Kurbingui Youth Development Association Inc.	Zillmere, Queensland	Ed. 15	November - December	Aroha Waharai
<i>Land Rights News</i>	1976	Northern Land Council	Northern Territory	No. 1	July	
	1976				November	
	1977				March	
	1977				April	
	1977				June	
	1977				July	
	1977				August	
	1978				May	
	1980				August	
	1980				October	
	1982				Jan-Feb	
	1983			No. 32		
	1985	Northern and Central Land Councils			September	
	1987				March	
<i>Land Rights News</i>	1976	Central Land Council	Alice Springs	No. 1	April	
	1977				July	
	1978				June	

	1981				July	
	1981				December	
	1982			Spring		
	1983			Spring		
<i>Land Rights News</i>	1988	Northern Territory Land Councils	Northern Territory		January	
	1989				July	
	2001				June	
<i>Land Rights Queensland</i>	1994	The Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA)	Brisbane, Queensland		December	Chris Griffith
	1995				February	
	1995				April	
	1995				June-July	Susan Forde
	1995				Aug-Sept	Susan Forde
	1995				Oct-Nov	Susan Forde
	1995-1996				Dec-Jan	Susan Forde
	1996				Feb-Mar	Susan Forde
	1996				April-May	Shaun Rohrlach
	1996				June-July	Shaun Rohrlach
	1996				September	David Liddle
	1997				August	Robert Douglas
	1998				February	
	1999				June	
	1999				December	
	2000				May	
	2000				August	
	2000				October	
	2002				June	
<i>Murri Views</i>	2004	Mt Isa Aboriginal Media Association	Mt Isa	Issue 1	April	Ed Knowles
				Issue 6	September	Ed Knowles
				Issue 7	October	Ed Knowles
				Issue 8	November	Ed Knowles
				Issue 9	December	Ed Knowles
	2005			Issue 10	January	Ed Knowles
				Issue 11	February	Ed Knowles
				Issue 12	March	Ed Knowles
				Issue 13	April	Ed Knowles
<i>National Indigenous Times</i>	2002		Batemans Bay, NSW	Vol. 1. No. 1	27 Feb 2002-3 February 2005 inclusive	Chris Graham
	2005			No. 82	9 June	Chris Graham
	2005			No. 86	4 August	Chris Graham

	2005				17 October	Chris Graham
	2006			No. 99	23 February	Chris Graham
<i>National Messagestick</i>	1985	National Federation of Land Councils	Alice Springs	Vol. 1. No. 1		Shorty O'Neil
<i>NQ Messagestick</i>	1977	North Queensland Land Council	Townsville		February	Shorty O'Neil
	1977			Vol. 2. No. 4	September	Shorty O'Neil
	1977			Vol. 2. No. 5	November	Shorty O'Neil
	1978			Vol. 3, No. 3	November	Shorty O'Neil
	1979			Vol. 4. No. 3	May	Shorty O'Neil
	1979			Vol. 4. No. 5	September	Shorty O'Neil
<i>North Queensland Land Council Messagestick</i>	1985	Jaragun Publishing Company		Vol. 1	January	
<i>Origin</i>	1969	Varies – described as “an independent newspaper for Aborigines and Islanders”	Adelaide	Vol. 1, No. 8	13 November	
	1970			Vol. 2, No. 11	28 May	
	1970			Vol. 3, No. 1	25 September	Margaret Kopps
	1975				February	
<i>Pugganna News</i>	1979	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre	Launceston, Tasmania	No. 2	December	(Times and length of editorship unknown) Jim Everett Karen Brown Farley Gardner as Assistant Editor
	1987			No. 24	February	
	ND			No. 30	11 April	
	1992			No. 35	December	
	1994			No. 41	November	
	1996			No. 43	July	
<i>Smoke Signal</i>	1974	Bill Rosser	Palm Island	No. 1	May	Bill Rosser
				No. 2	May	
				No. 9		
				No. 12		
<i>Smoke Signals</i>	1960	Victorian Aborigines Advancement League	Victoria	Vol. 1. No. 1	April	Stan Davey followed by G. M. Bryant

	1961			Vol. 1. No. 4.	March	
	1961			Vol. 1. No. 5	June	
<i>Torres News: The Voice of the Islands</i>	1958		Thursday Island		7 January	
	1990				6 – 12 July	
	1990				10-16 August	
	1990				21-27 Dec	
	1992				24-30 July	
	1992				18-24 Sept	
	1992				16-22 Oct	
	1993				25 June-1 July	
	1997				9-15 May	
<i>Torres News: The Voice of the Islands</i>	2002		Thursday Island		29 Nov- 5 Dec	Corey Bousen
	2005				19-25 January	Corey Bousen
					2-8 February	Corey Bousen
					9-15 February	Corey Bousen
					23 Feb- 1 Mar	Corey Bousen
<i>Westralian Aborigine</i>	1953	Coolbaroo League	Western Australia		December	
	1956				Jan-Feb	
	1956				Mar-April	
	1956				June-July	
<i>Yamaji News</i>	2004	Yamaji Languages Aboriginal Corporation	Geraldton		11 August	Paige Finci
	2004				25 August	Paige Finci
	2004				8 September	Paige Finci
	2005				16 February	Paige Finci

Appendix 4: Indigenous Media Survey

PREAMBLE

Hello, my name is _____

Before we start, I would like to take a moment to explain why I am carrying out this survey. As you know, I am a postgraduate research student with Griffith University and I am conducting research into the Indigenous print media. My research involves interviewing people who have helped to publish Indigenous newspapers either by writing articles, editing the newspapers and/or who have been sources in articles in Aboriginal/Indigenous newspapers.

I am interested in this subject because I believe the Aboriginal/Indigenous newspapers that have been produced over the last century provide an important but largely forgotten history of Aboriginal people and issues. I would like to understand what the people who produced these newspapers hoped to achieve and the problems they faced when they were working on these newspapers.

Thank you for agreeing to participate.

I'd like to begin by asking some questions about the Aboriginal/Indigenous publications you have contributed to and what work you did for the newspapers you were involved with.

Q1. Was your involvement with the Indigenous print media ...

1. As a news producer
2. As a source
3. As both a producer of news and a source
4. Other _____

Q2. Which Indigenous newspaper/s have you either produced news for, edited or provided comment for?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

Survey questions for journalists or media workers

Q3. When you worked for this or these publications, did you consider yourself to be a journalist or did you view your participation more like an active community member, as an activist perhaps? (Question based on comments made by Tomeselli and Louw)

1. As a journalist
2. As a community organiser
3. As an activist
4. Other _____
5. All of the above
6. 1 plus 2
7. 2 plus 3
8. Don't know/refused

Q4. In looking back now or considering the work you do for the publication, which of these words best describes your work at the organisation –you may choose more than one:

	YES	NO
1. Reporter and/or feature writer	1	2
2. Sub-editor	1	2
3. Chief-of-staff	1	2
4. Editor	1	2
5. Photographer	1	2
6. Lay-out	1	2
7. General production	1	2
8. Owner	1	2
9. A source	1	2
10. Other job title		
<hr/>		
11. Don't know	1	2
12. Refused	1	2

Q5. Who did you feel you were primarily producing news for? I.e. who was your audience do you think?

1. Indigenous people only
2. Non-Indigenous people
3. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people
4. Refused/Don't know

Q6. And was your audience primarily?

1. National
 2. State
 3. Metropolitan
 4. Suburban
 5. Regional/Country
 6. Other
-
7. Refused/Don't know

Q7. What was the circulation of the newspapers you were involved with?

Q8. About how long have you or did you work for this organisation or publication? Provide a time frame for each publication recipient contributed to (*Respondent can give amount in years – interviewer to code*)

Publication 1	Publication 2	Publication 3
Name :-	Name :-	Name :-
1. 0-6 months	1. 0-6 months	1. 0-6 months
2. 6 months to one year	2. 6 months to one year	2. 6 months to one year
3. 1-2 years	3. 1-2 years	3. 1-2 years
4. 3-5 years	4. 3-5 years	4. 3-5 years
5. 6-10 years	5. 6-10 years	5. 6-10 years
6. 11-15 years	6. 11-15 years	6. 11-15 years
7. 16-25 years	7. 16-25 years	7. 16.25 years
8. More than 25 years	8. More than 25 years	8. More than 25 years
9. Don't know/refused	9. Don't know/refused	9. Don't know/refused

Q9. In general, how long have you/did you work in the media for?

1. 0-6 months
2. 6 months to 1 year
3. 1-2 years
4. 3-5 years
5. 6-10 years
6. 11-15 years
7. 16-25 years
8. More than 25 years
9. Don't know/Refused

Q10. In looking back, why did you decide to write for this Indigenous publication? (Probe if necessary: Any other reasons? And record verbatim. Provide an answer for each publication.

Publication 1, Name _____

Publication 2, Name _____

Publication 3, Name _____

Q11. When you were producing stories or articles for the Indigenous newspaper/s you wrote or write for, which of these sources did or do you regularly use – for example, to gain background information and to research your stories?

	YES	NO
1. Daily newspapers	1	2
2. Public radio (ABC, SBS)	1	2
3. Magazines	1	2
4. Public television (ABC, SBS)	1	2
5. Commercial television	1	2
6. Commercial radio	1	2
7. Cable television	1	2
8. The internet	1	2
9. Wire services	1	2
10. Press releases	1	2
11. Social conversations and contacts	1	2
12. Other news workers at the newspaper	1	2
13. Other sources of information (indicate)		
14. Refused	1	2

Q12. When you were writing for _____ who were the most important people for you to speak to when you were writing a story?

1. Government workers and politicians
2. Business people
3. Officials working for large organisations or trade unions
4. Members of the Aboriginal community
5. Aboriginal leaders,
6. People working for social movements

What factors do/did you consider most when determining if something is or was a “good” story? For example is timeliness very important, fairly important, a little important or not important?

	Very	Fairly	Importance Little	Not
Q13.Timeliness				
Q14.Proximity				
Q15.Conflict				
Q16.Impact				
Q17.Prominent people				
Q18.Human Interest				
Q19.Currency				

Q20. What do you think makes a “good story”?

Q21. I’d like your opinion on what makes good news reporting. Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements. Mark on a scale of 1-7, where one is strongly agree, and 7 is strongly disagree and 4 is neither agree or disagree.

Good news reporting goes beyond putting forwards the contending sides in a political dispute.

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly disagree

Good news reporting encourages people to participate in the political process

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly disagree

Good news reporting expresses fairly the position of each side in a political dispute

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly disagree

Good news reporting makes clear which side in a political dispute has the better position.

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly disagree

Good news reporting motivates people to act on their beliefs.

Strongly agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly disagree

Q22. In your view, how important is it that a journalist try to be as objective as possible. [Define objectivity if necessary.]

- 1. Very important**
- 2. Somewhat important**
- 3. Slightly important**
- 4. Not at all important**

Q23. How important to you are or were the following aspects of your work as a journalist?

	Importance			
	Very	Quite	Slightly	Not
1. Imparting information to others.	1	2	3	4
2. Uncovering and publicising problems	1	2	3	4
3. Being among the first to know	1	2	3	4
4. Influencing the public	1	2	3	4
5. Being in the public eye	1	2	3	4
6. Influencing public policy decisions	1	2	3	4
7. Championing particular views and ideas	1	2	3	4
8. Expressing yourself	1	2	3	4

Q.24 Next, I'd like to ask you how important you think a number of things are that the news media do or try to do today. For example, to get information to the public quickly. Is that very important, quite important, slightly important, or not really important at all to you?

	Importance			
	Very	Quite	Slightly	Not
	1	2	3	4
1. Get information to the public quickly	1	2	3	4
2. Provide analysis and interpretation of complex problems	1	2	3	4
3. Provide entertainment and relaxation	1	2	3	4
4. Investigate claims and statements made by the Government	1	2	3	4
5. Discuss national policy while it is still being developed	1	2	3	4
6. Develop intellectual and cultural interests of the public	1	2	3	4
7. Be an adversary of public officials by being constantly skeptical of their actions	1	2	3	4
8. Be an adversary of businesses by being constantly skeptical of their actions	1	2	3	4
9. To set the political agenda	1	2	3	4
10. Give ordinary people a chance to express their views on public affairs	1	2	3	4
11. Motivate ordinary people to get involved in public discussions of important issues	1	2	3	4
12. Point people toward possible solutions to society's problems	1	2	3	4

Next, I want to ask you some questions about the newspapers you worked on.

Q25. How long did the newspaper/s you work for exist?

Publication 1 Name :-	Publication 2 Name :-	Publication 3 Name :-
1. 0-6 months	1. 0-6 months	1. 0-6 months
2. 6 months to one year	2. 6 months to one year	2. 6 months to one year
3. 1-2 years	3. 1-2 years	3. 1-2 years
4. 3-5 years	4. 3-5 years	4. 3-5 years
5. 6-10 years	5. 6-10 years	5. 6-10 years
6. 11-15 years	6. 11-15 years	6. 11-15 years
7. 16-25 years	7. 16-25 years	7. 16.25 years
8. More than 25 years	8. More than 25 years	8. More than 25 years
9. Don't know/refused	9. Don't know/refused	9. Don't know/refused

Q26. How many people in total worked with you on the newspapers you helped to produce?

Publication 1, Name _____ No. of news workers _____

Publication 2, Name _____ No. of news workers _____

Publication 3, Name _____ No. of news workers _____

Q27. Were most of the people you work/worked with Aboriginal? How many Aboriginal people helped to produce the newspaper?

Publication 1, Name _____ No. of news workers _____

Publication 2, Name _____ No. of news workers _____

Publication 3, Name _____ No. of news workers _____

Q28. Did you tend to work on your own as a journalist with an editor who oversaw your work or did you work as a team where nobody was in charge? Explain how people worked to produce the newspapers you worked on?

Publication 1, Name _____

Publication 2, Name _____

Publication 3, Name _____

Q29. What was/is your newspapers form of ownership?

- 1. Public**
- 2. Private (chain or group owned)**
- 3. Private, independently owned**
- 4. Institutional (union, church etc.)**
- 5. Community (owned by a community group)**
- 6. Don't know/refused**

Q30. What level of advertising did/does your publication generally include – i.e. as a proportion of your total content?

- 1. Less than 10 %**
- 2. 10-25 %**
- 3. 26-40 %**
- 4. 41-55%**
- 5. 56-70 %**
- 6. Over 70 %**

Q31. What was/is the main source of funding for the publication (Several may apply)

- 1. Advertising**
- 2. Subscriptions**
- 3. Street sales**
- 4. Newsagency sales**
- 5. Organisational/political support**
- 6. Community support**
- 7. Donations**
- 8. Other (specify) _____**

Q32. How was the newspaper you worked on distributed?

Publication Name

1. Subscription/Mail out

2. Free (Shops/street)

3. Street sales

4. Newsagencies

5. Combination

Subscription/street sales

6. Combination

Free/Street sales

7. Combination

Newsagencies/street sales/

Subscriptions

8. Combination

subscriptions/free

9. Combination

Newsagencies/Subs

10. Don't know/refused

Publication Name

1. Subscription/Mail out

2. Free (Shops/street)

3. Street sales

4. Newsagencies

5. Combination

Subscription/street sales

6. Combination

Free/Street sales

7. Combination

Newsagencies/street sales/

Subscriptions

8. Combination

subscriptions/free

9. Combination

Newsagencies/Subs

10. Don't know/refused

Publication Name

1. Subscription/Mail out

2. Free (Shops/street)

3. Street sales

4. Newsagencies

5. Combination

Subscription/street sales

6. Combination

Free/Street sales

7. Combination

Newsagencies/street sales/

Subscriptions

8. Combination

subscriptions/free

9. Combination

Newsagencies/Subs

10. Don't know/refused

Additional comments about funding, advertising and distribution

Publication 1, Name _____

Publication 2, Name _____

Publication 3, Name _____

Now I want to gain more understanding of what you and the people you work with or worked with on _____ were trying to accomplish by publishing this newspaper?

**Q33. What were you trying to achieve with the newspapers you worked for?
What was the aim of those newspapers?**

Publication 1, Name _____

Publication 2, Name _____

Publication 3, Name _____

Q34. When you were producing the newspapers you worked on, what sorts of problems did you encounter? For example, did you have to contend with pressure from people outside of the newspaper or from government sources?

Publication 1, Name _____

Publication 2, Name _____

Publication 3, Name _____

Q35. Next, I'd like to ask about the newspaper you worked on or work on? How good a job of informing the public do you think your own newspaper did or is doing? Would you say outstanding, good, fair, poor or very poor?

- 1. Outstanding**
- 2. Good**
- 3. Fair**
- 4. Poor**
- 5. Very poor**
- 6. Refused**
- 7. Don't know**

Q36. I am going to read a range of statements to you that researchers have suggested are reasons why alternative publications such as Indigenous newspapers are published. I would like you to tell me whether you agree very strongly, strongly, disagree or disagree strongly with each of these statements.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know /Refused	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.Indigenous newspapers help to build and develop community identity					
2.Indigenous newspapers provide a forum for the discussion of matters that are of particular concern to Indigenous people					
3.Indigenous newspapers provide a place for young Indigenous people to receive training					
4.Indigenous newspapers are a good training ground for Indigenous leaders					
5.Indigenous newspapers help to counter the lack of Indigenous voices in the mainstream media					
6.Indigenous newspapers can be used to encourage social change					
7.Stories in Indigenous newspapers can help bring about government policy changes					
8.Indigenous newspapers allow ordinary people to have a say					
9.Indigenous newspapers should encourage people to participate politically					
10.Stories within Indigenous newspapers can help to educate non-Indigenous Australians					
11.Indigenous newspapers can help to correct the misrepresentations of Indigenous Australians in mainstream newspapers					

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know /Refused	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
12.Indigenous newspapers are a good place to provide culturally appropriate information to Indigenous communities					
13.Indigenous newspapers should try to improve the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people					
14.Indigenous newspapers should be produced as an opposing force to the messages in mainstream newspapers					
15.Indigenous newspapers provide a historic record and a memory of Indigenous history					
16.Indigenous newspapers can help to rebuild and regenerate Indigenous communities					

OK, we're almost finished. I'd just like to finish up with some personal questions about you, that will help me to understand the levels of diversity amongst Indigenous print media producers. These responses are completely confidential and will not be connected to any particular individuals Please note you do not have to answer any of the following questions if you do not wish to.

Q37. What is your age group? (Interviewer to code if interviewee gives precise age)

1. Under 20
2. 21-30
3. 31-40
4. 41-50
5. 51-60
6. Over 60
7. Don't know
8. Refused

Q38. Which of the following best describes the kind of secondary school you attended?

1. State High School
2. Private Catholic School
3. Private Non-Catholic School
4. Private independent school (non-denominational)
5. Refused

Q39. What is the highest level of education you achieved?

1. Primary school only
2. Some Secondary School
3. Completed Secondary School
4. TAFE/Trade Certificate
5. University Degree (tertiary qualification)
6. Post-Graduate Qualification
7. Refused

Q40. If you completed a university degree, which of the following best describes your major at university?

1. Journalism
2. Communication
3. Other Humanities/Social Sciences
4. Economics or Business
5. Science or Technology
6. Medicine
7. Law
8. Other _____
9. Refused

Q41. Have you ever received any training to work as a journalist?
(If the person still works as a journalist)

- Yes
- No
- Don't know/refused

Q42. Would you like additional training in journalism or other subjects?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't Know
4. Refused

Q43. Do you fluently speak a language other than English?

1. Yes, which languages do you speak?

-
2. No
 3. Refused

4. Other
-

Q44. Is English your first language?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know
4. Refused

Q45. What actual group would you say you most identify with? For example, Indigenous people, Irish people, German people, Chinese people?

1. Indigenous Australian
2. White Australian
3. British or Irish
4. Asian
5. Middle Eastern
6. Continental European
7. Anglo Saxon/Continental European
8. Other

-
9. Don't know
 10. Refused

Q46. (INTERVIEWER: RECORD RESPONDENT'S GENDER. ASK ONLY IF NECESSARY.)

1. Male
2. Female
3. DK/Refused

Q47. Is there anything you would like to add to this survey that you think will help me to understand why the Indigenous print media exists and what the people who write for it are hoping to achieve?

Q48. Do you know anyone else who has written for or been involved with the production of an Aboriginal newspaper who might be able to help me gain a better understanding of how and why they were produced?

Names _____

Telephone Nos. _____

Contact info _____

Names _____

Telephone Nos. _____

Contact info _____

Names _____

Telephone Nos. _____

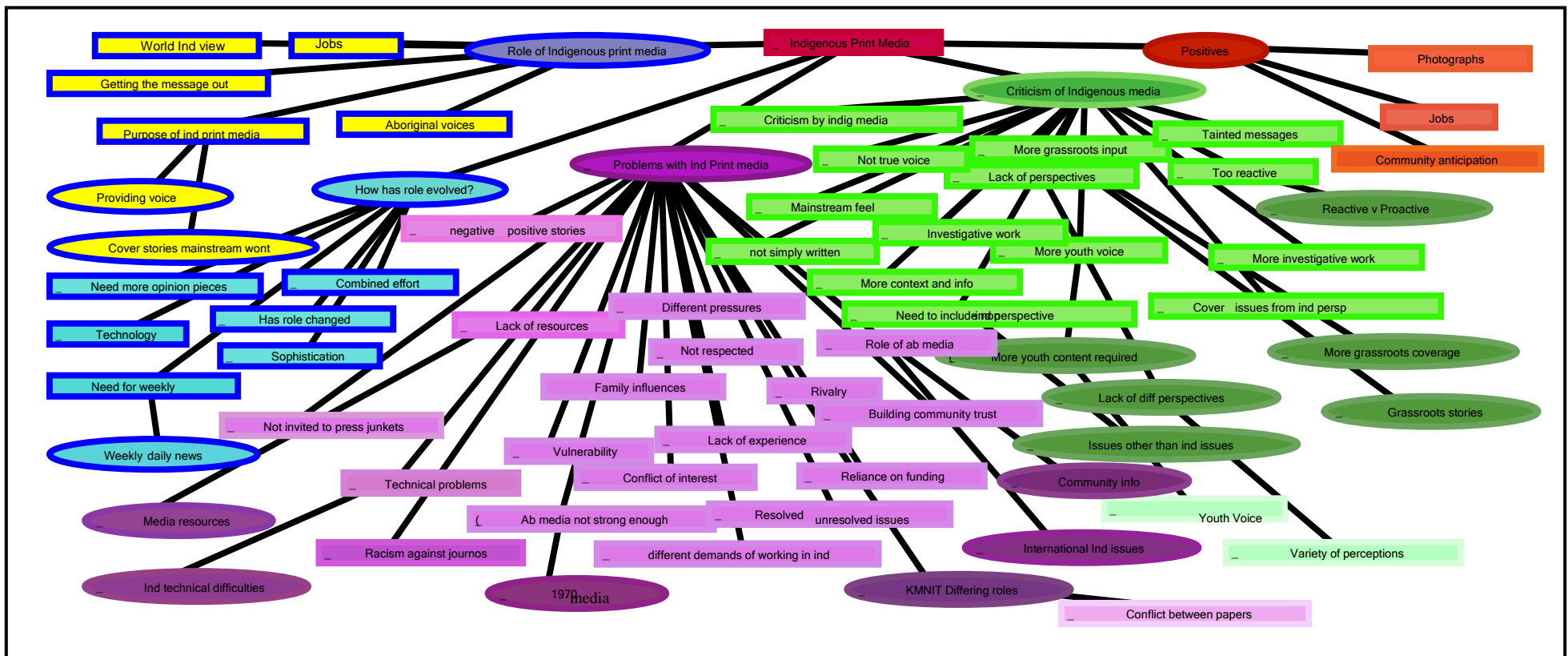
Contact info _____

Names _____

Telephone Nos. _____

Contact info _____

Appendix 5: Concept map showing Nvivo nodes



Appendix 6: Squires model for analysing public spheres

Enclave	Oscillating	Counterpublic	Parallel or Satellite
Ident transcripts and dialogues	To encourage social change, interaction between public spheres must occur.	The Counterpublic sphere is now strong enough to produce "sustained social movement activity" (Squires 1999, p. 36).	Information and ideas are oscillated easily and equally across public sphere boundaries.
Communication between Enclave PS and Dominant PS likely to be "highly scripted"	Subaltern public sphere members must oscillate into hostile and safe areas to educate members of other public spheres about the needs of the subaltern public sphere community	The Counterpublic sphere is developed to a strong enough level to be able to take political action against a hostile dominant public sphere to "transform" debates and generate political action (Squires 1999, p. 36).	Subaltern institutions can exist and operate without oppression from dominant public sphere members, organisations and institutions.
Enclave PS members likely to use subterfuge as a means of resistance and to avoid and respond to surveillance	While all subaltern public spheres will oscillate at some level, its success will be judged on its ability to raise awareness and bring about change.		Yet, the unique subaltern group has not and is not expected to assimilate into the dominant group. There is an acceptance of the cultural diversity that exists.
Communication produced for "in" group members	While members of the enclave public sphere may appear to adopt dominant public sphere norms, members of the oscillating public sphere will push their alternative identity and scripts at the dominant public sphere.	The satellite phase occurs when subaltern public sphere members begin to take "mass action" against dominant public sphere institutions and policy. These institutions and/or the state are forced to respond either violently or through negotiations and by entering into a dialogue with the subaltern public sphere members. Violence is more likely if the subaltern is not considered to be a great threat to the dominant public sphere.	As yet no parallel public spheres exist in the United States although stronger public spheres, such as the women's and African American public spheres, have had moments of parallel public sphere action. (Squires 1999, pp. 37-39, Squires 2002, pp. 463-464).
Protecting cultural identity	The oscillating public sphere appears when levels of oppression between the subaltern and dominant public sphere are reduced but full participation within the dominant PS is still limited by "social, economic and/or legal obstacles" (Squires 1999, p. 35).		
Exists during high levels of oppression	During the oscillation phase, subaltern publics will use "independent media and distribution channels which allows the group to facilitate wider discussions and plan tactical strikes into the dominant public sphere" (Squires 1999, p. 35).		
Access to mainstream media heavily restricted	Members of the oscillating public sphere will challenge myths and stereotypes within the dominant public sphere and attempt to reset the perceptions of dominant public sphere members to the subaltern group.		
Allies are likely to be paternalistic or patronising	The oscillating public sphere, with their shared media identity, is bound by their similar identity, problems, characteristics and common interests.		
Members bonded by their cultural/linguistic identity	Building a strong community and their own institutions is a key goal for the oscillating public sphere members.		
Minimal communication between the enclave and dominant public spheres. (Squires 1999, p. 31-33, Squires 2002, p. 448, 457-458).	While the group may have allies within the dominant public sphere, those allies may have different goals and strategic approaches. The dominant PS members may direct and control the interaction. This can lead to tension.		
	Oscillating group concerns are likely to be diverse and extend beyond group problems and issues. Topics may include "identity, economic and educational progress, and strategies to gain power" (Squires 1999, pp. 35-36).	Dominant public sphere members and institutions accept the counterpublic sphere members may not comply with dominant public sphere norms and expectations. This acceptance of difference allows interaction on a more equal footing across the boundaries of the two spheres (Squires 1999, pp. 36-37, Squires 2002, pp. 459-463).	

Appendix 7: Ethics Clearance statement



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28 April 2009

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Griffith University Human Research Ethics Application – FMC/01/03/HREC

This is to confirm that Human Research Ethics Application FMC/01/03/HREC titled "Writing to be Heard: A History of the Indigenous Print Media" conducted by Elizabeth Burrows was approved by the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) on 24 June 2003. The authorisation for this research was issued from 24 June 2003 to 7 May 2006.

The HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans*.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries about this matter.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "G. Allen".

Gary Allen
Manager, Research Ethics
Office for Research

G:\Ethics\Ethics\HREC\Correspondence\Status\Status Letter - Approved FMC 01 03 28 April 09.doc

Gold Coast Logan Mt Gravatt Nathan South Bank

