

2015

On being forgotten: the historical geography of television access across the rural south-eastern corner of Australia

Stephanie Hanson
University of Wollongong

Recommended Citation

Hanson, Stephanie, On being forgotten: the historical geography of television access across the rural south-eastern corner of Australia, Master of Philosophy thesis, School of the Arts, English and Media - Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts, University of Wollongong, 2015. <http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/4518>

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

COPYRIGHT WARNING

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

On being forgotten: the historical geography of television access across the rural south-eastern corner of Australia

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

Master of Philosophy

From

University of Wollongong

by

Stephanie Hanson, BA (Hons)

Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts

School of the Arts, English and Media

March 2015

CERTIFICATION

I, Stephanie Hanson, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award Master of Philosophy, in the School of Arts, English and Media, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Stephanie Hanson

(March 2015)

ABSTRACT

The experience of many individuals living across rural Australia challenges the popular notion that television “arrived” in September 1956, then spread rapidly across the country quickly evolving into a pervasive nation shaping cultural force. Although by the end on the 1950s all state capitals could boast at least one commercial and one public station, outside of the metropolis access to the new technology was limited and was to remain so in some instances for decades.

Using the introduction of free-to-air television to the rural south eastern corner of Australia as a case study this thesis explores the local cultural consequences of poor access to media and communications technologies. Both archival and ethnographic research strategies have been employed, with data obtained from regional and rural newspapers; the records of historically relevant regulatory bodies and the oral histories of 21 residents drawn from across the district. The thesis demonstrates how theories of practice can be used firstly to provide an account of the establishment of a television service to an Australian country television district and, secondly to consider the relationship between access to communications technology and “sense of place”. Particular attention is paid to the role of television in bringing stability to the discursive association between the south-eastern corner of Australia and its sobriquet the “forgotten corner”.

I conclude that rather than promoting national unity, the sub-standard television service on offer to this rural populace reinforced long-standing feelings of separation and difference. The thesis also highlights the inequity of service that has historically distinguished metropolitan from rural Australia and highlights the need for further research that takes into account the diversity within the experience of television across time and place.

PUBLICATION ARISING FROM THIS THESIS

Hanson, Stephanie 2012. Chasing a signal: memories of television across the south-eastern corner of Australia. In *Remembering Television: Histories, Technologies, Memories*, ed. Kate Darian-Smith and Sue Turnbull, 110-131. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout my research journey there have been many acts of kindness and words of support from friends, family members and colleagues. All have been appreciated and accepted with gratitude.

I would like in particular to acknowledge my supervisors Dr Kate Bowles and Professor Gordon Waitt for their expertise and insightful guidance. It has been a long journey and I thank you both for your support throughout. I would also like to thank Professor Sue Turnbull who has always shown a keen interest in my work and encouraged me to bring it to conclusion.

This project would not have been achievable without the willingness of project contributors to share their experiences and thoughts on television and community living. I am grateful to have been welcomed into so many homes and to have been given the opportunity to enjoy great conversations over a variety of delicious refreshments. I would particularly like to thank my good friend and project participant, Diane Martin, whose casual conversation of her own early experiences of television in Merimbula assured me that the topic of this research - at the time just a vague idea - was worthy of further exploration.

My thanks also go to friend Deborah McGrath who accompanied me on my second field trip to Mallacoota. Deb provided assistance in the management of large and unruly piles of documents and offered sustenance by way of home-cooking, good company and a therapeutic boat cruise.

I am also grateful to the staffs of the Bega Valley Genealogy Society and the Eden Magnet printing office for allowing access to their archives.

This project started life as PhD research project and I was optimistic my candidature would progress as fruitfully as it began. Unfortunately, in my third year I was beset by "dark days" and serious illness caused me to consider abandoning the project. I would like to acknowledge the timely and considered advice of family and friends at this time.

These sensible people persuaded me not to give up rather "take the pressure off" and reframe the thesis as a MA. I am very grateful for this advice. On recovery I was able to pick up where I left off albeit it shortened form. This enabled me to honour the contributions of project contributors by inserting into the historiography of Australian television the voice of at least some of the residents of the "forgotten corner", as per their request.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to my husband, Nick, who has encouraged me throughout the course of my candidature, providing both the moral support and practical assistance required to see this thesis to completion. Thankyou Nick.

Table of Contents

CERTIFICATION	i
ABSTRACT	ii
PUBLICATION ARISING FROM THIS THESIS	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	x
ABBREVIATIONS	xi
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to study	1
1.2 Regional media – a "sticky area"	4
1.3 Timeframe and place and of study	5
1.3.1 Two states one community	7
1.3.2 Discourses of progress	8
1.3.3 The "forgotten corner"	11
1.4 Rationale: Why television?	13
1.5 Approach	15
1.6 Thesis structure and chapter summary	16
2 FINDING A WAY FORWARD – LITERATURE, METHODOLOGY AND THEORY	19
2.1 Introduction	19
2.2 Australian television historiography	19
2.2.1 The development of the Australian Television System	19
2.2.2 Television as a cultural artefact.....	20
2.2.3 The spatial imperatives of television.....	21
2.3 The research challenge	21
2.4 Methodological underpinnings	25
2.4.1 The researcher/participant relationship	25
2.5 Collecting the data.....	27
2.5.1 Ethnographic strategies	27
2.5.2 Archival research	30
2.6 Analysis.....	31
2.7 Theoretical underpinnings.....	33
2.7.1 Nick Couldry and the move beyond content.....	33

2.7.2	Brian Larkin - technological failure and the unintended uses and effects of media	34
2.7.3	Michel de Certeau - everyday practices	36
2.8	Chapter Summary	41
3	“TELEVISION MUST DEVELOP IN AN ORDERLY WAY”	42
3.1	Introduction	42
3.2	Brief historical overview of broadcasting policy in Australia	43
3.2.1	Legislation and regulatory bodies	43
3.2.2	Underpinning values and policy incentives	44
3.2.3	Localism	46
3.3	Extension of television services to the country areas	47
3.3.1	Policy in conflict - the 1953 Royal Commission on Television	47
3.3.2	The Two Station Rule	50
3.3.3	The country areas licence allocation process	51
3.3.4	"The mess of country television services"	53
3.4	Chapter summary and conclusions	56
4	THE BATTLE FOR COMMERCIAL TELEVISION SERVICES	58
4.1	Introduction	58
4.2	The Bega-Cooma Television District	59
4.3	Getting ready for television	61
4.3.1	Early anticipation and expectation	61
4.3.2	Television debuts in Bega	62
4.3.3	Scattered communities come together in the interests of television	62
4.4	The ups and downs of television	63
4.4.1	Hope from beyond the district - Wollongong and Canberra television	63
4.4.2	Hope recedes - the first round of the commercial licence hearings	66
4.4.3	Hopes revived - CTC-7 Canberra	67
4.4.4	Tempers fray - the second licence hearing	69
4.5	The fallout	71
4.5.1	Confronting the enemy	71
4.5.2	Political disenchantment - the "hard-hearted" PMG	75
4.6	Chapter summary and conclusions	76
5	THE BATTLEFRONT EXPANDS – ABSN-8; CTC7 AND WIN TV	76

5. 1	Introduction:	77
5. 2	ABSN-8 and the promise of clear reception	77
5.2.1	Disappointed yet again	80
5.2.2	Political agitation	82
5.2.3	Searching for a solution	83
5. 3	The battle for commercial television round 2: translator services	86
5. 4	CTC-7 comes to the Monaro	87
5. 5	WIN TV comes to the Far South Coast	89
5.5.1	The long wait	89
5.5.2	No more waiting - WIN Channel 6 goes to air	93
5. 6	Eden and beyond - WIN TV and the ABC	94
5. 7	Chapter summary and conclusions	97
6	TELEVISION AND THE PRACTICES OF SMALL TOWN LIVING	99
6. 1	Introduction	99
6. 2	A brief history of telling stories and making do across the south-eastern corner of Australia	100
6. 3	Capturing a signal	102
6.3.1	The innovative imperative	102
6.3.2	The tactics of making a sale	105
6.3.3	"People don't seem to realize they need permission"	106
6.3.4	Coming together to watch television	108
6. 4	Affective responses to television	110
6.4.1	Ambivalence	110
6.4.2	A clash of cultures	112
6.4.3	"They think we do not exist!"	115
6. 5	Enduring stories of rural neglect and "being forgotten"	118
6. 6	Chapter summary and conclusions	120
7	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	122
7. 1	Histories about absences	122
7. 2	Key research findings	122
7. 3	Broader Implications - on "being forgotten"	124
7. 4	Rewriting the tale	128
7. 5	Conclusion	129

7. 6	Directions for further research	130
BIBLIOGRAPHY		131
APPENDIX 1 PARTICIPANT Biographies.....		150
APPENDIX 2 - Watching television in Mallacoota		153

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig.1.1. South-eastern corner of Australia	6
Fig.1.2. Advertisement for television repair work.	8
Fig.1.3. The "forgotten corner" by night.....	13
Fig.2.1. Transmitter and translator sites across the south-eastern corner of Australia ...	23
Fig.4.1. Approximate area and location of the Bega-Cooma Television District.....	59
Fig.4.2 TV is here to stay!!	64
Fig.5.1. Advertisement: Stewart's Television Service.....	78
Fig.5.2. ABC (ABSN-8) television coverage area Bega-Cooma, NSW	84
Fig.5.3. Picture of Mount Mumbulla translator station showing gradient of cutting for access road	94
Fig.6.1. Pushbike wheel aerial	103
Fig.6.2. Erecting an aerial: Jack Martin "captures" a signal.	105
Fig.App.2.1. Watching television in Mallacoota, 2009: A signal 'drop out' event	153

ABBREVIATIONS

ABC:	Australian Broadcasting Commission 1932 - 1983 Australian Broadcasting Corporation 1983 -
ABCB:	Australian Broadcasting Control Board
ABT:	Australian Broadcasting Tribunal
BCTC:	Bega-Cooma Television Committee
BDN:	Bega District News
BTA:	Broadcasting and Television Act
BVSRRA:	Bega Valley Shire Residents & Ratepayers Association
CME:	Cooma Monaro Express
CTL:	Canberra Television Limited
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
IM:	Imlay Magnet
MP:	Member of Parliament
M&V:	The Magnet and the Voice
NFU:	National Farmers Union
NSW:	New South Wales
PMG:	Postmaster-General
SBS:	Special Broadcasting Services
SRCMA:	Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority
TV:	Television
TWT:	Television Wollongong Transmissions

1 INTRODUCTION

This history focuses on the distribution of television to the south-eastern corner of Australia, midway between Melbourne and Sydney. Here television did not so much arrive as trickle into the district over a thirty-five year period. This qualitative project involves both archival and ethnographic research strategies. Data was obtained from historically relevant documents and the oral histories of 21 television viewers from across the south-eastern corner. The aim was firstly to provide an account of the establishment of a television service to a place distant from metropolitan cities; and secondly to explore how securing television to these areas impinged upon and constituted rural/urban/metropolitan inter-relationships that shapes rural responses to more recent technological advancements. I argue that communications technologies such as television can be culturally productive even when materially absent or malfunctioning. In this instance, because of the sub-standard service on offer to this population group, television has generated feelings of separation and difference from urban or mainstream Australia and exacerbated notions of rural disadvantage and "second-rate" citizenship.

For the greater part of my adult life I lived on the Far South Coast of New South Wales situated within the fieldsite. Therefore, this thesis is in part informed by my own experiences with communications technologies, including television, in that location and my subjective understanding of the cultural geographies of the south-eastern corner of Australia.

1.1 Background to study

In Australia, as in other countries, broadcasting services are strictly regulated. The electro-magnetic spectrum is considered to be a public resource and although private consortia may lease electromagnetic bands under prescribed conditions for limited periods of time, the spectrum remains under the strict control of the government (Cunningham and Flew 2002, 53). Prior to 1993 and the introduction of community television, Australian had a dual system of television consisting of two sectors: the

public broadcasting sector funded and maintained by the Commonwealth and an independent commercial sector financially supported by advertising and other forms of corporate enterprise (Moran 2010, Bailey 1979). The system was introduced in 1928 as a means of regulating the radio industry and later adapted to accommodate television (Australia. Department of Communications 1984). The intention was that the public sector would provide programs of broad interest to the majority of Australians and the commercial sector would present a service that was "essentially local in character" (Australia. Department of Communications 1984, 11 & 34-36). Lane (1987, 412) argues that this position has shifted with the commercial stations now providing programs of mass appeal and the public broadcasters, the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) and Special Broadcasting Services (SBS), catering for special interest groups.¹

Television is conceived of by Australian governments as a powerful mediating force through which disparate members of society may be brought together and a common sense of nationhood, civic duty and communal identity forged (Osborne and Lewis 1995, Curthoys 1991). In 1995, media historians Graeme Osborne and Glen Lewis (1995, 4) made the point that communication is often referred to as "public communication". This is still the case. The discourse surrounding this terminology positions the citizen-user as central to the process of communication. The implication is that relevant policies should both respond to the needs and interests of the public as well as reflect the state's willingness to meet its obligations to the constituency (Osborne and Lewis 1995, 14).

Since Federation the principle of universal service provision - the idea that all Australians irrespective of their place of residence should benefit from communications technologies - has underpinned policy-making. Victorian Senator Robert Best expressed this ideal during the first sitting of the newly formed Federal Parliament. His comment was met with the general approval of the House.

¹ The ABC was established for radio in 1932 under the Australian Broadcasting Act. Prior to its reconstitution as a corporate body in 1983 the ABC was known as the Australian Broadcasting Commission (Mackay 1957).

We have here a vast undeveloped continent and that we have a duty to render to those who do not crowd themselves into cities. We ought to offer them every possible facility with a view to making their lives as agreeable as possible. That is a general principle I am sure we will all bear in mind (Best in Commonwealth of Australia 1901, 906).

During the same session, parliamentary members also recognized that the low population density and therefore less cost-effective "rural sector" would be subsidized by those markets likely to bring in profits – the cities. This argument was put forward as a justification for placing all "postal, telegraphic, telephonic and other like services" under the monopolistic control of the Federal government (Commonwealth of Australia 1901). The sentiment continued to find expression throughout the 20th and into the 21st century, most recently in discussions surrounding the roll-out of broadband across the nation.

There is no question that if you started 100 per cent in the capital cities you would get a faster revenue stream, but that would be unfair and inequitable (then Communications Minister Stephen Conroy quoted in Rodgers 2010).

Universal service provision fuels a belief amongst rural dwellers that local communication services should be of a similar quality to those available to urban and metropolitan residents (Green 1998). However, a tension exists between the seemingly genuine desire to distribute communications equitably and the costs involved in doing so. This is yet to be fully resolved. Returning to the first parliamentary sitting, Senator Best went on to add:

We cannot afford to disregard the commercial aspects of the matter yet we have to remember the indirect advantages which may follow from offering facilities [referring to postal services] rather than to consider the immediate return likely to accrue (Best in Commonwealth of Australia 1901, 906)

Often governments proclaim that a very high proportion of the population is in receipt of this or that particular service to demonstrate their care and capacity. Given the size of the Australian continent, its scattered population, diverse topography and climatic conditions this may well be claimed a worthy boast. However, often overlooked is that the same, albeit small section of the population consistently misses out or has delayed

access to each new form of communication as it comes into circulation. Amongst those marginalized by communication technologies, conversations surrounding impending technological changes feed into and from a cumulative discourse of neglect.

Historically, this encompasses matters such as port facilities; lack of railways; roads; radio and television reception; telephone services and more recently broadband and digital technology. Jennifer Curtin wrote in her 2001 Federal Governmental brief on internet access across rural and regional Australia:

Digital technology has not created a new social divide. Rather it has built upon, and may exacerbate, inequalities that already exist in Australian society.... Many Australians do have 'reasonable' access to the Internet. A small percentage, those who live in rural and remote Australia in particular, have very limited access. But it is precisely this majoritarian position, which is problematic for those who live in rural Australia and feel their service levels seem to matter less *because* the majority of Australians are well serviced (Curtin 2001).

1.2 Regional media – a "sticky area"

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that media provision outside of the major Australian capital cities of Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth, has gained a reputation as being "a sticky area" of policy-making and legislation (Allen 2006). Over recent decades a number of media related policy-making decisions have drawn unexpected and at times unwelcome political responses from across regional Australia, most notably the recent fallout over the roll-out of broadband. Against expectation two of the three elected independent members charged with the responsibility of determining the make-up of the 2010 Federal Parliament when neither major party was able to form a majority government, opted to support the Australian Labor Party over the conservative Coalition, citing the former's policy on broadband as a pivotal factor in their decision making. Both men acknowledged that their constituencies were traditionally aligned to the National/Liberal Coalition however argued that the mode of delivery proposed by the Labor Party was the plan most likely to ensure that the residents of regional Australia enjoyed the benefits of this latest

technology and thus were prepared to break with convention (Marshall 2010)². This response could have been expected. The 2007 launch of the NEXT G mobile telephony network; the introduction of new media laws which saw the reduction of local radio content quotas in 2006 and the staged sale of Telstra were all similarly enshrouded in bitter debate.

Here then, are a series of contemporary problems which apparently have roots in the recent past. I contend, however, that this present day backlash can be better understood and potentially addressed if recognized as a consequence of ongoing and longstanding socio-spatial inequities in access to services and technologies.

1.3 Timeframe and place and of study

The project focuses on the years 1957 – 1992. The year 1957 was when television signals were first recorded as being received across the south-eastern corner of Australia. In 1992, the last of four local transmitter stations was established, thus providing most of the district's residents with at least a semi-reliable service. The case study is located on the narrow coastal strip of land beginning at Bermagui on the Far South Coast of New South Wales (NSW) and extending across the NSW/Victoria border to the southern shore of the Mallacoota Inlet, a total of approximately 6,500 square kilometers. The Great Dividing Range and Tasman Sea mark its western and eastern boundaries respectively (Figure 1.1). The fieldsite is comprised of a series of valleys and ridges, separated by thick forests and a profusion of west/east flowing waterways. The coast is spanned by harbours and ports of varying size that developed in response to the transportation requirements of the inland towns and villages at a time when the rugged terrain severely restricted land-based options (NSW. Heritage Office & NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning 1996, 162). Historically, fishing, forestry and dairying were the economic mainstays of settler capitalism. However over recent decades, tourism, retirement and the service industries replaced primary

² Rob Oakeshott MP, Independent Federal Member for Lyne, a rural electorate situated on the mid-north coast of NSW and Tony Windsor MP, Independent Federal Member for New England, also a rural electorate located in northern NSW.

production as the major employment sector (NSW. Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority (SRCMA) 2009).

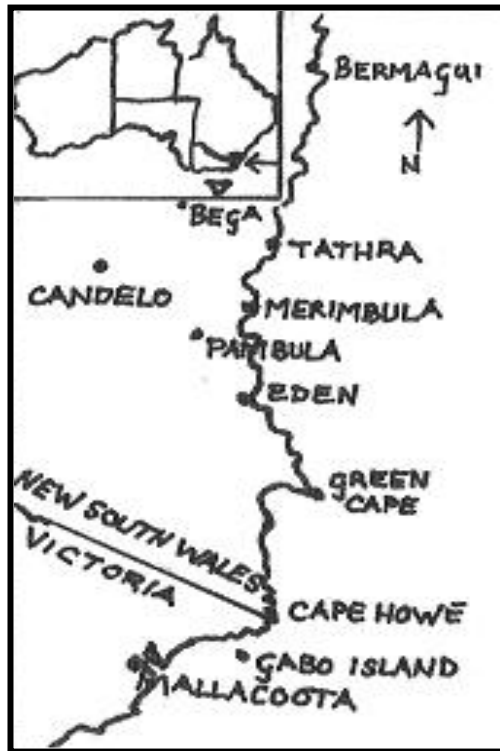


Fig.1.1. South-eastern corner of Australia

Source: Map adapted by author from *Reader's Digest Atlas of Australia*, 2nd edition. 1994. Reader's Digest (Australia) Pty Ltd, Sydney.

The fieldsite differs from most other regions on the eastern seaboard, in that it contains no towns with a population of over 5000. The population growth was slow for much of the twentieth century, increasing from 5,967 in 1901 (Ryan 1965, 116) to only 15,013 in 1976 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1976). From the mid-1970s numbers began to rise as a consequence of the region's "discovery" by city dwellers in search of a lifestyle change. Notwithstanding it remains relatively under-populated with approximately 35,000 permanent residents recorded at the time of the 2011 census (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011). Population centres comprise small to medium-sized towns, villages, hamlets and localities. Service centers include Eden, Pambula, Merimbula/Tura Beach Bega and Mallacoota. Much of the coastal land south of Eden is set aside as national park or flora reserve and thus excluded from private usage. Tourism Australia began promoting the fieldsite as the "Wilderness Coast" in international tourism campaigns in

the late 2000s. The SRCMA similarly recognises the "special" value of the region giving by reason its distance from large settlements and "near natural condition" (NSW. SRCMA 2009, 3).

1.3.1 Two states one community

The south-eastern corner of Australia is not considered a political entity by any government body, being divided as it is by the NSW/Victoria border. There is however a strong and long-standing association between residents that transcends official boundaries. As Pat Miles, talking of her experiences as a NSW volunteer ambulance driver working out of Eden in the 1950s and 60s, explains:

The fact that they [residents of Mallacoota, Genoa and Gypsy Point] were just over the border didn't matter, they were still your neighbours. And it's still very friendly between the two places (Miles in Clery 2000, 92).

Indeed, the district's Victorian cohort routinely use medical facilities, retail outlets and business houses located in the larger NSW towns of the Far South Coast. Both official and unofficial links exist between service and sporting clubs. Significantly in terms of my research until the early 1990s those Victorian residents who were able to receive a television signal did so from NSW South Coast transmitters. This part of north-eastern Victoria was and continues to be serviced by television retailers and technicians from the Far South Coast of NSW (see Figure 1.2).

Over the decades several attempts have been made by Mallacoota residents to have the north-eastern tip of Victoria transferred to NSW and similar discussions have taken place on the other side of the border.³ Ironically in 2005 it was discovered, much to the wry amusement of locals, that a 180km section of the state border between Cape Howe

³ In the mid-1950s a group formed with a strong interest in forming a new state which would comprise the Riverina to the coast and include the eastern section of Victoria. The port of Eden was central to the new states development. The groups meetings are reported to have been numerous and well attended however the movement met with strong opposition from both NSW and Victorian governments and eventually dissolved (*Magnet* 22 Aug. 1992).

and the headwaters of the Murray River surveyed in 1872 had never officially been proclaimed. This "historical oversight" was finally put to rights in February 2006 when the governors of both states met on the border and made the demarcation official (ABC 16 Feb. 2006).

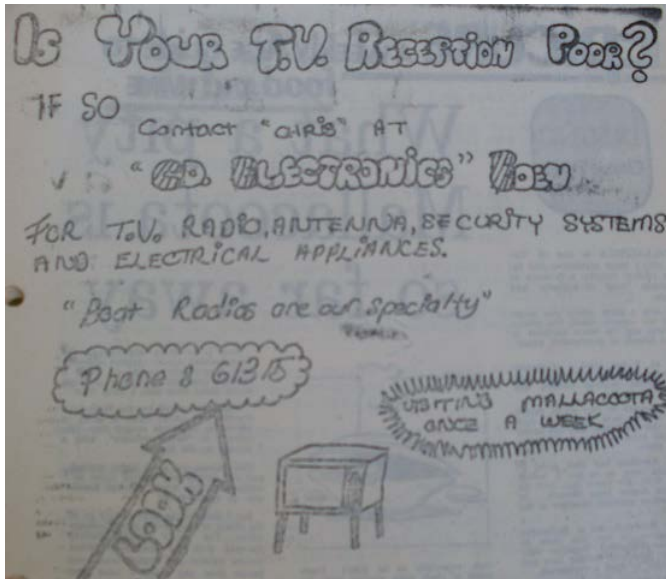


Fig.1.2. Advertisement for television repair work.

Advertisement placed by Eden (NSW) based technician announcing regular visits to Mallacoota (Victoria).

Source: *Mallacoota Mouth*, 16 & 23 Feb. 1979.⁴

1.3.2 Discourses of progress

One of the more often commented upon features of the south-eastern corner is its failure to develop economically at a pace comparable to other districts across the two states despite apparent advantages (Hagan and Mitchell 2006, Hagan 2006, Hartig and Waitt 1997, Ryan 1965). The harbour at Eden is said to rival that of Sydney, quality strands of timber spread across the interior, freshwater is plentiful and the hinterland valleys are ideally suited to grazing and other agricultural pursuits. The oceans sustain a vibrant

⁴ *The Mallacoota Mouth* is described on its banner as "a school based community newsletter". The newsletter was first produced in 1975 and has been gazetted a publication number (VBH3285). The newsletter continues to be published on a weekly basis throughout the school year. Mallacoota does not have a locally-based newspaper.

fishing industry dating to the 1860s. The most obvious explanation for this apparent anomaly is the history of poorly developed transport systems and the resultant loss of or delayed access to critical market opportunities. The failure of the state's rail transport service to extend beyond Nowra in the north and Bombala in the west is attributed to undermining integration into the capitalist economy. Until the late 1920s residents were almost entirely dependent on coastal shipping for all goods and passenger movement in and out of the district. Whilst road transport systems began slowly to improve from this time, the far southeastern corner and its inhabitants remained largely isolated from the larger population centres and metropolises to the north, south and west. The Princes Highway, the main arterial road connecting the district to the cities of Melbourne and Sydney was not fully sealed until December 1966 (*Magnet and The Voice (M&V)* 15 Dec. 1966). The Brown Mountain Road, linking the coast to Canberra via the Monaro plains was not bituminized for a further two years (*Bega District News (BDN)* 16 Aug. 1968). A large number of the secondary roads between the smaller hinterland hamlets and villages to date remain unsealed.

Many of the difficulties associated with the economic development of the area can be attributed to distance from markets and the uncompromising character of the terrain itself. However, as Hartig and Waitt (1997) effectively argue, any such explanations must also take into account the politico-economic influences that underpin decisions on the expansion of transportation and communication networks. A number of factors are at work in this instance. Firstly, in terms of cost-efficiency it is difficult to justify the high capital expenditure required to provide services to places of such low population density and economic output. Secondly, and again related to industrial productivity, in the competitive arena of resource distribution the fieldsite lacks the political influence to ensure its requirements are met above others. Thirdly, the arrangements which led to the development of NSW's heavy industries and major import-export markets around the closely situated centres of Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle allowed this compact urban complex to dictate trade-relations throughout the state (Bunker and Huston 2003, 311, Ryan 1964, 4). Finally, and in large part a consequence of the above, there has been an historical tendency amongst some residents to be cautious of "outsiders". Ryan

(1964, 14) claims this suspicion can in itself delay the entry of new ideas and slow the rate of economic development.⁵

Nowhere have expectations been higher and disappointments felt more keenly or spoken of more often than within the south-eastern corner. Shortfalls in services and resources are commonly considered a failure of government rather than local enterprise. For instance, the case for a railway connecting Eden to the Monaro Plains was put, after much community consultation and input, before the NSW Legislative Assembly for consideration in 1881, in 1908, in 1928 and again in 1968. In each instance "hopes were never realized" (*BDN* 20 Aug 1968, 1, 12 June 1962, 1). Similarly the specialised port facilities that support the industries of Newcastle and Wollongong were never made available to the people of the south-eastern corner, despite extensive lobbying going back to colonial days (see for example Hartig and Waitt 1997). Speaking on the matter in 1965, local counsellor L. Barry cynically commented to the *Bega District News*: "I'm told the first 100 years are the worst." The same article announced that the members of the Monaro and South Coast Regional Development Committee had threatened to resign en masse unless a more effective policy of decentralisation could be devised: "you work for a thing, but you get nowhere" (*BDN* July 2 1965, 1).

Historian Mark McKenna describes the residents of Eden as conceiving themselves to be "victims – victims of distant and uninterested state and federal governments and victims of fate" (McKenna 2002, 138). McKenna's description captures the sentiment of many other residents of the south-eastern corner. Residents are acutely conscious of their apparent political inconsequence and the dominance of the Sydney, Wollongong, Newcastle complex. This awareness has led to the local adoption of an expression used widely across rural NSW, that is, NSW as an acronym of Newcastle-Sydney-Wollongong.⁶ For example, Pambula/Merimbula resident Jim McGrath whose family have lived in the area for over a century explained:

⁵ Geographer Bruce Ryan writes in and of a period of time particularly relevant to this thesis.

⁶ This variation of the acronym NSW is listed by cwhast in the online *Urban Dictionary* 2006. <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=NSW> (accessed August 16, 2013).

That's where it all happens, doesn't it ... And do you know why it happens? ... Because they have all the politicians ... how can you expect to get anything, out of those areas? (McGrath, J. 2009)⁷

1.3.3 The "forgotten corner"

While progress accelerates throughout Australia, this *forgotten* [my italics] region supplies only a small and diminishing proportion of the State's production, its rural population declines and its development stagnates: it is merely the poor, hill-billy neighbour of industrial Wollongong, opulent Canberra and the Snowy Mountains Scheme – a billabong beside the stream of progress (Ryan 1965, 1).

My research has shown that "forgotten" has been a common designation for the south-eastern corner at least since the post-WWII period (see for example Clery 2000, McKenna 2002, Brown 2002, Ellis 1948). Within the fieldsite the notion of being forgotten finds expression in the term the "forgotten corner". At this early stage of the thesis therefore some consideration should be given as to what this labelling may mean to residents. While interviewing I asked the participants, all long-term residents of the region, whether they were aware of the nomenclature the "forgotten corner", how the notion had come into being and what it meant to them personally. Most interviewees were familiar with the term and although its origin was unknown all agreed the expression has been in circulation for a very long time.

I remember the first person who ever told me. It was an old lady who'd lived in Merimbula for a long time and she said: "of course, this is the "forgotten corner". We don't get this and we don't get that. Everybody else has it." Many a time it has been said since then. I think times have changed a lot but there are times when I still think we are the "forgotten corner". But things are improving (Mann 2009).⁸

There was also general consensus amongst participants that the sentiment speaks directly to the issue of service provision: "we're the last to get anything" (McGrath, J. 2009). Participants were largely accepting of the situation however their emotional responses when questioned on the "forgotten corner" differed significantly.

⁷ Jim McGrath, interviewed by author, Merimbula, NSW, 29 May 2009.

⁸ Holly Mann (pseudonym), interviewed by author, Merimbula, NSW, 26 May 2009.

I think we've been very lucky really. We're a long way away from the city. We have so much more now. And I don't take it for granted... I mean I guess it doesn't bother me. If the TV's bad – well – it's bad (Smith, G 2009).⁹

It made the people living here very self-sufficient and very proactive as to doing what they could for their own lives. Because it was an accepted fact that they were in this isolated, and "forgotten corner". Yes, that was the mentality (Tetley 2009).¹⁰

When Fraser Buchanan (2009)¹¹ explained the "forgotten corner" he directed me to a Google Night Skies map displayed at a Tourism Australia forum recently attended.¹² The round-table was convened to discuss efforts to promote the region as a destination for international tourists. The areas of bright lights, he explained, are Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney - the "black hole" in the centre, the "forgotten corner" (see Figure 1.3). Buchanan pointed out that although the district has more access to communications technologies than it has ever had, because of the speed of technological advancement "it is as behind as ever." He does not consider this feature of the region a problem, rather suggests that the reason many people choose to live in remote areas is that they do not want to live an urban lifestyle. The region's villages, those with the least access to communications technologies, he argues, are producing fine musicians and artists. "It is because the area has been forgotten or left behind that it is the way it is and can be promoted for its pristine beaches and communal lifestyle" (Buchanan 2009).

As these comments demonstrate, the "forgotten corner" is a subtly nuanced idea which holds multiple meanings and degrees of meanings, often held simultaneously by the same individual. Framed in terms of "neglect" the idea of the "forgotten corner" triggers resentment directed particularly at governing bodies that are perceived as being neglectful of the needs of residents. On the other hand, the idea of the "forgotten corner"

⁹ Gail Smith, interviewed by author, Lochiel, NSW, 27th May 2009.

¹⁰ Kevin Tetley, interviewed by author, Bega, NSW, 28th May 2009.

¹¹ Fraser Buchanan, interviewed by author, Pambula, NSW, 26th May 2009.

¹² The Google image cannot be included in this document due to copyright regulation but can be accessed on http://visbleearth.nasa.gov/view_rec.php?id=1438 The map provided by The Astronomical Society of New South Wales Inc. (Figure 1.3) shows equivalent detail and is not subject to the same restrictions.

may be imagined as a utopian space and a space of resilience from which springs a sense of pride in self and community. This is not to suggest that feelings of "neglect" and "utopianism" and degrees thereof, are unique to the "forgotten corner". On the contrary, this particular form of parochialism, that is, resentment of what is seen as urban privilege countered by pride in self-sufficiency and/or postcard perfect beauty on the other is a common feature of many rural communities.

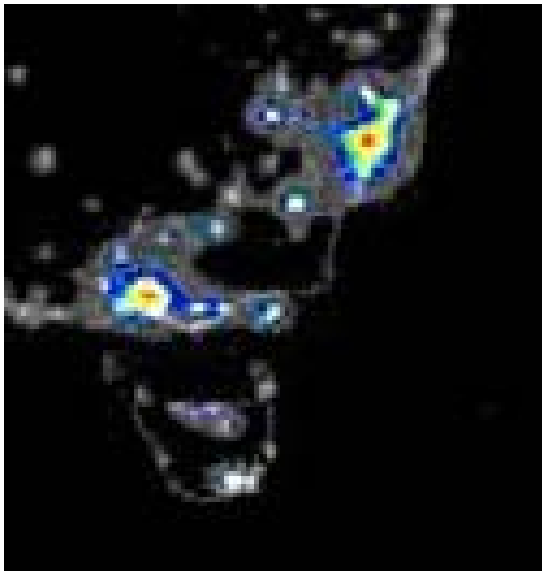


Fig.1.3. The "forgotten corner" by night

Source: The Astronomical Society of New South Wales Inc. 2012. *Light Pollution*, <http://www.asnsw.com/node/747> (accessed July 17, 2014).

1. 4 Rationale: Why television?

Given the difficulties and delays in securing access to such a wide range of technological infrastructure into the district, it would be reasonable for the reader to be asking at this point, why television? From a media studies perspective, why research a particular media form in a context where it is barely present? Media historian Michael Curtin contends that the history of television "provides a unique vantage point" for exploring power-relations and the spatial boundaries which uphold them, because of the way television is used by political authorities to "promise equality" while simultaneously practicing "the politics of difference"(Curtin 2000, 59). As with a number of the more recent contributions to the historiography of Australian television

this project was inspired by the celebrations surrounding 50 years of Australian television throughout 2006. In large part these works focus on the seeming ubiquity of television and its capacity to unite widely dispersed peoples through a common viewing experience. For example Tony Sweeney writes:

There is a collective experience of TV that is conspicuously universal and at the core of our cultural history – the source of national pride, popular nostalgia, and of countless ‘best of TV’ clip shows (Sweeney 2006, 3).

Throughout 2006 I was searching newspapers published in the south-eastern corner for another project based on cinema-going (Hanson 2009). I found myself immersed in an ongoing crusade waged by residents, retailers, councillors and both State and Federal Members of Parliament (MPs) aimed at getting a reliable television service to the district. Historian John Gillis argues:

...any attempt to fix the past unsettles it. Memory is not a thing, but an interactive, interpretive process. Every effort to create a viable national memory resorts to polysemic symbols and images that invite multiple interpretations and support countermemories (Gillis 1992, 99).

Fifty years for who, I thought.

On further and more intense investigation, I discovered that the problems encountered across the region in relation to television were not uncommon, neither was the experience exclusively shared by the members of small or isolated rural townships. Residents of other major country population centres across the nation were also to different degrees, and for varying reasons, subjected to poor or intermittent reception and lengthy delays in receiving television services. These populations and their political representatives were not silent. At the holding of almost every Federal parliamentary session from the late 1950s through to the early 1970s the matter of inadequate country television service and the effect this was having on rural communities was brought to the attention of the both houses of government.¹³ There is, however, little in the historical record of Australian television to suggest that the country experience was

¹³ The House of Representatives – Lower House; The Senate – Upper House

significantly different to that of the metropolitan or that this discrepancy was a matter of relevance, either to regional communities or the national television service as a whole. In writing this thesis I hope to provide a fuller picture of the historiography of Australian television, and in doing so broaden our understanding of the influence of communications technologies in the co-constitution of spaces and identities in the Australian context.

1.5 Approach

This television history has been "written from below", that is the focus is on a localized and particular experience of television, bearing in mind always the broader socio/political forces which shape and are shaped by that experience. Histories "written from below" differ from traditional political or industrial histories in that they focus attention on the experiences and understandings of ordinary people rather than the social or political elite. The concept was popularised by Marxist historians in the 1950s and 60s (Institute of Historical Research 2008). Histories of television in the Australian setting, as is the case internationally, are most commonly focused at the national level, with particular emphasis on establishing countrywide network systems. Macro accounts can easily overlook the practices that produce everyday media culture as well as suggest a universality of distribution, which often does not correspond with the evidence (Fuller-Seeley 2004). Consequently a growing number of historians of the different forms of media, including television, have shifted away from traditional political and industrial historical techniques. Instead, the social conditions under which different media cultures are produced and experienced by audiences in different locations at particular historical junctures becomes the focus of study.

Media historians Douglas Gomery and Robert Allen first argued the case for locally-based media histories in their 1985 publication *Film History: Theory and Practice*. Allen and Gomery insist that "the event under study is not a one-dimensional 'thing' but the point of convergence for various lines of historical force" (Allen and Gomery 1985, 17). Works of this kind remain a rarity in the context of Australian television historiography. Of the existing studies the short histories of the early years of television in Western Australia written by Eric Fisher (1985) and Tom O'Regan and John

Hartley's (1985) are amongst the most notable. These papers were produced to supplement an exhibition of Western Australian screen culture held in Perth, 1985 to 1986 and, along with other contributions, were published as a collection of dossiers. Editors O'Regan and Shoesmith (1985, 7) contend that rather than being parochial in exploring screen culture at the regional level "by putting a very small component of an international complex under the microscope more sense can be made of that complex." The challenge for researchers is to find those linkages that connect the localised and particular to its coexisting socio/historical structures and systems.

Typically histories "written from below" take the form of empirically based micro-studies that draw upon perspectives from across academic disciplines in accordance with the data findings and/or research question. This interdisciplinary project draws insight from media studies; cultural geography and the newly developing field of media anthropology. Media anthropology brings the ethnographic and theoretical approaches of anthropology to the study of a broad range of media-related activities. The media is understood as being inextricably linked to the social and cultural lives within which it is produced and/or consumed (Askew 2002). Further inspiration and direction is taken from anthropologist Brian Larkin and historian and cultural theorist Michel de Certeau, whose extensive body of work traverses a broad and somewhat disparate range of disciplines, fields and topics of enquiry.

1.6 Thesis structure and chapter summary

This spatial history operates on two levels. On one level it provides an account of the establishment of a television service to an Australian country television district. At the same time it explores how the getting of television to these areas produced particular kinds of spaces and spatial arrangements which in turn helped to further entrench the association between the south-eastern corner of Australia and the "forgotten corner".

In this introductory chapter the direction of the thesis: its aims, incentives and parameters are outlined. Also included is a justification and descriptions of the fieldsite in terms of its relationships with the politics of media technologies.

Chapter 2 begins with an exploration of the primary literature in the field of Australian television history. An explanation of and justification for the particular methodological and theoretical approach employed in conducting this project is then provided. This explanation includes details on the processes of data collection and analysis as well as the practical and ethical challenges that arose whilst performing these tasks. My long term engagement with the communities under investigation complicated these procedures so the "insider" research position is discussed in depth. The chapter culminates in a general dialogue on practice theory with a focus on the works of Nick Couldry, Brian Larkin and more particularly Michel de Certeau.

Chapters 3, 4 & 5 utilize data collected mainly from primary source documents such as parliamentary documents; local newspapers and the papers of relevant television authorities to present an historical account of the delivery of television services to the communities under examination. Larkin and de Certeau direct the thinking underpinning this discussion. As will be discussed in **Chapter 2** de Certeau (1984) divides practices or "ways of operating" into strategies and tactics. However, as he acknowledges, the two are not always readily disengaged. These chapters explore the to and fro between the strategic and tactical as residents, their political representatives and community leaders took on consecutive federal governments in pursuit of reliable television services. The chapters collectively place events, which could be described more concisely, under the microscope. This strategy was deliberately employed to emphasize the deteriorating relationship between the local and the national as a consequence of promises broken; bureaucratic bumbles and delays; rising hopes and repeated disappointments. The reader is invited to imagine the levels of frustration experienced by would be television users as each new initiative aimed at bringing television services to the south-eastern corner was stymied.

Chapter 3 begins with an overview of the organizational and legislative arrangements that underpin the Australian television system as well as the processes by which licences were allocated to the country. The policy incentive of localism is explored and discussed. In **Chapter 4** the conversation returns to the communities under examination, in particular the decision to form a regional television committee with the

intention of establishing a local commercial television station. The chapter explains how community members are forced to seek help from commercial stations outside of the district when efforts to obtain a local licence fail and the desire for reliable television services of any description intensifies. **Chapter 5** bears witness to a strategic planning reversal. Government policy makers are forced to reconsider ideals around localism when transmitters prove to be the most practical and cost effective means of providing television to locations distant from broadcast centres. The chapter also includes discussion on the establishment, successes and failures of the Bega-Cooma local ABC television service, ABSN-8.

Chapter 6 examines the responses of participants collected through their oral histories to explore the entry of television into their everyday life. The chapter begins with a description of the technical apparatus devised by early users of television to capture television signals transmitted from Sydney and Wollongong, the household tricks used to overcome reception difficulties and the initiatives adopted by electrical retailers to make a sale given the known difficulties associated with television access. The relevance of local representation for users of the new medium, bearing in mind the notion of localism as a driving policy incentive, is also explored. The chapter concludes with consideration of how the practices and discourses that developed around television usage reinforced the notion of the south-eastern corner of Australia as "being forgotten".

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis. This short chapter begins with a summary and interrogation of key research findings. The implications of these findings in terms of the nation-making effort associated with communications are then considered. The chapter closes with suggestions for future research.

2 FINDING A WAY FORWARD – LITERATURE, METHODOLOGY AND THEORY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an explanation and rationalisation of the methodological and theoretical approaches employed in this thesis, including detailed discussion on the processes of data collection and analysis as well as the practical and ethical challenges that arose whilst performing these tasks. Before delving into the specifics of the project, however, the primary literature in the field of Australian television history will be overviewed. The following review focuses most particularly on those studies which exemplify different approaches taken to the topic or are informative in terms of my research.

2.2 Australian television historiography

2.2.1 The development of the Australian Television System

Over the last thirty years a number of excellent studies investigate the introduction and early years of television and television policy in Australia (Flew 2006, Jacka and Johnson 1998, Curthoys 1991 & 1984, Bailey 1979, Hall 1976). Australian media books and readers, particularly those targeted towards students, also commonly include at least one chapter on the early history of the television system (see for example Harrington 2014, Cunningham 2000). The rise of the commercial networks (Herd 2012, Stone 2000, Moran 1992, Hall 1976) and media oligarchies (Griffen-Foley 2002, Shawcross 1997 & 1992, Goot, Tiffen and Australian Film, Television and Radio School 1995) are also well-represented in the literature. The history of the national component of the dual broadcasting system, the ABC and SBS, is also well documented. Kenneth Inglis' (2006, 1983) two volume work covering the development, organisation and day-to-day running experiences of the ABC make a particularly noteworthy contribution to the historiography of this sector of the television system. The history of SBS has similarly been thoroughly investigated (Hawkins and Ang 2007, O'Regan and Kolar-Panov 1993). Liz Jacka has written extensively on the Australian public broadcasting system,

including both contemporary and historical accounts of the ABC and SBS (Jacka 2006, 2002, 2000).

Whilst it is not usual to cite articles published through Wikipedia in academic works, it would be remiss not to mention here WikiProject Australian Television (2010). This ongoing venture is undertaken by "a group dedicated to improving Wikipedia's coverage of topics related to Television in Australia". Linked pages include historical and contemporaneous data on metropolitan and regional services taking into account satellite and digital television, programming, the stations, legislation and many other aspects of Australian television. All articles are referenced, reviewed and rated according to quality and importance. The site is well-organised, internally linked and regularly updated.

2.2.2 Television as a cultural artefact

Further supplementing the field are those works which focus on television as a cultural artefact or cultural industry. From this perspective, the significance of television lies in its capacity to reflect, stabilize and/or formulate politico-social values and cultural mores. As O'Regan (1993, 81) explains, television is "in the business of fostering a sense of citizenship, social identities and creating and representing a common cultural and political core". This is a broad field of study approached from a variety of different angles. Curthoys (1991) and Osborne and Lewis (1995), for example, direct their attention towards policy making. For Liz Jacka, the significance of television as a cultural artefact lies in its capacity to bring together localising, regionalising and globalising forces and thus fashion new cultural geographies and identifications (Jacka and Given 2002, Cunningham and Jacka 1996, 13, Jacka 1993). Other researchers tackle the issue from the position of television users. The focal point of interest becomes the individual and the collective experience of television, which includes memories of particular programs, advertisements, celebrities and events, including watching television in the family home and other places (Darian-Smith and Turnbull 2012; McKee 2001, Turner 2000, ACNielsen 1999, Beilby 1981). The celebrations surrounding the 50th anniversary of Australian television in 2006 prompted a number of

further publications of this type (Jacka and Dolin 2007, Hartley 2006, Horgan 2006, Poulter 2006, Jacka and Turnbull 2006).

2.2.3 The spatial imperatives of television

In summary histories of the Australian broadcasting system, including the rise of the commercial networks and media oligarchies are well-represented in the literature as are histories of television as a cultural artefact and/or a cultural industry. However, in 1993, O'Regan made the point that "Given Australia's poly-ethnic society, the geographic dispersal of television markets, and the different television environments across the country, it is important to allow for the internal diversity of the Australian experience of television" (O'Regan 1993, 2). More recently, Pinkerton and Dodds (2009) and Liz Jacka (2004) also called for historical research which addresses the spatial imperatives of television in relation to locality and access. A research agenda has, therefore, long been set in relation to experiences of television as mediated in and through place. To date, however, this agenda has gone largely unaddressed. Leila Green (1998) made a significant contribution to the spatial dimensions of the field with her qualitative study on the implications of the introduction of satellite television for remote communities of WA. From this perspective Jenny Bailey's *The Country's Finest Hour* (2001) although more of a celebration of the ABC's rural broadcasting unit written for a wide audience than a critical history, is also an important work.¹⁴ Although research exploring the spatial distribution of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) (Walton et al. 2013, Willis and Tranter 2006, Pluss 2004, Given 2001) is flourishing, these kinds of works remain a rarity within the historiography of Australian television.

2.3 The research challenge

The scarcity of studies which focus on the spatial distribution of television is not a problem unique to the Australian setting. In 2004 media historian Kathryn Fuller-

¹⁴ My own contribution to *Remembering Television: Histories, Technologies, Memories* (Darian-Smith and Turnbull 2012) also fits this research agenda. The chapter "Chasing a signal: memories of television across the south-eastern corner of Australia" was predominantly drawn from Chapter 6 of this thesis however also includes parts of Chapter 1 and 7.

Seeley collated statistics pertaining to television ownership taken from census material, yearbooks and almanacs to demonstrate that television was not rapidly experienced by audiences across the United States of America (USA) as is often suggested. Rather, in its early years TV was a predominantly urban privilege. She asks us: "To think more about social differences (social class and income, region, and race) and what the eventual, gradual appearance of TV (and radio) meant to these non-viewers' understanding of the new medium and of a shared, "mass," popular culture" (Fuller-Seeley 2004). A decade later Fuller-Seeley's call remains largely unaddressed. This may in part be due to the difficulties involved in the formulation of such a project. The distribution and uptake of services is always a complex matter, broadcasting particularly so because of the mix of technologies, regulations, commercial priorities and content involved. Anthropologist Walter Armbrust, who has a special interest in popular culture and the media, contends that: "In terms of television, for most of the discipline the issue is now less the importance of the phenomenon than how to approach it" (Armbrust 2004, 820).

The research challenge is intensified when the enquiry is focused on a material absence. The kinds of documentary sources employed by Fuller-Seeley can be useful in mapping the rate of spread of television services across a country. However, the resultant "television footprint" must be viewed with suspicion. The data displayed in Figure 2.1 indicates the rate of dispersal of both transmitters and translators across south-eastern Australia.¹⁵ Looking at the map, it would be reasonable to assume that by the mid-1960s and possibly earlier, the people who lived in the south-eastern corner had access to the national station and at least one commercial station, the level of service promised to country residents by the government of the day. This however was not the case.

¹⁵ A translator has a smaller range and less power than a transmitter. It is designed retransmit signals from a parent station without alteration.

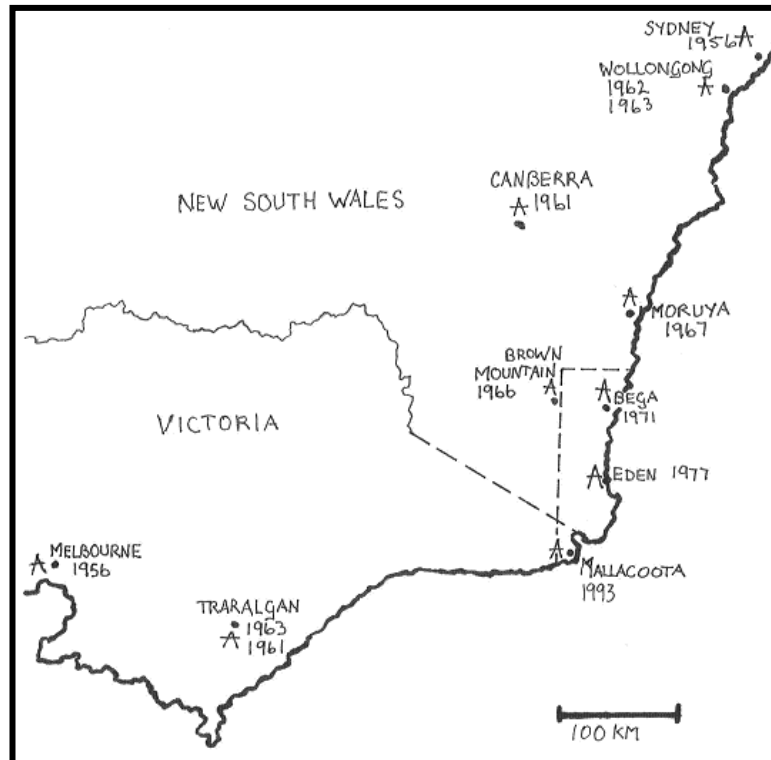


Fig.2.1. Transmitter and translator sites across the south-eastern corner of Australia

Sources: Data collected from the Australian Broadcasting Control Board (ABCB) and Australian Broadcasting Tribunal (ABT) annual reports. Map adapted by author from *Reader's Digest Atlas of Australia*, 2nd edition. 1994. Reader's Digest (Australia) Pty Ltd, Sydney.

In order to comprehend the problems associated with the analogue signal access experienced by residents it is necessary to closely consider the topography of the fieldsite. The terrain throughout the south-eastern corner of Australia is undulating in the extreme. To the northwest lie the high plains of the Monaro, to the west and southwest the Alpine region. These mountains played havoc with broadcasting signals. Local television technician Frazer Buchanan estimates that prior to the establishment of the Mt Bimmil translator in 1977 less than 30% of the population had what could be termed as "good" reception. This percentage increased to 60% - 70% once the translator became operational however many of the settlements, particularly those in the hinterland, continued and continue to have minimal if any television coverage (Buchanan 2009). When taken in conjunction with the comments of other interviewees and newspaper commentaries of the period Buchanan's estimations seem reasonable.

There are still pockets in all major centres with no free-to-air television access or access which is undermined by frequent and significant reception disturbances.¹⁶

Signal quality is also compromised by climatic conditions and routinely deteriorates over the summer months. Residents are in the main at a loss to explain this phenomenon. The general consensus amongst the technicians and retailers I have spoken to is that signals are so weakened by distance and multiple instances of retransmission that they become caught up in the high pressure systems that hover over the Tasman Sea over the summer months and consequently miss the repeater. However, even amongst this cohort the phenomenon is not fully comprehended. According to retailer Alwyn Armstrong:

Its [television] designed as a line of sight business. And after that the signal makes up its own mind where it's going to go (Armstrong 2009).¹⁷

Kevin Tetley has observed the phenomenon since he first began experimenting with television in the late 1950s.

We used to suspect it [particular weather events] may have been happening further up the coast because they were using a number of repeaters and I think they were repeating from one to the next like a chain. I don't know that for sure but I've always surmised that could be the case because there were times when there didn't seem to be any real reason around here. It still happens I saw it on mine just recently, where the picture becomes very unstable, very weak, snowy. It'll start wobbling around and it's gone (Tetley 2009).

Irrespective of the cause, the upshot is that across the district residents' television reception deteriorates, sometimes to the point of becoming unwatchable, for a portion of the year.

Hence, in this instance the "television footprint" does not tell us whether transmitted analogue signals were adequately received. Nor does it give any indication of the

¹⁶ Major population centres include the townships of Bega; Merimbula; Pambula; Eden; Tathra and Mallacoota.

¹⁷ Alwyn Armstrong, interviewed by author, Eden, NSW, 27 May 2009.

consequences of no or non-functional reception in the everyday lives of those affected.¹⁸ In order to address a situation such as this a different kind of data source and methodological approach is clearly required.

2.4 Methodological underpinnings

As the interest in the media as a cultural artefact or product intensified researchers became more versatile in their approaches to data collection often combining several different methodologies (see for example Podber 2008, Kuhn 2002, Schröder 1999, Stacey 1994) In keeping with this trend, this project uses both archival and ethnographic strategies. My long term engagement with the communities under investigation requires critical reflection. Hence, the "insider" researcher position will be discussed before detailing the specifics of data collection and analysis.

2.4.1 The researcher/participant relationship

An "insider" research relationship is brought into being when the investigator is a member of or has at least a close association with the place and/or population under investigation.¹⁹ In the case of this project I had a close association with the fieldsite, and also with some of the interviewees. Indeed, in large part as a consequence of the "snowballing" technique employed as part of the recruitment process, in all interview sessions I shared several acquaintances with the participant/s. In keeping with the practices of small town interpersonal communication, these connections were established on first meeting and discussed closely prior to the interview taking place.

The advantages and disadvantages of the insider relationships in the conduct of ethnographic fieldwork are discussed in depth by numerous scholars (see for example

¹⁸ Informal conversations with residents of the south-eastern corner indicate that the switch from analogue to digital television has brought improvement to some viewers. For others, however, snowy pictures are simply replaced by images rendered unwatchable due to pixilation. The digital phase of the history of television in Australia is outside the remit of this thesis however is a worthy consideration for future research.

¹⁹ Social researcher Dorothy Smith (1999, 8) coined the phrase 'the situated knower' to describe 'insider' researchers because of the prior knowledge and expectations they invariably bring to the research field.

Unluer 2012, Oliver 2010, Corbin Dwyer and Buckle 2009, Rabbitt 2006). Scholars generally agree that the "insider" is more able to gain access to and understand the cultural specificities of the field allowing for more nuanced and deeper observation and data collection. On the other hand over familiarity with the object of enquiry can result in both researcher and researched taking certain matters for granted in terms of both information sought and received as well as interpretation (Oliver 2010). Self-reflexive analysis of the processes around interviewing in this project found similarly. Most positively, the existing connections allowed for a casual atmosphere to develop which in turn led to relaxed discussion and a steady flow of data. Participants did not appear to be intimidated by the interview process and were clearly willing to disagree with suggestions I made. Interviewees also readily steered the conversation towards issues important to themselves but not necessarily formally addressed by the guide interview questions. Additionally, the conversation was not interrupted by requests on my behalf for explanation of the many everyday micro-geographies, weather conditions or social practices referred to by interviewees. On the other hand, being constantly alert to the risk of unequal power relationships and pushing the preconceived ideas/knowledge I brought to the discussion at times inhibited my own conversation.

The difficulties associated with 'insider' research extend beyond information gathering to the process of analysis in terms of the interpretation of documentary and ethnographic data. As already stated, I lived in several communities within the fieldsite over the course of my twenty-five year residency. I am aware of the feelings of frustration and annoyance experienced by residents when poor reception renders television unwatchable; when telephones cease to function in heavy rains or as a consequence of rabbits chewing through cables; when mobile telephones slip out of range mid-conversation and when computer files take hours longer to download than they would if broadband was available. I also recognise how these emotions colour perceptions of self and community in relation to others and other places. Personal experience and the interpretation thereof, in part drove this research project from conception. In all forms of research, however, data must be interpreted. Therefore, irrespective of researcher positionality questions of bias necessarily arise. Historian Beverley Southgate reasons:

It is difficult to see what else historians can be expected to do than report on the past in the light of who they are, but that is no bad thing so long as they are aware of what they are doing and why. For at some point a decision has to be taken about what is important: even if all such decisions are 'relative' they all have to be made (Southgate 2001, 145).

Schneider (2006, 1) goes so far as to suggest that in ethnographic work: "Experience is a precondition for understanding." Subjectivity, then, need not be a detriment to sound research practice. It does however place additional onus on the academic enquirer to treat evidence critically, sources sensitively, to remain aware of their personal subject position and to be open to other potentially valid interpretations of events. Research methods should also be open to scrutiny (Fetterman 2010). For this reason the methodological approach associated with this project is now described in detail. The project received approval from the University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).²⁰

2.5 Collecting the data

2.5.1 Ethnographic strategies

Ethnographic strategies involved collecting the oral histories of twenty-one residents through a series of interviews conducted in 2009 over the course of two field-trips. Recruitment occurred through a number of strategies. The first two participants came from my pool of close friends who, on hearing about the project, were eager to assist and offered to be interviewed. Volunteers were also called for over the course of a radio interview in which the scope and purpose of the study was outlined.²¹ Two listeners, a former television retailer and a technician, responded to the call. Three participants were attracted through contacting the Bega Valley Genealogy Society (Pambula) and the Bega and Mallacoota Historical Societies. Chance also played a role in the recruitment process. The proprietor of the holiday units where I stayed whilst conducting my field research in Mallacoota had extensive experience retailing televisions in both Australia

²⁰ HREC Approval Number: HE08/314

²¹ The interview went to air on the local ABC South East Mornings program with Tim Holt, ABC local radio, Bega, 27/4/09

and New Zealand. When general conversation revealed the purpose of my visit he became quite interested and happily volunteered for interview. The decision to take time off work to visit a WWII bunker which occasionally open to tourists also resulted in a chance meeting with the president of the Mallacoota Historical Society and a further interview. The most successful recruitment strategy however was snow-balling. All initial contacts were asked if they would be willing to pass on my contact details to any of their associates who would likely be interested in the project. In this way a further twelve persons were recruited. A brief biography of each participant is provided as an appendix to this thesis (Appendix 1).

In all 21 residents participated in the project. Ethnographic work does not sample for representativeness, nevertheless it is important that in recruiting participants, the researcher bears in mind the need for relevance to broader socio-cultural environment (O'Reilly 2012, 39). Although the group is too small to be considered representative in a numerical sense an attempt was made to draw widely from across the television using community, presenting as many scenarios as practicable. The original plan to select participants who were television users in the 1950s and 1960s was modified when it became apparent that a significant portion of the population still had no access to services throughout that period. Consequently, the time frame was expanded to include the 1970s, 80s and in the case of Mallacoota, the 1990s. Participants were recruited across the entire of the south-eastern corner: 11 from the southern towns and villages - that is from Eden in NSW to Mallacoota in Victoria - and ten from Eden north to Bemboka. All participants consumed television for pleasure however six were also technicians and three were retailers, now retired. The gender composition of the group is also fairly equivalent with nine females and 12 males volunteering for interview.

2.5.1.1 The interviews

Prior to the event several sets of open-ended prompt questions were constructed to help stimulate and direct the flow of the discussion, although it was always the intention that interviews be conducted in conversational manner. These questions differed according to the usage status of the interviewee, for example whether the person was primarily a viewer, technician or retailer. In each circumstance the first group of questions was

designed to provoke a generally descriptive rejoinder. I was interested in learning in specific detail about the practices that developed around television within the two already outlined contexts of location and accessibility. The second group of questions were directed towards matters of reception and the practices and feelings that developed in response to ongoing service difficulties. Lastly the subject of the "forgotten corner" and the links between this nomenclature and access to television was tackled.

The formulation of the latter group of questions caused some concern. On the one hand, I had no desire to lead - or mislead - participants by subtly skirting the issue or "dropping hints" in the hope of drawing a particular line of response. On the other, explicit reference to the supposed connection ran the risk of eliciting answers that, either consciously or sub-consciously, aimed to please me as the researcher or to enhance the outcomes of the project. After consideration, and in part in response to the Popular Memory Group's call for greater participant involvement in secondary analysis, the latter option was adopted (Popular Memory Group 1982, 240). The interviewees were informed that I knew of the expression the "forgotten corner", assumed it was linked to the notion of service provision and was interested in their opinion on the matter.

The approach whilst not without risk proved very successful. In some instances participants raised the notion of "being forgotten" in the early stages of the interview thus circumventing the dilemma. However in those instances where the subject was purposefully raised, rather than simply responding to questions participants tended to pause for thought before embarking upon a full and considered discussion. Interviewees were also willing to go against the presented proposition adding weight to the argument that the researcher/participant power relationship is more complex and possibly more equal than previously assumed (Huggett 2006, England 2002). For example, almost all interviewees were aware of the link between the notion forgotten/"forgotten corner" and service distribution, but not everyone believed the slur to be warranted.

I don't think we're really forgotten here. We've got some very good facilities here (Wilson 2009).²²

²² Meone Wilson, interviewed by author, Mallacoota, Vic, 12 November 2009.

Others argued that the concept was largely obsolete given the advances in transport and communication experienced over recent decades. For example:

... it is an expression that you would hear a lot from my Mum's generation. But I'm not sure from my age group and younger whether you would hear it very much and maybe that's simply because you really have gone to areas that are a lot more isolated (Martin 2009).²³

Two of the first three interviewees quickly associated the notion of the "forgotten corner" with lack of local representation in the various forms of the media (Martin 2009, Mann 2009). Although it had not been my original intention to discuss program content as a result of these comments all subsequent interviewees were asked for their thoughts on the matter. Lively conversation invariably ensued indicating that representation is a matter of concern to residents and thus warranted inclusion in the thesis. In all the direct approach evoked a rich response and participants seemed to relish the opportunity to be interpreters, rather than just informants.

2.5.2 Archival research

As with all methods, ethnographic approaches have their limitations and in this instance there was good reason why the traditional historical research technique of trawling the archive was required. Firstly, the history of the early years of television across rural Australia has not been collated and there is very little in the secondary literature from which newer works can build. Media historian Liz Jacka points out: "It is difficult to do something as complex and as pervasive as television [history] when the basic historical materials do not exist" (Jacka 2004, 27-28). Project participants were of minimal assistance in this matter rarely being able to detail to any degree of temporal accuracy the events they described. For example, Fraser Buchanan was well aware that the establishment of the Mt Bimmil transmitter marked a turning point both in the uptake of television across the district and the viewing habits of residents. However, in terms of a timeframe for this important occurrence "probably sometime in the mid to late 70s" was

²³ Diane Martin, interviewed by author, Merimbula, Merimbula, NSW, 25 May 2009.

the closest estimation he could make (Buchanan 2009). Historian Paula Hamilton takes the position that history and memory are essential to each other.

I want to argue for an integral relationship, an essential interdependence between memory and history despite claims of great tension and conflict ... Memory is gradually lost and here the historian steps in to tell the stories that people forget – the "gaps" in the collective remembering. Just as the people do remember what the historians forget (Hamilton 1994, 12).

Filling in the "gaps" proved an extremely time consuming exercise. Documentary evidence was collected mainly from parliamentary documents; the reports of broadcasting administrative bodies and local newspapers.²⁴ To date most of the documents perused are not available online meaning many hours were spent scanning microfilm or hard-copies. The ongoing commitment to digitalize historical documents and collect historical media research on sites such as TROVE and the Australian Media History Database (AMHD) will be of great benefit to future researchers.²⁵

2.6 Analysis

Having collected a wealth of information the process of sorting and analysis was embarked upon. Data was analysed according to the general principles of grounded theory as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Grounded theory is a bottom-up approach. Typically, the researcher begins with the empirical data, looks for common patterns and themes and then searches for a generalizing concept, or theory. Guidance in

²⁴ Broadcasting administrative bodies include the Australian Broadcasting Control Board (ABCB); the Postmaster-General's (PMG) Department and the Department of Communications.

Newspapers referred to most frequently are: *Cooma Monaro Express (CME)*; *Bega District News (BDN)* and the *Imlay Magnet (IM)*. The *BDN* briefly changed name to *The News* in 1969, returning to *BDN* a year later. The *IM* was named the *Magnet and the Voice* until 1970. The title of the publication was then changed to *The Voice*. In 1971 the newspaper was renamed the *Imlay Magnet*. The publication had a further name change in 1993 and is now known as the *Magnet*.

²⁵ TROVE: An online database created by the National Library of Australia committed to the digitalization of documentary resources connected with Australia. AMHD: An online database established under the auspices of Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW, listing research currently been undertaken relating to the history of all aspects of the Australian media.

this process was sought from ethnographers Karen O'Reilly (2012) and David Fetterman (2010). Both suggest an iterative approach, that is, data analysis takes place across the entire course of the research. This strategy in progress is evident in my decision to add a new line of question when unanticipated information was received from a variety of sources (described in **Section. 2.5.1.1**). The iterative approach worked equally well for documentary sources. For example, the document search was broadened to include matters pertaining to decentralization when it became apparent that this issue was used by parliamentary representatives of the electorates across the south-eastern corner to advocate for television.

NVIVO software made achievable the tasks of storage, organisation and finally the cross-examination of data. As this data was made available through very different kinds of sources, for example digital audio-recordings; scanned primary source documents; hand-written notes; photographs and drawings, manual analysis would have been extremely difficult.²⁶ NVIVO's capacity to import audio files making them available for scrutiny through the use of a simple to use and effective search mechanism also caused a rethink of my original plan to transcribe the interviews in full. Transcription, until recently considered an essential tool for oral historians has increasingly come under criticism by researchers who challenge the notion that the interview situation can ever be truly represented (for example Huggett 2006, Portelli 1997, Rabbitt 2006, Frisch 2006). According to oral historian Alessandro Portelli:

Even if we tried to print interviews in their entirety, we would end up with lengthy and almost unreadable texts (in which the mechanical fidelity of the transcription thinly veils the qualitative betrayal of turning beautiful speech into unreadable writing (Portelli 1991, 63).

There seems little benefit in undertaking this contested endeavour as NVIVO produced the results required for this project. An audio record of each interview is uploaded; coded and stored within the program itself.

²⁶ NVIVO: A commercially available Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching, and Theorising (NUD*IST) program designed for use in qualitative research endeavours.

2.7 Theoretical underpinnings

The final stage of analysis involved conceptualising the findings of this project within the context of the Australian television system and television usage more generally. Problems immediately emerged. Once the collected material came under scrutiny it became apparent that *getting* access to watchable television was of at least equal significance as programme content. The first complication then was to fit the project within existing media studies theoretical frameworks which largely assume the media in question is present and functioning as intended. Secondly, a primary aim of this project has been to expose the links between poor access to communications services and the construction of places and identities - again an under-theorized topic.

2.7.1 Nick Couldry and the move beyond content

If reframing television history to focus on ideas of access and experience, the work of Nick Couldry on media practice has been highly influential (Couldry 2012, Couldry et.al. 2010, Couldry and McCarthy 2004, Couldry 2004). Since the 1970s, practice theory has been evolving across a range of disciplines, including anthropology, geography, philosophy and sociology. Practice theory remains a loosely defined approach rather than a concise framework or model. In a general sense, however, practice theorists focus on human actions and bodily responses to think about connections rather than "top down" structures (Postill 2010, 3). Couldry (2004, 115) contends that a practice-based analytical framework moves beyond the institutional, economic and textual approaches that have traditionally been the conceptual mainstays for studies of the media, allowing researchers to explore more fully a wide range of media-orientated practices and the role of the media in structuring other social practices. In formulating his ideas on practice Couldry drew insight from sociologists Alan Warde (Randles and Warde 2006, Warde 2005) and Ann Swidler (2001). Swidler conceives of culture as two kinds of processes – practices and discourse. In terms of media culture this can be conceptualised as what people do and say in relation to the media. Therefore, in the interests of understanding "media's consequences for social practice as a whole", Couldry argues, "the full range of practices oriented towards media (not just direct media consumption)" should be the focus of study (Couldry 2004, 128).

Couldry's conceptualization allows for an understanding of media practice which includes political action, such as lobbying for television services. Media practice must also include repeatedly adjusting aerials, covering television screens with blue cellophane or fly-wire to ameliorate the effects of snowing or complaining about programs missed due to poor reception. Equally, the political processes and industry plays that typically prefigure broadcasting regulation and consequently service delivery should also be conceived as media practices.

Couldry's scholarship inspired me to think more constructively about the implications of a practice approach for histories of the media and resulted in a foray into the literature across the fields of media studies, cultural anthropology and cultural geography. A number of scholars working across these fields have influenced this project and will be referred to as required. However the works of media anthropologist Brian Larkin and cultural theorist and historian Michel de Certeau are of particular value and collectively underpin much of the thinking behind this thesis. The ideas posited by these theorists present compatible conceptual frameworks that may be drawn upon to explore the media as a cultural artifact in different social settings.

2.7.2 Brian Larkin - technological failure and the unintended uses and effects of media

Larkin has extensively examined the role of media technologies in shaping modernity in communities across northern Nigeria. Over the course of his research he observed that the infrastructures that support media networks are inherently subject to breakdown, resulting in connections that are "frequently messy, discontinuous and poor" (Larkin 2004, 292). Therefore as well as recognizing the achievements of the media, he insists that the instances of its failure should also be critically analyzed, particularly in contexts where technological breakdown is commonplace. In such situations, Larkin contends technology may take on even greater social, cultural and political significance than in the former case often becoming the focal point for political resentment and dissent.

Larkin, nevertheless, contests the have/have not dichotomy of the "so called digital divide" arguing that this position overlooks the "structuring effects that technologies and their failures – however dysfunctional – have on everyday life" (Larkin 2004, 305).

The basis for this line of reasoning is made evident through detailed analysis of Nigeria's vibrant video piracy industry. Imported films, intended for dissemination through legitimate trade networks, are copied in large numbers by video pirates, subtitled and distributed both locally and internationally through illicit circuits of distribution. The success of the piracy industry lies in its capacity to manipulate the procedures and infrastructures of globalisation to its own ends (Larkin 2004, 293). Legitimate film-making enterprises also thrived as a consequence of having gained access to the capital, technology, technicians and distribution networks established by the illegal industry.

Larkin also concludes that the informal infrastructures and material operation of video piracy "produces new modes of organizing sensory perception, time, space, and economic networks" (Larkin 2004, 291). These successful piracy industries enable many Nigerians to participate in global media culture. However, the films that are available to them are characterized by interference, static and noise, reflective of the substandard sound and image reproduction equipment used in their manufacture. The result is a particular aesthetic or sensory experience, which Larkin refers to as a "technological veil of semiotic distortion" (Larkin 2004, 308). This aesthetic highlights Nigeria's marginality, inferior national status and disconnection from other places - a technological 'other' - where such problems are believed not to exist. Larkin suggests that the fantasy of a technological "other" carries implicit criticism of the Nigerian government and its failure to provide as much for its citizenry (Larkin 2004, 309).

Several issues of significance to my research are raised here. First Larkin persuades us to look beyond the obvious flaws in any particular media system in order to appreciate its productive capacity. Second he presents a scenario where technological malfunction, place and the constitution of a particular subjective position, that is felt neglect, are clearly linked. Finally Larkin introduces the notion of an imagined geography of the "other place" where technology runs smoothly.

2.7.3 Michel de Certeau - everyday practices

Michel de Certeau's extensive and interdisciplinary work body of work draws together concepts from across the usually distinct fields of history; psychoanalysis; anthropology and philosophy. His two volume text *The Practice of Everyday Life* continues to influence cultural studies since translation into English in 1984 (vol. 1) and 1988 (vol. 2). Media theorist Roger Silverstone first drew attention to the potential benefits of this scholarship for television studies in early 1989. He suggested that de Certeau's approach to practice offers a useful way of thinking about the relationship between television - as an institution, as a purveyor of cultural meaning and as a technology - and its users (Silverstone 1989, 84). Since that date de Certeau's work is increasingly influential particularly in the sub-fields of audience and fan studies. de Certeau's conceptualisation of readers as the "poachers" of meaning from other peoples' texts can be readily expanded to include television users and he is often discussed in this context (for example Gorton 2009, Jenkins 1992, Morris 1990). Given the topic matter of this thesis, however, I am equally interested in de Certeau's thoughts on historiography and his treatment of space.

2.7.3.1 Hidden histories

De Certeau's historical endeavours are founded on the premise that the historian is always irretrievably removed from the object of his/her enquiry: the subject being locked into a meaning system relevant to its own era and the researcher similarly placed within the confines of the present (de Certeau 1988, 3-14). Consequently many histories of human interaction and society, unrepresented and/or uninterpreted, seemingly vanish. The challenge for the historian is to seek out these missing stories and return them to the historical record. This may seem an impossible task given the apparent disappearance of historical evidence. De Certeau however insists that the "réel", or that which escapes interpretation or representation, does return but in altered form, particularly in the realm of popular culture (de Certeau 1988).²⁷ He therefore seeks the "réel" in the myths and stories, oral exchanges and practices of ordinary people in the conduct of everyday life.

²⁷ As defined by translator Tom Conley (1988, xvii).

The second volume of *the Practices of Everyday Life* (de Certeau, Giard, and Mayol 1998) is devoted to this purpose.

2.7.3.2 Ways of operating

De Certeau also turns to popular culture to explore his long standing interest in the way social orders change from one mode of organization to another. To this end in both his historical studies and explorations of contemporary culture he purposefully seeks out instances of alterity - or otherness - that challenge the control of the powerful elite (as noted by Ahearne 1995, 191). This enterprise is evident in the *Practices of Everyday Life Volumes I and II*, the first volume of which includes a response to Foucault's account of social control through surveillance and self-discipline outlined in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1977). If, as Foucault suggests, the "grid of discipline" is everywhere and becoming increasingly more intense, which de Certeau agrees is the case, how does society avoid being "reduced" to the disciplinary grid imposed by the dominant order? What hidden techniques are brought into play in order to manipulate its mechanisms (de Certeau 1984, xiv)?

The essays included in *Practice of Everyday Life* were intended to open the way for discussions seeking to foreground the practices or "ways of operating" adopted by the weaker members of society to negotiate or manipulate the structures laid down by the dominant economic order (de Certeau 1984, xi). To this end he divides the realm of practices into two distinct, but not necessarily opposed categories: strategies and tactics. Strategic practices are implicated in the implementation of power and the organizations invested with the authority of society's dominant elite. The strategy assumes the "proper" or correct foundation for relations (de Certeau 1984, xix). In the case of television, broadcasting regulations imposed by the relevant regulatory bodies become the "proper" basis for disseminating television services. Strategies create for themselves a place, for example a house of parliament, law-court or commercial head office, from which to conduct their enterprise protected from competition or dissidence that may threaten their dominance (de Certeau 1984, xix).

Tactics comprise the innumerable acts of practice, narration and decision-making that constitute everyday living. Brought into effect within an economic and political framework and on terrain controlled by the powerful, tactics wait for the optimum moment to draw from a range of different but limited alternatives which are then used to particular advantage. "The weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them" (de Certeau 1984, xix). Tactics have no particular place or power base and herein, contends de Certeau, lay their strength. Whereas strategies may become unwieldy, constrained by the strictures of their own making, tactics are opportunity driven. They are the tricks and manipulations employed by the weaker members of a society to circumnavigate the directives of an imposed order and therefore can be considered political (de Certeau 1984, xvii). Cultural theorist Ian Buchanan (2000, 14) points out that tactics bring the local into the broader domain: "... his [de Certeau's] notion of tactics is a formalisation as it were, a raising up, of what would otherwise be merely local." Following this line of reasoning, it is critical that researchers situate the everyday practices of individual people within the broader framework of the economic order.

In a consumer society, the practices of consumption become particularly significant. De Certeau insists consumption be considered a form of production. Consumption becomes productive through the ways people make use of the products made available by the economic order. "Everyday life invents itself by poaching in countless ways on the property of others" (de Certeau 1984, xii). As Buchanan (2000, 87) notes, de Certeau does not here intend to extravagantly endow the individual with a level of agency disproportionate to their capacity to act within the social order, as is sometimes implied by his critics (see for example Frow 1992, 1991). On the contrary, individual actions, he argues, are always deeply imbedded in the fullness of social relations. It is the combination of these actions, or practices, that constitute a culture and are the basis of all procedures (de Certeau 1984, xi). The individual cannot escape the dominant order or society but they can try to "outwit" the system by attempting to re-appropriate it to their own ends (de Certeau 1984, xix). De Certeau describes this practice as "making do".

A number of examples are provided by de Certeau to illustrate the process of "making do", most notably his story about a worker in a wig-making factory. Over a period of

time this man takes unwanted scraps of material and using the facilities of the workplace and during work hours, turns them into something for a family member. This operation is given the name "la perruque".²⁸ Other examples de Certeau provides of "la perruque" in the workplace are writing love-letters in the employer's time or borrowing tools for home use. Such practices, if discovered, are often disregarded by authorities as the offence seems trifling. Collectively, however, these minor acts of disobedience that "'put[ting] one over'" on the established order on its own ground" can significantly undermine the weight of the economic order (de Certeau 1984, 26). "La perruque" then, is essentially delinquent. Delinquency, de Certeau argues, is the ordinary social consequence of people who feel they are living within a system which deprives them of autonomy through legitimate means (de Certeau 1984, 24-26). "La perruque" is just one way of "making do". Reading; shopping; cooking; walking the streets; even speaking all provide the weaker members of society with an opportunity to circumvent authority by denying or defying the "proper" usage/meaning attributed to a particular form of production, including language.

2.7.3.3 Telling stories

In de Certeau's scholarship stories - tales, legends and other forms of popular narrative that circulate through society - hold privileged position. More than being a primary repository for the "réel" and therefore of critical value to the historian, stories provide the necessary instruction for human action. Stories describe, sanction and establish the range of available practices possible within a given situation: "whereas historiography recounts in the past tense the strategies of instituted powers, the 'fabulous' stories offer their audience a repertory of tactics for future use" (de Certeau 1984, 23). Stories may be conceived of as a learning resource of what has been tried; what "works" and what does not. The discourses surrounding the "forgotten corner" can be understood in this way - as stories that provide the field for particular actions according to individual or group interpretation.

²⁸ "La perruque" translates from French to "the wig".

2.7.3.4 Making spaces

De Certeau is especially interested in the "make do's" and narratives employed by the weaker members of society to manipulate their environment, to create their own spaces within an imposed set of spatial arrangements. De Certeau conceives places as "configuration[s] of positions" with each element distributed and situated in its own "proper" location as defined by the "proper" (de Certeau 1984, 117-118). In other words, places are colonised, by civic authorities, regulatory bodies, mapmakers and the like. Therefore, there is an element of fixity about place, not by reason of any properties innately associated with a particular location but because places are strategically set aside for specific purposes by those with authority. Space, on the other hand, is understood as fluid. Drawing insight from Merleau-Ponty, de Certeau envisions space as experiential, discursive, perceptual and relational. Space is what people make of it: how they use it; talk about it and understand it to be. There are as many spaces as there are spatial experiences (de Certeau 1984, 117-118).

Stories, de Certeau (1984, 122) argues, play a critical role in the construction of space: they are "treatments of space". At one level people learn through stories how particular spaces can be used and thought of. More significantly though, stories create or eliminate space. When a story is told about a space, for example the "forgotten corner", then that space comes into being. When the story ceases to be told that space is lost. As with other forms of "making do", story-telling is potentially delinquent. The story provides both producer and audience with a point of departure from the imposed social relations attributed to a specific place (de Certeau 1984, 129).

De Certeau concludes that the dominated or weaker members of a particular society do not completely succumb to the dictates imposed upon them by the economic order, rather create a space of relative autonomy for and of themselves within its confines. This is made possible through tactical operations such as "making do" and through story-telling. He presents by way of example the story of an African immigrant to France, forced by circumstances to accept the living conditions, customs and language of a foreign land. The immigrant is able to create a space for himself wherein "a degree of plurality and creativity" is achieved by insinuating into the adopted system the stories and ways of living and being of his home land (de Certeau 1984, 30). The "forgotten

corner" can be conceived of as another such a space. Although its residents cannot and do not claim to be more dominated by the economic system than other members of Australian society it would be fair to say that at least until the mid-1970s when the area became a popular holiday and retirement destination for urban dwellers, the trappings of the capitalist venture, the conveniences, comforts and consumer items that make such domination palatable were often absent.

De Certeau's meditations on both historiography and everyday practices are invaluable in terms of pursuing the aims of this thesis. Firstly de Certeau provides theoretical justification for the use of local stories and knowledges in historical research. Secondly, his insistence that practices, no matter how seemingly individual, are always embedded within broader systems of practices, emphasises the connections that exist between the actions of individuals and concomitant socio-historical structures and systems. Finding these connections is the endeavour of historians who "write from below". Thirdly, de Certeau's understanding of culture as being composed of multiple practices allows for the blurring of boundaries between the disseminators of television services or televisions, for example legislators and retailers, and the watchers of television. All may be regarded as conducting their various activities in practiced and therefore examinable ways. Finally, de Certeau's conceptualisation of space as both practiced and narrated provides a stepping-stone from which spatial relationships within and between places may be explored.

2.8 Chapter Summary

The aim of Chapter 2 is threefold: to position the thesis within the relevant literature, provide a critical discussion of the methodological approach and outline the theoretical concepts. The following chapter, "Television must develop in an orderly manner", focuses particularly on how de Certeau's contemplations on practice can assist in the acquisition of a deeper understanding of the complex processes that underpinned the establishment of the Australian Television System and the subsequent delivery of services.

3 “TELEVISION MUST DEVELOP IN AN ORDERLY WAY”

3.1 Introduction

Many of the difficulties associated with the equitable introduction of television throughout Australia may be attributed to the technological and economic constraints involved in extending the necessary infrastructure over vast distances to relatively small and widely dispersed population groups. However, as I intend to demonstrate in this and the following chapters, policy decisions made according to the politico-cultural priorities of the 1950s and 60s also worked against the speedy dispersion of television services and thus to the disadvantage of the thirty percent of the population who lived outside of the capital cities at this time. In 1958 Sir Charles Davidson, Australia's Post Master-General (PMG) from 1956 to 1963, laid out the approved operational stratagem for distributing television throughout the nation, that is "in an orderly way."

It is important, however, that television be developed in an orderly way, decisions based on general principles rather than individual cases no matter how convincing they may be (Davidson in Commonwealth of Australia 1958, 257).

The statement was made in response to complaints from a Tasmanian Member of Parliament (MP) speaking on behalf of a male constituent. The man had invented, constructed and installed a two horsepower television transmitter/receiver from which signals were picked up from Melbourne and retransmitted to his appreciative neighbours in the town of Devonport, Tasmania. Rather than being applauded for this ingenuity, the man was fined by officers of the PMG's Department and ordered to pull the installation down. Many years were to pass before television was seen in or around Devonport again.

Here is a clear demonstration of the distinction between strategic and tactical practice as conceptualised by de Certeau. The "way of operating" envisaged by the PMG for the distribution of Australian television services was strategic. Davidson speaks with authority, on behalf of authority, from the place of authority - the House of Representatives, Parliament House, Canberra. The devised stratagem *was* in the main

"orderly", but as this and the following two chapters will demonstrate painstakingly slow, caught up in its own making. On the other hand, the unnamed Tasmanian acted tactically. He circumvented the strictures of strategic planning by devising his own means of disseminating television services, without reference to any outside authority. An opportunity - wayward signals from Melbourne - was discovered and acted upon. The punishment incurred was a consequence of a breach in the "proper" foundation for relations between television authorities and consumers.

The anecdote presented above, although singular in detail, is characteristic of the many varied and significant challenges presented to the presiding conservative Coalition government, led by Sir Robert Menzies, with the arrival of television to Australia. Not least of these was the vexing problem of determining the most effective means of dispersing services across metropolitan, regional and rural Australia whilst simultaneously ensuring that members of the public received the kind of information deemed to be in the "best" interest.²⁹ This chapter has two core components. The first section introduces to the reader a history of policy that is of especial relevance to the distribution of television across regional Australia.³⁰ The second and more substantive section discusses the "ways of operating" that informed and directed the extension of television to rural and regional Australia.

3.2 Brief historical overview of broadcasting policy in Australia

3.2.1 Legislation and regulatory bodies

The legal foundations of the television system were laid down under the 1942 Broadcasting and Television Act, which incorporated the 1932 Broadcasting Act and sections of the 1905 Wireless Telegraphy Act. The 1942 Act and its subsequent amendments establish the framework for the national public service; determine which frequency bands are to be made available for television broadcasting, define "service

²⁹ Australia covers an area of approximately 7 ½ million sq. km. It is slightly smaller than the USA not including Alaska but with less than 10% of the population (Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) 2014)

³⁰ The political machinations which encircled the introduction and early years of television in Australia have been well discussed in the literature (Curthoys 1991, 1984, Hall 1976, Davidson 1968) and will not be further addressed here.

areas", the number of licences to be allocated within each and set down controls on who is entitled to hold a licence and under what conditions.³¹ Throughout the period under investigation, the ABC operated under its own charter whereas the overall control and direction of commercial radio and television broadcasting lay with the Australian Broadcasting Control Board (ABCB).³² This statutory body determined and regulated programming, advertising and technical standards. The ABCB also investigated and made recommendations to the PMG, an elected member of parliament on the granting, renewal and transfer of commercial licences (Mackay 1957). The PMG, however, was under no obligation to follow the Board's advice and could act independently. Consequently the independence and authority of the regulatory body was significantly undermined (Kuhn 1985, Hall 1976, Davidson 1968, Mackay 1957). The PMG's Department issued licences and collected licence fees; allocated frequency bands; enforced regulatory Acts; dispersed broadcasting funds and operated transmitters for the national service (Australia. Postmaster-General's Department 1973).

3.2.2 Underpinning values and policy incentives

As important to the system as the regulatory bodies and the Acts themselves are the cultural values that drive them. One reason for stringent controls on the industry is television's perceived capacity to profoundly influence audiences (Flew 2002, 53). Given this assumption, coupled with television's apparent ubiquity in the everyday lives of much of the populace, the medium is conceived of as a powerful mediatory force by which disparate members of society may be brought together and a common sense of nationhood, civic duty and communal identity forged. According to Grant Blackley, chairperson of Free TV Australia, the industry body representing Australia's commercial free-to-air television licencees:

³¹ Australian Broadcasting Act 1948; Television Act 1953; 1956 Broadcasting and Television Act; 1960 amendments to the Act; 1964 amendments to the Act; Broadcasting Act Amendment 1981; Broadcasting Services Act 1985; BSA 1992. For a more comprehensive discussion on the topic see *Localism in Australian Broadcasting: A Review of Policy* (Australia. Department of Communications 1984).

³² The ABCB was established in 1949 and replaced in 1976 by the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal (ABT).

No other media reaches into people's lives, reflects and projects society; or connects individuals in the way free TV does. And nothing else can coin a phrase, engrave an indelible image, or provide a collective experience on the same scale (Blackley 2006, 20).

Since Federation, communications technologies and their usages have been intricately tied to notions of national development, common citizenship, cultural expression and social control (Osborne and Lewis 1995, 1). Whilst these discursive associations have remained largely intact over the decades and continue to influence policy making, there have been subtle shifts in emphasis over time. Between 1900 and World War II, for example, communications were seen as a means of bolstering the nation's economy and defence whereas by the 1950s, with the introduction of television imminent, the emphasis had transferred to the social aspects of communications technologies, the media's role in community building; cultural and national identification; cultural standards and shaping political attitudes (Osborne and Lewis 1995, 4-6).

Two long-standing policy incentives which relate closely to these themes – localism and the belief that control of the media should be in as many hands as practicable – were pivotal to the decision making processes that underpinned the extension of television services to the "country areas" (O'Regan 1988). These ideals are discussed later in this chapter. Throughout the post-war period a conversation was also occurring at all levels of government around the topic of decentralization. In the Australian context, decentralization aimed not only to relocate industry from metropolitan and urban centres to rural environments thus halting the "drift from the bush"³³ but also to strengthen the political role of local governments, thus making political authority more accessible and accountable to rural population groups (Brown 1995, 127). Decentralization was often used in argument for the rapid deployment of television services to the country. The following statement by member for Eden-Monaro, Mr Allan Fraser, is typical of this discourse.

³³ The migration of residents from small towns and villages to provincial centres is generally attributed the increased affordability of privately owned motor vehicles. It was a commonly occurring phenomenon affecting Australia rural districts in the post-war period (Davison 2005, 52). "Drift from the bush" was an expression commonly used to explain this phenomenon. It remains in currency.

The country districts are fighting hard to retain their populations. It is a particularly difficult battle to keep the younger people in the sparsely populated rural areas. The amenities and excitements of the big cities beckon to them continually and television is one of the most beguiling of attractions (Fraser in Commonwealth of Australia 1965, 2417).

3.2.3 Localism

The concept of localism is central to the Australian dual system of broadcasting, which was designed for radio and transferred to television. Localism did not emerge as a "conscious" policy until the 1950s, however the incentive is evident in policy-making and legislation from 1928 (Australia. Department of Communications 1984, 289). The Department of Communications states:

The essence of localism is that stations are licenced to cater, as far as practicable, for the particular needs and interests of the audience within their respective service areas. The policy was designed to encourage the development of local programming (whether produced or purchased by stations), local ownership or control of stations and local advertising (Australia. Department of Communications 1984, 288).

Underpinning this ideal is the belief that if stations are owned, controlled and managed by people who have a close association with the service area then the needs and interests of the "local community" are more likely to be met in terms of program content, employment opportunities and advertising. Importantly, the allocation of commercial licences according to the principle of localism is regarded as a disincentive to monopolistic practices because it decentralises the control and/or ownership of stations.

A comprehensive policy review was conducted by the Department of Communications in 1984.³⁴ The review committee found that support for localism was widespread, with community groups, local government, business associations and chambers of

³⁴ The review committee based its findings and recommendation on 831 submissions received from across geographical locations and representing a broad array of interest groups as well as a number of independently conducted studies.

commerce, local advertisers, sporting and public interest groups and individuals providing generally positive feedback. Both State and Federal parliamentarians were similarly supportive as was the broadcasting industry itself (Australia. Department of Communications 1984, 211-219). However, as the report acknowledges and this thesis will demonstrate, the implementation of this policy significantly delayed the expansion of commercial services beyond capital cities, which in turn resulted in a spatial disparity in service provision (Australia. Department of Communications 1984, 208; 265). The remaining paragraphs of this chapter illustrate how localism may at times run counter to the notion of universalism.

3.3 Extension of television services to the country areas

3.3.1 Policy in conflict - the 1953 Royal Commission on Television

The 1953 Royal Commission on Television was instigated by the Menzies-led Coalition Government to comprehensively investigate matters concerning the impending introduction of television to Australia. The Commission was authorised to inquire and make recommendations on the number of television stations, both national and commercial which could be effectively operated taking into account financial and economic considerations as well as programme availability. The Commission would also determine the spatial distribution of television services and the processes by which such facilities should be established, the conditions under which television stations should operate and programme standards. The latter included the setting of conditions which may be considered desirable in the public interest with respect to advertisements; the telecasting of political and religious matters as well as issues deemed "controversial" (National Archives of Australia 2000). Between March and November of that year 34 public meetings were held and 163 witnesses, representing 122 organisations, examined. The experience of television in Canada, Britain and the United States was also extensively explored.

In all 68 recommendations emerged from the hearings including the crucial proposals that:

- (i) the dual system of broadcasting designed for radio should be extended to television;
- (ii) television should be introduced gradually with the first licences to be allocated to Melbourne and Sydney;
- (iii) the Australian Broadcasting Control Board should have overall responsibility for the licensing of commercial stations and,
- (iv) television to be developed using VHF rather than the UHF frequencies (Commonwealth of Australia 1955, 780-784).³⁵

The difficulties posed by geography in the distribution of television services to the thirty percent of the population residing beyond metropolitan centres were quickly recognized and the matter of intense discussion. The Commission was sympathetic to arguments that television was of particular benefit to country residents:

A number of witnesses gave evidence to the effect that television would be of great importance to country interests in that it would bring to country people a variety of entertainment and cultural expression such as a city enjoys. It was put to us that television would help shape a better country life and become a most valuable means of developing country areas (Commonwealth of Australia 1955, 741).

However, the commission concluded that cost would prohibit access to television many communities, with the exception of those within close proximity to centres of "large" population: "This conclusion is as inescapable as it is socially unfortunate" (Commonwealth of Australia 1955, 741).

Supporters of the farm lobby railed against this apparently "inescapable" conclusion. One concern expressed both to the Commission and made public through media releases was that television would become an essentially urban commodity partially paid for, through taxation, by members of rural communities. Some witnesses argued that if widespread coverage could not be assured television should not be introduced at all. Mr. Howse M.P, the Liberal member for Calare, a low population density, rural electorate which covers close to a third of NSW, for example, argued that the introduction of television would involve a substantial capital outlay that may not be

³⁵ Four rounds of licence allocations were envisaged: the first, the capital cities of Melbourne and Sydney; the second, other major capital cities; the third, larger provincial and country areas and finally, country areas of low population (Australia. Department of Communications 1984, 35-38).

recovered. It was both unfair and unreasonable to expect country residents to contribute to this cost if they were not to benefit (*The Canberra Times* 23 Nov. 1954, 1; *Courier-Mail* 27 March 1953, 7) The Australian Primary Producers' Union (APPU) took a similar stance insisting it was unacceptable that money be spent on television until the "lag" remedied for rural service provision (*Hobart Mercury* 16 July 1953, 11). The National Farmers Union (NFU) recommended that the responsibility for delivering television services to the nation should go to the commercial sector, which would meet its own costs (through advertising revenue). In this the NFU found allies amongst industry players. Mr J. E. Ridley, Country Broadcasting Services Ltd chairman argued that only by making use of relay technology could country residents have access to television in a similar time-frame to city dwellers (*Courier Mail* 11 April 1953, 5).

The gradual approach for a national service favoured by the Commission and the Menzies Government further antagonized the rural sector.³⁶ Representatives argued that delays in establishing country television services were not in the interests of the development of the nation (Herd 2008, 193). Many country areas were already faced with population depletion and labour shortages as residents, particularly young people, migrated to the cities in search of greater employment and life style opportunities. Any lengthy delay in bringing television to country dwellers would exacerbate this trend.

The commission was in sympathy with the farming community concerns. To counter any unease around country residents paying for a television service they could not access, commissioners agreed that the national service would be funded by individual television receiver licences rather than through general taxation. When several potential licencees for metropolitan stations stated that they would be willing to operate "country stations in conjunction with city stations" the commission reacted favorably, recommending that this "connexion" should be encouraged (Commonwealth of Australia 1955, 741-742). The commission recommended the licensing of commercial stations within the larger country towns as soon as practicable with permission to use

³⁶ PMG Sir Charles Davidson (Commonwealth of Australia 1962, 1538) was later to explain that the decision to develop the television system in stages was to prevent the national economy from developing too rapidly as a consequence of the introduction of the new medium.

relay links from the metropolitan stations. The report went so far as to suggest that licences granted to metropolitan stations should also include a requirement that the licensee should undertake the operation of a TV service in a country area, thus furthering the diffusion of television. The potential for increased concentration of the media was accepted and appreciated as a commercial necessity.

We are in agreement with the view that some limitation on the concentration of control of television stations is necessary in the public interest. On the other hand, it is evident that, in certain directions, there may be advantages to be derived from the common ownership or control of a number of stations. For example, we envisage that the licensees of metropolitan stations may be prepared to establish and operate relay stations in districts which may not be in a position to provide the necessary financial support to justify a station operating as an independent unit. Indeed, it was put to us that it should be made a condition of any licence granted for a station to service a metropolitan area that the licensee should, within a reasonable period, be required also to undertake the operation of a station in a country district, and it is clear that in certain circumstances this would assist in furthering the extension of television to the country (Commonwealth of Australia, 751).

3.3.2 The Two Station Rule

One of the most critical recommendations stemming from the Royal Commission was to expand the dual system of broadcasting to television. In 1956, when the Australian Broadcasting Act 1942 was modified to accommodate television, an amendment was included to keep the commercial arm of the system in as many hands as possible. The amended Act prohibited any single person from owning or being in a position of either direct or indirect control of more one station in a capital city, or more than two stations across the nation (Australia. Department of Communications 1984, 38). This prescription subsequently became known as the Two Station Rule. To ensure the regulation was executed as mandated licensees were required to alert the minister prior to making "substantial" changes to shareholdings (Australia. Department of Communications 1984, 40).

Despite these deterrents by the early 1960s an oligopoly emerged as a result of complex share transfers. Whilst not strictly in breach of the existing Two Station Rule the oligopoly was in conflict with the intention of the government. Consequently, in 1965

the Act was once more amended, more concisely defining the meaning of "control of a television licence" (ABCBa 1965, 37). As the amendments were not enacted retrospectively station shareholdings purchased prior to December 1964 could be retained. Hence, the already well established media conglomerates headed by Frank Packer, Rupert Murdoch and John Fairfax retained their position of control in terms of the Australian commercial television system (Davidson 1968, 20). The revised legislation consequently had little impact on metropolitan television users. By 1973 four major consortia, the Herald Group, John Fairfax & Associated Newspapers Ltd; Mirror Newspapers & News Ltd and Australian Consolidated Press owned sixteen metropolitan stations throughout Australia and held interests in many provincial stations through subsidiaries. Of the remaining seven metropolitan stations Ansett Transport Industries Ltd owned two and had substantial interests in two others (Hauser 1974, 41). As will be highlighted in **Chapter 4** the changes had the greatest impact on the country television districts where commercial services were still absent or fledgling.

3.3.3 The country areas licence allocation process

In May 1959 PMG Davidson announced the extension of television services to the major provincial and country areas and interested parties were called upon to apply for a licence. By this date commercial television stations either had or were about to become operational in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth. The first of the hearings proved to be a test-case for those hearings which were to follow. There were two kinds of applicant for the country licences: those who wanted to establish stations independently from the metropolitan stations and those that were in association with the metropolitan stations. The former group argued that television should be "free to develop its own character and to select without inhibitions or external influence, its own programs and genuinely to interpret and express the needs and wants of its own people (Australia. Department of Communications 1984, 57). The latter group wished to establish networking arrangements with programs relayed from a metropolitan station. They argued that this was the quickest way – indeed the only way – that country residents could have the same standard of service as that on offer to city residents (Australia. Department of Communications 1984, 52-55).

The ABCB ultimately deferred to the ideals of localism, ruling that licences should be allocated to locally-based independent stations. This decision was not only based on the principle of keeping the mass media in as many hands as practical, but also on the belief "that it is desirable that the operations of stations should be controlled, in practice, by people who have some real interest in the areas concerned" (Australia. Department of Communications 1984, 64). Initially, only one commercial licence would be allotted to each station service area. For a company to hold a licence it would need to be at least fifty percent owned by members of the public within that station's service area. No major changes in shareholdings were to take place without the Minister's approval. Exclusive arrangements with a sole metropolitan station in regards to either program provision or the sale of advertising time were also disallowed. Provision was made for a second independent station to be licenced at a future date if it was demonstrated that this was desirable and economically viable. Much was made of the experience of local ownership of newspapers and radios and how this situation proved to be of extreme benefit to rural communities (Australia. Department of Communications 1984, 62-68).

This decision was a controversial one. Those applicants closely associated with the metropolitan stations, appealed to the notion of universal service provision arguing that the only way country viewers could have the same standard of service as city dwellers was via relay and networking arrangements, similar to the US model. Two licences could then be made available per country television district with each attached to one or other of the metropolitan stations. As these stations were already well established, services could be made available with minimal delay (Australia. Department of Communications 1984, 62-68). These applicants had some grounds for optimism. The 1953 Royal Commission into Television had come to precisely the same conclusion and made recommendations as such. The Board, however, remained unconvinced preferring to adhere to the principle of localism in its purest form. Griffen-Foley (2002, 95) points out that from 1946 to 1966 (the Menzies' era) most of the Postmaster-Generals came from the coalition's smaller wing, the Country Party and suggests this as a reason for the government's strict adherence to the policy of localism at this time.

3.3.4 "The mess of country television services"

The backlash that accompanied the ABCB's ruling was immediate and unrelenting. It culminated in sitting member for Melbourne and leader of the opposition, Arthur Calwell, bringing forth a censure motion in relation to the government's policy on the granting of television licences which he stated was "contrary to the best interests of the community." Particular reference was made to the "mess" of country television services. Calwell argued that the system decided upon was "the least likely to provide country viewers with a service comparable with that available in the cities" (Commonwealth of Australia 1963, 699). Not only was the decision to favour local licence applicants widely condemned but the entire process of enquiry. An insight into the frustration of some country dwellers to the rollout schedule can be gleaned from an article published in the *Australian Women's Weekly* in December 1959. The author and regular columnist on the magazine, Nan Musgrove, stated the article was written in response to a letter received from a "country woman" from "beyond Parkes" in NSW.

The article, provocatively entitled "When will the country get TV? This year, next year, sometime..." begins:

It [the letter] asked what I thought was a simple question. "Tell me when we will have TV in the country." So I picked up the phone. In 10 minutes I knew just how simple I was to think that was a simple question.... No one would say, no one would forecast (Musgrove 1959, 5).

Television authorities eventually provided an answer "of sorts". Country residents could not expect TV for at least two years. To Musgrove (1959, 5) this response was as unfathomable as it was delayed. Getting TV to the country she reckoned: "should and could be a simpler and quicker process." Indeed, Musgrove discovered through an alternate line of enquiry that broad band radio relays were at the time of writing being installed by the PMG's Department technicians between Sydney and Canberra, Sydney and Wollongong and Sydney and Newcastle.

Country viewers surrounding these cities could see a direct telecast of next year's Davis Cup while it's being played in Sydney. But they won't. The Board will still be down there in Melbourne considering, considering, considering. (Musgrove 1959, 5)

Musgrove questions the reasoning behind establishing a process as slow and cumbersome as was being witnessed and describes in detail the "machinery" set into play when on 11th May 1959 interested parties were invited to apply for licences for all thirteen designated country service areas.

Applications, readers were told, closed on the last day of September by which time forty-five applications were received. It was not until after all the applications were received that the ABCB was called upon to hold a public enquiry. The first of these enquiries, the licence for Canberra, took just over 4 weeks to be heard. Musgrove was flabbergasted to discover that no decision on the outcome of the hearing would be declared until the completion of all thirteen of the hearings – "which on their present form will take 48 weeks" (Musgrove 1959, 5). Only then would the ABCB prepare a report for the PMG, Sir Charles Davidson. According to Musgrove's source this procedure was likely to take "at a conservative estimate" at least a further 2 months. Davidson would "then have to do his considering" after which his conclusions, along with the ABCB report, would be presented to the Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers (Musgrove 1959, 5). The decision would then be made as to whether the recommendations would be accepted. The source calculated this process would take until at least Easter 1961, or nearly 18 months (Musgrove 1959, 5). It would then take at least 12 months from the date of licence issue to bring together and install the necessary infrastructure required to support a television service. This prediction proved to be surprisingly accurate. The first of the country area television stations began operations in Newcastle in March 1964.

Musgrove also questioned the ABCB's decision to allocate licences to locally-based consortia. "Country people need TV desperately" she wrote. Whereas TV was "wonderful" in the city, it would be in "the minor-miracle class" in the country particularly outside of the big towns. However rather than facilitating the fast dispersal of services, the Government appeared "determined to make it just as hard as possible"

(Musgrove 1959, 5). After carefully scrutinizing details of the Canberra inquiry Musgrove considered that the Board was swayed by the argument that locally produced "live" shows which employed Australian artists "were the way to go" and licences were granted accordingly.

As a viewer, I don't get this. I don't care whether a programme is live, filmed, Australian, or Ruritanian, as long as it is good. And I think most Australian viewers agree with me. The way the inquiry carries on about "live" shows is just silly. If I have to have one or the other I'll take my TV straight, expertly canned by the Americans and English. I don't see how country viewers could get a service comparable with the city one, unless it is relayed, because the three established city channels have bought up the world's best TV shows...
(Musgrove 1959, 5)

The consequence would be that the independent stations would only be left with a choice of programs the metropolitan stations rejected as not being "good enough to buy" (Musgrove 1959, 5).

It should be noted that the proprietor of the *Australian Women's Weekly* at the time of Musgrove's editorial commentary was Sir Frank Packer. Packer was a strong advocate for an Australian networking system along similar lines as instituted in the United States of America, that is simultaneous broadcasting of programs throughout the nation. He was also one of the group of licence applicants that argued for the granting of two licence per each regional centres, each with affiliations with a metropolitan station with programme being provided by relay services (O'Regan 1988, 132). Irrespective of this possible editorial bias, Musgrove's statements were not out of keeping with those made before parliament by a number of Members of Parliament representing both country and city electorates. For example, Mr Wheeler MP for Mitchell, the electorate covering the outer north-western suburbs of Sydney, issued the following scathing criticism of both the progress and tenor of one licence hearing:

Mr. Speaker, while the Parliament was in recess, I attended one of Australia's most remarkable shows – the television inquiry. It is running at the South Melbourne Town Hall, and, although it has hardly got into its stride, it is now in its fifteenth week. It threatens to rival, for length of run before it finishes, Melbourne's other perennial entertainment, "My Fair Lady", but I am afraid that it will never be such a good box office attraction, for I was

the only spectator on the occasion when I attended. Yet this inquiry is costing more to stage than is "My Fair Lady." I expect that the final curtain will be rung down only as a result of a process of physical exhaustion – or when the sponsors' money has run out" (Commonwealth of Australia 1960, 88).

Wheeler went on to say:

The main duty of the Government should be to make television available to country people as quickly as possible. The present procedure, I regret to say, does not do that. (Commonwealth of Australia 1960, 89).

By 1964 the Menzies government itself had recognised the drawbacks of the 1959 ruling. The PMG, now Sir Alan Hulme observed:

...it would be almost impossible for a person profitably to conduct a television station in a metropolitan area unless he had some prospective outlet for the films which he obtains from overseas. In fact a network arrangement is the only arrangement by which a television station can succeed. Different companies and different people buy the Australian rights to overseas programs and unless they can have an outlet for those programs beyond the one station which they may control, I believe they cannot compete successfully with those who have network arrangements (Commonwealth of Australia 1964, 1495-1496).

Unfortunately this recognition came too late for thousands of potential television communities scattered across regional and rural Australia.

3.4 Chapter summary and conclusions

This chapter drew on de Certeau's concepts of "strategy" and "tactic" to investigate the procedures, policies and policy incentives that set the foundations for the Australian television system. In terms of practice, the strategic and tactical should not be thought of as binary opposites and as de Certeau himself readily admits are not easily disentangled (de Certeau 1984, xv-xxiv). It is evident, however, that the practices established to facilitate the distribution of television across Australia lent strongly towards the strategic. This is particularly apparent in the planning processes around the extension of television services to the country. On the one hand, invested with the power of authority, the ABCB withstood the pressure exerted by the influential

metropolitan media moguls when allocating the country licences, favouring independent locally-based consortia. Conversely, weakened by the unwieldiness of bureaucratic process, the television hearings were extraordinarily protracted and arguably did not achieve the outcome desired, that is to "to make television available to country people as quickly as possible" (Wheeler in Commonwealth of Australia 1960, 89).

Undoubtedly, ABCB representatives acted in what they believed were in the best interests of potential television viewers outside of the nation's cities by granting station licences according to the principles of localism. Nonetheless, localism as a "way of operating" denied people living in the country a standard of television service on par with that of city residents. Chapter 4 returns the conversation to the south-eastern corner, the towns and villages of which united to form the Bega-Cooma Television District, to explore in depth the ramifications of the policies discussed above for a particular rural community.

4 THE BATTLE FOR COMMERCIAL TELEVISION SERVICES

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 indicated that the distribution of country licences was controversial.

Chapters 4 and 5 continue this theme. Though divided, the chapters tell a single story, one of hopes and disappointments, promises and promises broken, all around the topic of television as narrated across the Bega-Cooma Television District. The discussion explores the "ways of operating" employed by local residents, community leaders and their political representatives over a 36 year period in order to do what, at least according to the local press, other Australians were routinely doing, that is listening to and watching television.³⁷ As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, ABCB reports and parliamentary documents throughout the 1950s and 60s indicate that the Bega-Cooma district was by no means the only country service area to have difficulties accessing television signals. Even residents of Melbourne and Sydney could not be assured interference-free television. These chapters conceptualise television as creating a geography, in Larkin's words, of an *imagined* technologically flawless "other" where seamless television access and reception is guaranteed. In this instance that "other" was the Australian capital cities.

The battle for television was fought on two fronts: that of the service delivery, both commercial and national, and that of signal reception clarity. In the interests of narrative cohesion, particular incidents are sorted according to where they sit within these arenas. This structure suggests a very linear trajectory. However, as suggested by the dates of the numerous primary documents referred to, the issues discussed often occurred concurrently, providing passion and momentum for other categories of events. The first of these two chapters, "The battle for commercial services", discusses residents' earliest experiences of television; the formation of the Bega-Cooma Television District and local efforts to establish a commercial station within that district. Data is drawn primarily from newspapers published and circulated within the south-eastern corner and Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (Hansard). These sources demonstrate how the

³⁷ Beginning in 1957 when signals were first recorded as being received and ending in 1993 when the last of four local transmitter stations was established.

endeavour to establish the Bega-Cooma Television District was significantly hampered by strict adherence to the two-station rule and the ideal of localism coupled with an unsympathetic terrain.

4.2 The Bega-Cooma Television District

The Bega-Cooma District Television District covered approximately 25,000 square kilometres. It comprised the entire of the Far South Coast where Bega is located and a large portion of the Monaro, of which Cooma is the major provincial centre (see Figure 4.1).³⁸

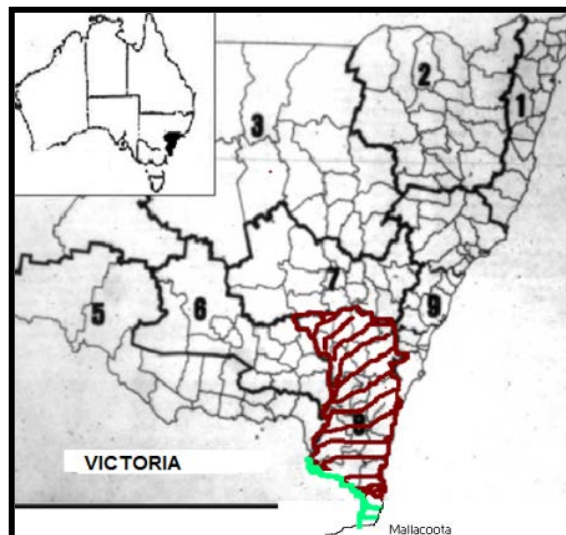


Fig.4.1. Approximate area and location of the Bega-Cooma Television District³⁹

Source: Map adapted from *BDN*. 1971. Regions of New South Wales. August 6: 3.

Cooma and Bega are separated by the Great Dividing Range. For most of the 1960s and 70s the total population of the Bega-Cooma Television District was only around 33,000 people. Cooma, the most heavily populated centre housed just over 6000 people (*BDN* 25 June 1968, 1).

³⁸ The Monaro is the name used to describe the tablelands that stretch from the Victorian border west of the Great Dividing Range through to Taralga in the north. The Bega-Cooma Television District incorporated the Monaro High Plains and the Snowy Mountains.

³⁹ The boundaries of the Country Television Districts are only loosely defined by the ABCB (Musgrove 1959, 5).

As discussed in the introductory chapter the Far South Coast and Monaro have strong settler cultural, political and economic connections. During the late 1820s Monaro pastoralists extended their holdings to the south coast of NSW. Strong family, friendship and business ties ensure this connection continues today. However, the two sub-regions differ very significantly in terms of their integration into the settler capitalist economy. Whereas the Far South Coast struggled to generate capitalist wealth for much of the 20th century the Monaro flourished (Rawson and Holtzinger 1958, 6). Since the 1830s the profitable wool industry has been central to the Monaro's economic prosperity. Monaro coffers also benefit from tourists drawn to the ski fields of the Snowy Mountains. In the late 1940s, the commencement of construction of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Project provided further flows of capital investment (Australian Government 2012).⁴⁰ An in depth analysis of the issues influencing the outcomes of the 1956 NSW State and 1958 Federal elections in the seat of Eden-Monaro was conducted by Rawson and Holtzinger in 1958. At this time the district was readying itself for television. The researchers observed that:

The South Coast of New South Wales is an area of many grievances, and alleges neglect by State and, to a lesser extent, Federal governments. This is more than the common belief in country districts that they are subordinated to the cities: the South Coast considers itself the victim of discrimination in favour not only of Sydney, but of practically all the rest of the State. No member for Eden-Monaro can afford to ignore the chronic suspicion of the Coast that it is being neglected, particularly if he himself comes from the Tableland (Rawson and Holtzinger 1958, 1).

The disparity in fortune between the Monaro and the South Coast did on occasion lead to inter-district jealousies and tensions. However, common ground for grievance could

⁴⁰ The Snowy Mountain project was devised as a means of utilizing the melting snow and rain which falls across the Snowy Mountains to firstly, to produce electricity and secondly, to provide water to the more arid farming regions across NSW and Victoria. The scheme consists of a series of dams, power stations tunnels, pipelines, aqueducts and a pumping station. The project began in 1949 and took 25 years to complete (Australian Government 2012).

often be found in respect to issues of transport and communication services. Monaro residents did not suffer transport deficiencies to the same extent as people living on the Far South Coast, largely because of high-income generating activities such as wool-growing. By the time the Bega-Cooma Television District was formed the larger Monaro towns were linked by air and rail to Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra and the condition of major arterial roads was in the main adequate. Minor roads between towns and villages and across the snow fields however were "generally poor" (Rawson and Holtzinger 1958, 6). Telephone services throughout the entire television district were also reported as sub-standard. Throughout the period of investigation articles citing instances of antiquated equipment; complaining about the inefficiencies of manual exchanges and party-lines; highlighting the need for more public telephone boxes and protesting high call-costs maintained a presence across the pages of all local newspapers, often sitting alongside demands for television.

Access to radio broadcasts was also problematic. In the late 1930s commercial stations were launched in both Bega and Cooma. A regional ABC service was established in 1949. Irrespective of source of origin, reception difficulties were a common factor. In 1952 the Federal Parliamentary Representative for Eden-Monaro, Mr Allan Fraser who was to play an active role in the setting up of television services, described "listening conditions" as "wretched" (*BDN* 29 July 1952, 5). Four years later, Mr C. J. A. Moses the General Manager of ABC was asked to investigate the quality of radio reception across the whole south-east of the NSW as residents reported that programs picked up from New Zealand were at times clearer than local transmissions (*BDN* 10 Aug. 1956, 5). In 1980 the *Imlay Magnet* (3 March 1980, 21) reported that reception clarity was still an issue in respect to the Bega commercial station.

4.3 Getting ready for television

4.3.1 Early anticipation and expectation

Despite this long history of uneven and inadequate access to communications technologies, the "switching on" of television services in Sydney in 1956 precipitated a flurry of excitement throughout the district. An unnamed *BDN* staff member visited the

ABC studio just prior to its opening. Admitting to being initially sceptical about the new medium he came away from the launch impressed. "TV is likely to become as powerful in Australian life as it has done in other countries" he declared (*BDN* 3 Aug. 1956, 7). The staffer was also given to understand that country areas could expect television within five years.⁴¹ The particular advantages of television for rural dwellers were discussed in a series of follow-up articles published in the *Bega District News* over the following month. Television, it would seem, was "wonderful value" in agricultural areas "as it allow farmers to see 'how the other fellow does it'" (*BDN* 5 Oct. 1956, 1 & 6). Conversely the Sydney public could be educated on what rurally-produced commodities were available to them and where high quality goods could be bought. This knowledge could only be of benefit to primary producers (*BDN* 3 Aug. 1956, 7). Most importantly the "exciting new form of entertainment" would undoubtedly entice "young farmers to stay on the land" rather than migrate to the cities (*BDN* 7 Aug. 1956, 2 & 7).

4.3.2 Television debuts in Bega

In February 1957, Amalgamated Wireless staged a "Meet the Electron Week" in conjunction with the Bega Show. This event marked the first public exhibition of television within the Bega-Cooma district. A "television theatrette" was set up at the southern end of the pavilion. Audiences were treated to a series of "special technical films", produced by Imperial Chemical Industries, designated of particular interest to "the man on the land". Patrons were charged a small fee to enter with all monies raised donated to the Apex swimming pool fund (*BDN* 18 Jan. 1957, 1 & 9). As an added attraction a television camera was displayed in the window of Bruce Devlin's electronic retail store in Carp St, Bega. Aspects of the agricultural show were filmed by the ABC and later aired in Sydney (*BDN* 1 March 1957, 1).

4.3.3 Scattered communities come together in the interests of television

In August 1959 representatives from four local government areas, Cooma Shire, Mumbulla Shire, Bega Municipality and Imlay Shire, formed the Bega-Cooma

⁴¹ This time-frame was later endorsed by Amalgamated Wireless executive Mr Cecil Gidley (*BDN* 7 Dec. 1956, 1).

Television Committee (BCTC) to press for the claims of Bega-Cooma when new stations were allocated (*M&V*. 9 Oct. 1959, 1). It now seems ludicrous to suggest that given the low and scattered population the district would be able to support an independent television system. Indeed by 1965, one of the schemes most fervent advocates, Allan Fraser MP, was acknowledging the folly of the enterprise.

It is obvious there are not nearly enough residents to make a separate television service practicable of profitable... it was probably a mistake in the original planning ever to set up the Bega-Cooma area as a separate region for a separate licence (Commonwealth of Australia 1965, 2417).

In 1959 when the committee was formed, however, the plan apparently seemed feasible both to the licensing body and the local community. Bega-Cooma was to become one of twelve country television districts to be considered for a commercial television licence in the fourth round of applications set to be heard in 1963. National services were to be rolled out in such a manner that a district could expect ABC access at about the same time as a commercial station became operational. Local press outlets however gave the district's potential television users good reason to hope for at least 'fringe reception' of television prior to the establishment of these services with Wollongong and Canberra commercial stations due to begin transmission in the early months of 1962.⁴²

4.4 The ups and downs of television

4.4.1 Hope from beyond the district - Wollongong and Canberra television

"TV may soon become a reality on the Far South Coast" proclaimed *The Magnet and the Voice* on the 15th February 1962 (1): WIN, Channel 4 Wollongong would commence transmission to the Illawarra and South Coast within the month. At 6.00pm on the 18th March 1962 crowds congregated in front of Bega's three electrical retail outlets to witness WIN's inaugural telecast from televisions placed in shop windows, with sound being amplified by speakers into the street. The *Bega District News* reported

⁴² The WIN and Wollongong ABC transmitters were located at Knights Hill South West of Wollongong – 780m above sea level. The CTC-7 and Canberra ABC transmitters were sited on Black Mountain in the ACT - 812m above sea level.

that "sound was remarkably good throughout the evening and the picture remained good most of the time... reports from many districts also told of good reception" (*BDN* 20 March 1962, 1).

TV REACHES BEGA AND DISTRICT
BRUCE DEVLIN First to Show

Channel 4 Coming in Perfectly
 and on AWA RADIOLA Screens!

TV IS HERE TO STAY!!

You Can Choose Your Receiver from These Lovely Models

Complete Installation with Antenna Available at £40

MONTHS OF PREPARATION BY TECHNICAL EXPERTS
 BRUCE DEVLIN and his staff at Bega have spent three months preparing the area for the new service. When this modern and popular medium of communication, education, entertainment and information was first introduced to Australia, the Bega area was first investigating the possibilities of the service being the worst. Bruce Devlin and his staff have spent three months preparing the area for the new service. When this modern and popular medium of communication, education, entertainment and information was first introduced to Australia, the Bega area was first investigating the possibilities of the service being the worst. Bruce Devlin and his staff have spent three months preparing the area for the new service. When this modern and popular medium of communication, education, entertainment and information was first introduced to Australia, the Bega area was first investigating the possibilities of the service being the worst.

AWA RADIOLA FRINGE AREA RECEIVERS
 From £156/9'; £26/8' Dep.; £4/13' Monthly

Consult Local Leader in TV
 Phone Bega 664 **BRUCE DEVLIN** CARP ST.

Fig.4.2 TV is here to stay!! Television advertisement placed by Bruce Devlin in the *Bega District News* two days after the opening of WIN 4 Wollongong.

Source: *BDN* 20 March 1962, 12.

This same scenario was repeated in Cooma three months later when CTC-7 Canberra began transmission. Readers of the *CME* were informed in advance of the station becoming operational that despite the intervening mountainous terrain: "it would not be surprising if the Canberra signals bounced into Cooma" (*CME* 4 April 1962, 1). A "small survey" of television viewers in Cooma conducted by a journalist several days after the "switch on" confirmed that reception of either WIN TV or CTC-7 was "good" to "very good" (*CME* 8 June 1962, 1). For some residents at least, television was a "reality" if only in a limited way. It soon became apparent, however, that distance and terrain foiled the hopes of the majority. Over the ensuing months, numerous complaints were received across both the Monaro and Far South Coast of ghosting; veiling; snow;

fading or intermittent signals and "dead spots" where television could not be received at all. In some instances "dead spots" covered entire towns and villages.⁴³ This story was repeated when the Wollongong and Canberra ABC stations became operational the following year (*BDN* 30 April 1963, 9).

As no appreciable improvement in services stemming from beyond the district could be anticipated, the BCTC, community groups and retailers, with the co-operation of local State and Federal parliamentary representatives, refocused their energies on procuring locally-based services. The ABCB invited interested parties to submit an application to for consideration in November 1961. If feasible, the ABCB advised, licences would be granted to local applicants. However, recognizing the particular difficulties faced by low population television districts in producing local content, stations would be allowed to relay programs from adjacent stations. In order to retain some vestiges of localism, program purchasing agreements with the metropolitan networks were not to be entered into (Australia. Department of Communications 1984, 189).

With the support of the BCTC, "a group of businessmen" predominantly from Bega and Cooma formed a consortium to trade by the name of Eastern Television and in May 1962 applied for the licence (*BDN* 25 May 1962, 1). Eastern Television promised precisely the kind of television service recommended by the ABCB and the PMG, that is, the station was to be primarily controlled and managed by people with strong 'local' affiliations and knowledge (ABCB 1963a, 4). Members began negotiations with Canberra-based commercial station, CTC7, to relay programs via a transmitter sited at Glenbog in the Brown Mountain ranges, west of Bega. Provision was to be made for some "distinctly" local content. Early field tests pointed towards the plan being technically viable and Canberra Television Ltd (CTL), proprietors of CTC-7, indicated they were prepared to provide programs at an 'equitable cost' (ABCB 1963a, 4-6).

⁴³ Ghosting refers to the state of the picture when images are overlapped by two or more paler versions of the same. Veiling describes the phenomenon whereby vertical bands of varying width and shade slowly shift across the screen.

4.4.2 Hope recedes - the first round of the commercial licence hearings

Taking all these factors into consideration the BCTC that providing Eastern Television could demonstrate it was "prepared and equipped to proceed for television" the station could be operational by the end of 1963, preceding the establishment of a national service (*BDN* 21 Aug. 1962, 1). However by March 1963, the period allotted for the hearing of the licences, the enormity of the endeavour became apparent to the applicants. A postponement until after the conclusion of the financial year was sought. In a letter read before the hearing, consortium spokesperson Mr. John Scott explained that although negotiations with CTL held promise and the company was confident of meeting the costs of buildings, equipment, staffing and programme costs: "we had no firm assessment of earning capacity and, at the present time, we still are no closer to a solution to this problem which is the crux of the whole scheme" (ABCB 1963b, 2). The company had also been unsuccessful in its bid to come to a firm arrangement with any Sydney-based advertising agencies. ABCB Chairperson Mr. R. G. Osborne agreed to hold the application over to the end of the 1963 round of hearings, giving Eastern Television time to establish with certainty whether the venture could be profitable. Unfortunately, no conclusions were reached by the end of the allocated time. The difficult decision to withdraw from procedures was made, with a request that the licence be held open so further application could be made "at a future date" (ABCB 1963b, 6).

News of Eastern Television's withdrawal from the licence hearing was a source of great disappointment for community members. Obviously, hope for a television service in the short term was quashed. There was, however, a further reason for dejection. Here was a community whose ability to draw upon itself when faced with difficult situations was a source of great pride.⁴⁴ The licence application venture had put this capacity to test - and seemingly prevailed. The outcry in Cooma was of such magnitude that the Municipal Council "bowing to public opinion" considered applying for the licence itself (*BDN* 7 June 1963, 2). Whilst undoubtedly valiant the contemplation of such action clearly demonstrates council members' naivety in regard to the costs involved in running a television station. Even the *BDN*, normally supportive of any effort to secure

⁴⁴ For discussion of this particular aspect of communal identity see **Chapter 6, Section 6.2**

a television service was scathing, claiming that the Cooma council should quickly discover why private enterprise considered the project unviable (*BDN* 9 July 1963, 1).

The matter appears to have been laid to rest when CTL explained that the costs of establishing the necessary infrastructure would be well in excess of the estimated £50,000 envisaged by the Cooma council. Tactfully suggesting that "a full appreciation of television transmission was difficult to obtain except through personal experience and knowledge", CTL invited Cooma councillors to inspect the station and have its operations explained (*BDN* 9 July 1963, 3). From this time forth members of the BCTC and station representatives engaged in close negotiations with the aim of bringing Channel 7 Canberra to viewers across the district at the nearest possible opportunity.

4.4.3 Hopes revived - CTC-7 Canberra

Bega-Cooma was not the only 'Stage 4' television district that lacked the market revenues to support an independent commercial service. The evidence presented by the various applicants across the course of the hearings convinced the ABCB that the chance of success for an independent commercial station in areas of small population was minimal (Australia. Department of Communications 1984, 73). The Broadcasting and Television Act (BTA) was consequently amended in 1963, making provision for the licensing of commercial translator stations for the relaying of programs from established stations adjacent to markets with low population numbers (Australia. Department of Communications 1984, 74). Translator stations can only retransmit signals from a "parent" station without alteration; that is no 'local content' is able to be added. In enabling the passage of this amendment both the ABCB and PMG tacitly acknowledged that localism would have to be forgone in some circumstances in the national interests of disseminating television. It should be noted that this was precisely the conclusion reached at the Royal Commission almost a decade earlier.

With official barriers apparently removed, CTL declared its preparedness to provide the people of Bega-Cooma with a relay of Canberra programs via a translator to be located at Hudson's Peak near Cooma with the company meeting all costs. When field tests confirmed that "fair to good" reception of programs relayed from Canberra could be

received across the Monaro and Far South Coast from the proposed translator site an application for an "off air" licence was lodged forthwith with the ABCB (*BDN* 15 May 1964, 5).⁴⁵ All augured well for a hasty solution to the problem of commercial television access across the Bega-Cooma district. At this point, however, the PMG unexpectedly announced the Department intended to hold a public enquiry into translators, a move that would delay the approval of any such licences for at least twelve months (*BDN* 15 May 1964, 5). Allan Fraser (MP Eden-Monaro) used both the parliament and local press to voice his infuriation at the seemingly unnecessary delay:

It [a commercial television station] can be provided without any cost to the government in labour or materials. All that is necessary is official permission, yet the Cooma Council has been informed that to obtain official approval may take at least 12 months. So unless the bureaucratic delay and dalliance is overcome, the people of this district are to suffer the loss of this amenity completely unnecessarily ... This does seem to me to be the very limit in bureaucratic delay and dalliance and shows the Government's lack of concern for country people (Commonwealth of Australia 1964, 1668-1669).

Fraser's displeasure on behalf of his constituents appears well-justified. That the required amendments to BTA were in situ prior to the call for an enquiry suggests the decision to allow translators had already been made. It is quite possible to construe the PMG's further deliberations as a strategic measure on behalf of the television authority to reiterate and reinforce its control over metropolitan station owners - with little consideration for the country residents caught up in the power-play.

As it transpired, all plans for a translator service were set aside when, in November 1964, the ABCB called once again for interested parties to submit an application for a full commercial licence for the Bega-Cooma Television District (*BDN* 27 Nov. 1964, 1). The reason for this turn-around was explained at the hearing. Relay services via translators could only be considered, the report states, once the "normal" means of service delivery through high powered stations was "absolutely ruled as impractical" on economic or other grounds (ABCB 1965b, 8). Apparently, while the BCTC and other interested parties within the Bega-Cooma district considered this proviso was met and

⁴⁵ An "off air" licence is the descriptive name for a translator licence.

demonstrated through the failure of Southern Television to find the means necessary to ensure a viable service, the regulatory body remained unconvinced. Fraser (in *BDN* 11 June 1965, 1) was further incensed when no date was set for the licence hearing by June of the following year and once again demanded an end to the dithering.

...surely no further reason can be advanced for delaying a decision which will enable a commercial television service to be provided in the Bega-Cooma area. The delays which the people of this area have suffered over the years are almost unendurable, and the repeated official communications, always announcing a further delay, have raised public fury. It is really intolerable that country people should have to go year after year without the amenity of television which city people enjoy simply by pressing a button ...

Fraser forwarded to the PMG a transcript of the broadcast in which the Mayor of Cooma, Ald. Johnson, spoke of "the fury of the citizens at the outrageous official dilly-dallying" (*CME* 11 June 1965, 1). Residents were also encouraged to express their displeasure in writing.

In the constant pressure that is seemingly necessary to overcome official inertia every expression of public opinion is valuable. I have already put before the Postmaster-General various expression of indignation at the inordinate delay, and every resolution, or letter, supporting the demand for action that arrives on my desk at Parliament House will be most welcome... We have waited far too long for television, but experience teaches that we may wait far longer unless we maintain our attack (*BDN* 11 June 1965, 1).

The PMG remained unmoved on the matter of translators. Rather, he announced, the second inquiry had been expedited and was now scheduled to begin on 31 August 1965 more than two years after the original CTL agreement was drawn up (*BDN* 30 July 1965, 1).

4.4.4 Tempers fray - the second licence hearing

Fraser's pessimism was well founded as became increasingly evident in the months preceding the second hearing. Initially three applications were received for the single licence on offer: one submitted by Television Wollongong Transmissions Limited (TWT) (WIN-4) and another by CTL (CTC-7) and a third from a Melbourne-based

consortium, Southern United Telecasters, of which little appeared to be known (*BDN* 30 July 1965, 1). This response was promising and residents were reassured about hasty the delivery of commercial television. TWT's plan was to erect a series of translators along the coast thus programs would arrive directly as shown in Wollongong. CTL on the other hand had up-graded its original proposal promising a full television service transmitted from a station located on Brown Mountain. Generally content would be relayed from Canberra. Crucially, however, as a transmitter rather than a translator was to be installed some locally produced shows and advertisements would be included in the programme format. Southern United Telecasters did not disclose their plans prior to the hearing. Journalists and editors of the local press clearly favoured the CTL proposal. The *BDN* pointed out to readers that if accepted residents would receive "a service equal to that enjoyed by viewers in Canberra, while catering also for the interests of the Bega-Cooma viewers" (*BDN* 30 July 1965, 1). The Bega and Cooma Municipalities as well as the Imlay and Mumbulla Shire Councils all of whom were represented on BCTC also publicly recommended the Canberra station bid (*BDN* 20 August 1965, 2). Demonstrating a similar lack of interest in alternate contenders, TWT's withdrawal from the application process for reasons unspecified received only limited press coverage (*M&V* 22 April 1965, 1).

The 2nd hearing opened, as scheduled, on the 31st August 1965. The ABCB immediately ruled CTL's application in breach of the recently amended ownership and control provisions of the BTA.⁴⁶ Company representatives, obviously prepared for this line of reasoning, countered, arguing that residents could only receive a "proper service" via relay transmitted from a station located within the district. Low-powered translators could not provide sufficient coverage due to the size and topography of the Bega-Cooma district. Therefore, although recognising the station's position under the new

⁴⁶ As discussed in **Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2** the amendments were not enacted retrospectively therefore station shareholdings purchased prior to December 1964 could be retained. However, as the Bega-Cooma licence hearing was scheduled to take place after that date the new provisions applied. John Fairfax Ltd, major shareholders in Canberra Television Ltd, already owned two other capital city television stations, ATN Sydney and QTQ Brisbane, and therefore could be ruled ineligible for the licence.

legislation, the company believed that "ways and means might be found whereby CTL could be permitted to provide a service to the area" (ABCB 1965b, 9). Such a request, representatives claimed, was reasonable because of the "exceptional nature" of the Bega-Cooma districts. Moreover, the Board had a responsibility to approve the plan in the interests of equity "so that residents of the subject area would receive a service equal in quality and interest to that enjoyed in Canberra" (ABCB 1965b, 9). CTL's argument was rejected by the ABCB.

This decision left Southern United Telecasters, a consortium of businessmen based in Melbourne, yet to be formed into a company, as the sole applicant for the licence. The company appeared to have no affiliations with the metropolitan networks or electronic manufactures. In accord with the Board's principle of localism, assurances were made that four of the seven proposed directorships would be assigned to community members. Unfortunately, Southern United Telecasters had very little experience with the television industry. The chair was "impressed by the sincerity" of the applicants but considered that costing estimates were unsound. Concerns were raised by the chair that the organisation would require ongoing and unspecified government assistance of "a continuing nature". Only the three proposed directors based in Melbourne promised capital subscriptions, each having pledged £375. The Board consequently had "serious doubts" as to whether the funding necessary to establish the station would be forthcoming and under the circumstances could not recommend the applicant be granted a licence (ABCB 1965b, 11). This decision left Bega-Cooma residents, once again, with no hope of a commercial television service in the foreseeable future.

4.5 The fallout

4.5.1 Confronting the enemy

Of all the impediments that stood between residents and a reliable television service none enraged the community as much as the ABCB's decision to deny CTL a licence on a legislative technicality. Anti-monopoly laws appeared to have little relevance to a district that had no television service. Moreover, as the amendments were not applicable to share-holdings acquired prior to December 1964, had the matter been addressed with more haste the galling situation would not have arisen. As Fraser was quick to point out,

four years had passed since the initial calls for licence applications (*BDN* 3 Sept. 1965, 1). A deputation comprising fifteen Bega-Cooma dignitaries was quickly formed with the intent of persuading the PMG to allow the Bega-Cooma district to be attached to Canberra for the purposes of television. Representation included members from each local government body ⁴⁷ as well as representatives from the Bega and Cooma Chambers of Commerce. The deputation is recorded as being the largest ever to be amassed from the district (*BDN* 21 September 1965, 1 & 2; *BDN* 24 September 1965, 4; *M&V* 23 Sept. 1965, 4). Fraser was called upon for assistance. He took little persuasion, being both already deeply committed to the cause and politically in opposition to the PMG. Arrangements were immediately made for the group to meet with the PMG, now Alan Hulme, for face-to-face consultation (*CME* 15 Oct. 1965, 1).

On 15th October 1965, the *BDN* published in full a letter written by Fraser explaining how the meeting played out. The deputation argued that:

Four years [from the original date of calling applications] is far too long a period for a community to suffer denial of television's reception to the satisfactory standard of reception enjoyed by metropolitan communities.

A proposal was put to the PMG whereby either CTL could be exempted from the 1965 amendments to the BTA for the purpose of supplying a commercial service to the Bega-Cooma television district, or, that Bega-Cooma could be included in the ACT solely for the purpose of television. The close and growing social and commercial connections between Canberra and the Eden-Monaro were explained in depth as was the improbability of an independent company running a successful service given the difficulties posed by the small population centres (*BDN* 15 Oct. 1965, 1). Hulme rejected both proposals but indicated that CTL could apply for permission to install translators across the district. Members of the deputation were dubious about this scheme. They expressed three concerns. First, as translator licences would need to be applied for and approved, further delays could be anticipated. Second, because translators were low powered, only the larger provincial centres were likely to gain television access. This in turn would cause social friction within the community and

⁴⁷ Cooma and Bega Municipalities; Bibbenluke; Bombala; Imlay, Mumbulla and Monaro Shire Councils.

exacerbate the already worrying problem of population movement from the district's villages to the larger townships. Finally, the television district itself would likely be split with CTL providing coverage to the Monaro and Wollongong station WIN the South Coast, which again would threaten community cohesion and was particularly problematic in terms of local interest programming. The case was argued for over an hour to no avail: "he [the PMG] could not see the problem our way ... he could not change his mind" (Roy Howard in *BDN* 15 Oct. 1965, 1).

Despite the lack of prospects the deputation unanimously agreed "to fight on" until commercial TV was available to "the whole community" by a transmitter relay as opposed selected towns via a translator system (*BDN* 19 Oct. 1965, 4). Fraser was again approached as was the state parliamentary representative Mr. S. G. Mauger (MP). Both agreed to put the matter before their respective House of Parliament.

Fraser was the first of the two parliamentarians to take action. In October, he took the argument to the House of Representatives challenging the PMG's understanding of "public interest". Hulme was urged to waive the amendments to the BTA in the case of Bega-Cooma television district and in other areas where an independent service was shown to be impractical. Such a move would allow the number of communities with access to commercial television services to be maximised. According to Fraser this would serve the public interest. The MP applauded the measures taken by government in amending the Act with a mind to stymieing the "further extension of monopoly control of commercial television" (Fraser in Commonwealth of Australia 1965, 2418-19). He then drew the House's attention to the fact that the television ownership at the time of the amendments was already "in the nature of a monopoly". As the new provisos were not to be implemented retrospectively:

The present state of affairs would unfortunately continue in the metropolitan areas ... The fact is therefore that while the amending legislation enables the control of commercial television programs seen by millions of viewers to continue to be in the hands of a very few entrepreneurs, it has the effect of shutting out about 33,000 people [in the case of Bega-Cooma] – or fewer if translators were established – from the opportunity of obtaining any commercial service whatever ... The Government's provisions under the law are intended to service the public interest. To shut these people out from any commercial service

whatever will not serve the public interest; it will be against the public interest... The inflexibility of the laws of the Medes and Persians should not apply in these enlightened twentieth century days of the Ming dynasty (Fraser in Commonwealth of Australia 1965, 2418-19).

Mauger took a different, but similarly politically astute tack when he approached as promised the NSW Legislative Assembly for assistance in November of that year. He argued that the PMG's refusal to consider the proposition put forward by key members of the Bega-Cooma community ran counter to the process of decentralisation. Both State and Federal governments listed decentralisation as a primary goal in their respective platforms.

Why, when we ask people to go to the country industry to work cannot we provide them with the entertainment on TV that their city counterparts enjoy... How are we to keep people in the country if he continues with this attitude? I wonder if the Post-master General has ever had to fill in the night hours of the winter, miles from anywhere on a lonely country station homestead, knowing full well that the people of the near city areas are sitting up enjoying their television. I wonder if he has ever stopped to think why young people want to head for the city areas. It might not seem much to him but it means a great deal, in particular, to the old people enjoying the twilight hours of their life. It brings the outside world to them and lets them enjoy being able to be a part of it (excerpt from the speech delivered by S. G. Mauger to the NSW Legislative Assembly published in the *BDN* 12 Nov. 1965, 4).

Fraser and Mauger's petitions were published by local press outlets across the entire district, potentially drawing a very extensive readership. It is interesting to note that although presenting very different arguments both politicians tapped into and linked discourses of rural neglect and the technologically flawless "other" to put forward their cases. The power of these discourses is demonstrated through Mauger's casual positioning of a "lonely country station homestead" simultaneously "miles from anywhere" and "near" to the city. In one sentence logical understandings of distance - near and far - are over-ridden. Yet the message is clear. Empathetic rather than physical distance is being referred to here. The PMG has made a decision on behalf of people with whom he has no

affinity, on a situation with which he is unfamiliar. Anyone reading the quoted speeches would surely be left without doubt that, at least in respect to television, rural dwellers were indeed the "poor and put-upon cousins" of their metropolitan counterparts.

4.5.2 Political disenchantment - the "hard-hearted" PMG

Not surprisingly, by November 1965 community feeling was high, with the PMG described variously as "hard-hearted"; "harsh and unjust"; "callous" and "lacking in concern for country people" (*BDN* 12 Nov. 1965, 4; *M&V* 4 Nov. 1965, 1). Hulme remained unmoved despite the carefully reasoned approaches advanced by various community advocates. This intractability prompted a scathing response from Douglas Hepburn, the editor of the *Magnet & Voice*: "People are most incensed by the callous action of the Minister in his total disregard for the need to supply this modern amenity to the 33,000 people in the area to be served". Hepburn petitioned "every public body" to make representation directly to the PMG on behalf of local residents (*M&V* 4 Nov. 1965, 1). The community evidently rallied and throughout the November 1965 papers reported on the pledges of support by various civic organizations. Fraser vowed once again to fight on: "I will not rest until all the people of Eden-Monaro have two television programs from which to choose" (*M&V* 25 Nov. 1965, 3). Persuaded by Mauger's argument, even the NSW Premier Sir Robert Askin, party-aligned with the presiding Federal Liberal Party, agreed to lobby both the PMG and the Prime Minister (*M&V* 11 November 1965, 1).

The controversy peaked in late December 1965. Hulme formally announced that a television licence would not be granted for the Bega-Cooma district. He reiterated that CTV-7 was ruled ineligible in accordance with the amended BTA (*CME* 24 Dec. 1965, 1; *Sydney Morning Herald (SMH)* 23 Dec. 1965, 11). Community sentiment towards Hulme at this time was described in the *BDN* as amounting to 'public fury' (*BDN* 24 Dec. 1965, 1). However, with all formal avenues of protest and negotiation having been unsuccessfully tapped there was little more to be done other than wait for the ABCB to investigate the alternate and less favoured option of providing commercial services using a series of translators.

4. 6 Chapter summary and conclusions

This chapter demonstrates the deeply growing resentment amongst community members around the centralised provision of television services. Residents from across the south-eastern corner entered the television era understanding that a new and exciting entertainment and informational medium would be available to them within five years. Nine years later, for most, television still seemed a distant dream. As indicated by Fraser M.P. and television deputation member Roy Howard (section 4.5.1), the "dilly-dallying" "red-tape" practices of the regulatory body, made little sense to the district's increasingly frustrated would-be television viewers. Indeed the strategic space produced through the legislative process appeared to be generated solely in the interests of metropolitan television viewers - who already had access to at least two television stations. A commercial service could have been made available throughout the television district under auspices of CTL had television authorities been prepared to take a more flexible approach to the country licence allocation process. The Bega-Cooma press showed scant interest in or sympathy for the high ideals of the amended Two Station Rule. Readers were, however, made well aware that their television service was forestalled because of the strategic manoeuvring and wrangling of the city-based powerful: the metropolitan television station owners and regulatory bodies operating from Parliament House, Canberra.

Given the intensity of feeling against television regulators, at least as represented by the local media, it is likely that the antagonism between the authoritative body and residents of the Bega-Cooma Television District would have reached even greater heights. However, a series of press announcements across the early months of 1966 indicating that residents had good reason to hope for both a commercial television service as well as the ABC in the short term appear to have de-escalated the situation. Rumbles of dissatisfaction over the failed licence were largely subsumed by the excitement surrounding the promised new services. Chapter 5 will take up the story at this point.

5 THE BATTLEFRONT EXPANDS – ABSN-8; CTC7 AND WIN TV

5.1 Introduction:

Chapter 4 has detailed the efforts of the BCTC and their supporters to acquire a commercial television service for district residents. **Chapter 5** sees the battlefield expand as the national station, ABSN-8, comes into operation. The chapter begins with discussion on the establishment of ABSN-8 and then returns to commercial television and the construction of promised translator stations. The role of television practices in the spatial configuration of metropolitan/rural relationships remains central to this conversation. As will become apparent, these arrangements fluctuated according to the perceived success or failure of each endeavour employed by authorities to address issues of television access across the Bega-Cooma television district.

5.2 ABSN-8 and the promise of clear reception

On January 29, 1966 the *BDN* reported that the Bega-Cooma regional ABC television station, to be known as ABSN-8, would commence transmission from Brown Mountain, located approximately 50kms north-west of Bega, by June of that year. This announcement brought "much relief" to television deprived community members (*BDN* 29 Jan. 1966, 1). The decision to extend the national station to the Bega-Cooma television district was declared five years previously by the then PMG, Mr Davidson (Commonwealth of Australia 1961, 2204-2206). So - as with all things to do with television in Bega-Cooma - this announcement was long awaited.⁴⁸ In the context of this lengthy delay, and given the continuing impasse over the matter of the CTC-7 licence, the commissioning of the new station was presented to residents as somewhat of an olive-branch. In announcing the event both the prime minister, now Harold Holt and PMG Alan Hulme were careful to convey the message that the district's television "problems" were recognised and being acted upon by government. Holt (quoted in *BDN* 15 March 1966, 1) pointedly explained that the capital outlay was "substantially higher" than for most other television districts.⁴⁹ Hulme guaranteed that the service on offer was to be "of the first class", that is on par with that available to city viewers in terms of both reception quality and content (*BDN* 15 March 1966, 1). In response to these

⁴⁸ ABSN was the 28th of 33 national stations to go to air meaning the Bega-Cooma television district was one of the last places in Australia to receive transmissions from the ABC (*BDN* 15 June 1966, 2).

⁴⁹ The total cost of ABC Brown Mountain relay station was in the vicinity of \$880,000 (*M&V* 16 June 1966, 1).

overtures, the editor of *BDN* suggests that the populace was willing to put animosity on hold.

...there is no doubt that when the Postmaster-General, Mr. A. S. Hulme, officially opens the Channel 8 transmitter his action will be received with universal enthusiasm on the Far South Coast and Monaro (*BDN* 28 June 1966, 2).

Certainly, if the news reports were to be taken at face value, the woes of both existing and potential television consumers would soon be over. Interest in the new "entertainment" medium was reported as being widespread. Bega electrical retailer Bruce Devlin, reckoned that as many as five-hundred television sets were likely to have been sold within a month of the opening, a figure regarded as being "near saturation point" for the township and surrounds – that is "one in every home" (*BDN* 7 June 1966, 4).



Fig.5.1. Advertisement: Stewart's Television Service

Caption reads: "Proof of Stewart's efficient television service is evidenced by this photograph taken in Stewart's shop window on Tuesday night. The T.V. sets – large and small – all beamed for the clear test pattern signal of ANSN 8 – the ABC's new television which begins transmissions to the Cooma-Bega area on Wednesday."

Source: *CME*, June 24 1966, 3.

By the end of May 1966, Devlin and Roy Howard, Bega's major electrical retailers, were also running multi-page 'television supplements' on a weekly basis (see for example Figure 5.1).⁵⁰ Much was made of the PMG's promise of a "first class" service.

The time is near at hand when first class television reception will be available to all residents of the Far South Coast and Southern Tablelands ... We are assured of crystal clear, mirror like reception and the snowy, distorted pictures, with which we have become familiar in recent years will quickly become a memory (*BDN* 31 May 1966, unpaginated).

Television was also promoted in the press in terms of "linking" community members to the "outside world". The following editorial comment typifies this discourse.

In every township and village in this area, in isolated and lonely farm homesteads, the lives of thousands of people will be transformed as the outside world is brought into countless living rooms by the magic of television (*BDN* 31 May 1966, unpaginated).

The advantages this connection could bring about to both the district and individuals were repeatedly stressed. Viewers, the *BDN* explained, would be both entertained and informed by well-versed discussion on "all forms of human activity" including live coverage of key sporting events, news bulletins and other matters of national and international importance (*BDN* 15 March 1966, 1). The 'magic' of television, however, extended beyond its ability to put residents of the Bega-Cooma in touch with the metropolis: television also had the potential to bring the lives of country dwellers into the lounge-rooms of their city counterparts.

...it will behove us to see that this great medium of entertainments is not merely a one way thing. We in this part of the world have a story to tell and we should be afforded the opportunity of telling it, not only to our own people but to those of the outside world ... it would be of benefit to Sydney people to see on their home screens just what goes on in this part of the world. Plenty does, as we all know. Let us endeavour to show others through this new entertainment medium (*CME* 24 June 1966, unpaginated).

⁵⁰ Howard was also the proprietor of an electrical store in Cooma.

The tone of this piece is instructive. The writer's contempt for city dwellers, or at least their ignorance of Bega-Cooma affairs, is very thinly disguised. While the benefits of developing greater understanding between the country and city dwellers are exhorted, the overall tenor of the article suggests that for this bond to be made it is: "Sydney people ... who need to know just what goes on in this part of the world". It appears that some of the antipathy felt towards the PMG, because of his apparent inability to understand country problems, may have spilled over to city television viewers more generally.

5.2.1 Disappointed yet again

ABSN-8 was officially "switched on" amidst much celebration on June 29 1966.⁵¹ At first all augured well for existing and would-be television viewers of Bega-Cooma. However such optimism as it transpired was misplaced and resentment towards the Canberra-based television authorities consequently deepened. In the months leading up to the station "switch on" test signals were reported as being picked up clearly across the district (*BDN* 17 June 1966, 3). Newspaper editors, parliamentarians, technicians from the ABC and ABCB and retailers all indicated that an excellent standard of reception should be anticipated. Two days after the initial telecast, June 29, 1966, the *BDN* reported that clear reception was "proved beyond doubt". Consequently, a "minor [purchasing] frenzy" occurred across the district (*BDN* 1 July 1966, 1).

Within a matter of days, however, a different story was beginning to emerge. On the July 5th 1966, the paper rescinded its earlier comments, stating that the clarity of reception was varying widely across different parts of the Far South Coast. Within the township of Bega itself some people were able to pick up a clear signal with an inside

⁵¹ The official ceremony was attended by a number of dignitaries, including the chairman of the ABC, Dr Darling and the PMG himself. This event was telecast nationally. A "special" programme entitled "Bega-Cooma People" was also aired on the same night. The feature included views of coastal and mountain "beauty spots" as well as footage of Bega residents carrying out typically rural occupations particularly those relating to dairy farming (*BDN* 1 July 1966, 2).

aerial only, whereas others had no reception whatsoever. This variation in the micro-geography of reception was consistent across the entire district (*BDN* 5 July 1966, 1&2). The editor of the *M&V* (14 July 1966, 1) reported that, "while many are receiving a very good to almost perfect picture many others have very mediocre reception with snow and ghosting spoiling the picture." A similar story was being told in the Cooma press (*CME* 1 Aug. 1966, 1). The cause of the problem was not immediately apparent. Initially, the ABC supervising technician, Mr Paul White, hoped reception difficulties could be remedied by adjusting receiving equipment. Retailers generally supported this optimistic view (unnamed dealer in *BDN* 5 July 1966, 1). However, by late July 1966 it was evident that because of the undulating terrain signals were being interfered with before reaching household antennas or in some instances, weakened by distance. The familiar memory of "snowy, distorted" pictures thus lingered on prompting a further round of antagonism between the populace and regulators.

The popular consensus was that more extensive testing should have been conducted prior to the station becoming operational. It seemed therefore reasonable to hold the pertinent regulatory bodies responsible for deficits in reception quality. Indeed, when it came to establishing the Bega-Cooma extension of the national station, despite the financial outlay of many years of preparation, apparently very little had been done correctly. A Cooma retailer claimed that sources from within the PMG's department attributed the "television 'blunder'" to "the wrong choice of frequencies, the wrong choice of polarisation and wrong advice on equipment." The transmitter itself, reportedly labelled by "enraged viewers" as a "white elephant", was situated on the "wrong" mountain (*CME* 2 Sept. 1966, 1). Cr. F. Clare, representing the Imlay Shire, was also in no doubt as to where to lay blame:

There must be something very wrong when the technical experts go to the trouble to spend so much money for the service that is less than 50 per cent efficient (*BDN* 23 Aug. 1966, 2).

The situation was clearly unsatisfactory. The press began to agitate. *BDN* readers were reminded of the "wonderful flow of words" from government and ABC representatives on the occasion of the station opening.

That was the night we were told we had been lifted from all the doubts and disappointments of fringe reception – life with our TV was going to be perfect. Events from the outside world were to be brought into our homes by the miracle of this new mass medium. Yes, we were to be very happy and grateful (*BDN* 23 Aug. 1966, 2).

Perhaps prompted by such rhetoric many residents wrote letters of protest to Fraser (*M&V* 14 July 1966, 1). Retailers also demanded action, complaining that sales were being impacted and an inordinate amount of time and money was being spent trying to ensure customers had at least a reasonable level of reception.⁵² Dissatisfied viewers were encouraged to fill in an interference complaint form "in the hope that the standard of reception will improve". A petition was circulated throughout the district expressing the various communities' displeasure (*M&V* 14 July 1966, 1).

5.2.2 Political agitation

Fraser brought the matter to the attention of the PMG when parliament next sat in late September 1966. He demanded that "particular regard" be paid to his electorate in regards to the reception of ANSN-8 pointing out that complaints were stemming from "every local government body in the area". These complaints, he noted, were endorsed by "reputable electrical retailers in every centre" (Fraser in Commonwealth of Australia 1966, 1253). Meanwhile, Mauger, also recommitted to the cause. He drew to the attention of Sir Robert Askin, the NSW premier, the deficits in the national service across the Monaro and Far South Coast:

⁵² It is interesting to note that by mid-August the number of television related advertisements that had substantially increased from June had almost ceased. All of the major electrical retailers returned to a generalised marketing strategy with a range of household electrical goods being promoted alongside television.

These people in my area have gone to considerable expense to buy a television sets, expecting to receive a programme that they have been awaiting for many years, which had been promised to them by the Commonwealth Government (Mauger quoted in *BDN* 6 Sept. 1966, 5).

In response the NSW premier once more demonstrated a preparedness to become involved in Commonwealth affairs. Askin assured Mauger that the concerns of the communities involved would be passed on to the PMG Hulme.

The response to the various "requests for action" put before the PMG was typically disheartening (*M&V* 11 Aug. 1966, 1). In a letter to Fraser, copies of which were forwarded to all local newspapers for publication and public scrutiny, Hulme acknowledged that reception quality in some parts of the Bega-Cooma television district was "somewhat lower than desired for good service" (*M&V* 11 Aug. 1966, 1; *BDN* 12 Aug. 1966, 1; *CME* 12 Aug. 1966, 1). Although a commitment was made to "keep the area in mind" if "practicable" measures for improvement were found in the future, he was not prepared to instigate an investigation in the short term as requested by Fraser. Residents were informed they should not expect that deficiencies in the service could be easily remedied or in some cases rectified at all. This was because of the "difficult" terrain. The Bega-Cooma district, Hulme added, was not considered by the ABCB to be of particular concern or priority as similar reception conditions applied to many parts of rural Australia (*M&V* 11 Aug. 1966, 1; *BDN* 12 Aug. 1966, 1; *CME* 12 Aug. 1966, 1). It may be that in saying this Hulme was attempting to appeal to district residents' empathy towards other rural dwellers. If so, the strategy backfired as the statement was used by the local press as further proof that the PMG was "unmoved" by the concerns of the community (*BDN* 12 Aug. 1966, 1).

5.2.3 Searching for a solution

Given the PMG's unwillingness to give Fraser any firm commitment on the matter of the district's reception shortcomings, it may have come as somewhat of a surprise when arrangements were made by the ABCB for a series of field surveys to begin within a month (*BDN* 30 Sept. 1966, 2). The investigations were conducted in two phases and took in total just under a year to complete. The report of the first phase, which involved

testing signal strength across various parts of the district, was released in early December 1967. Signal strength was found to be "as expected" given the "difficult topography". That is "adequate" in the main, although in some areas signal quality was acknowledged to be very weak or non-existent. As illustrated in Figure 5.2 "adequate coverage" included the provincial capitals of Bega and Cooma and the popular coastal tourist towns of Tathra and Merimbula.⁵³ Much of the southern region, including the township of Eden, was outside the recognised reach of broadcast signals. The few small villages and hamlets within the main coverage area are clearly not considered significant enough to warrant inclusion on the map.⁵⁴ Technicians also noted that some consumers did not have "appropriate aerials" and this factor was contributing to reception difficulties.



Fig.5.2. ABC (ABS-8) television coverage area Bega-Cooma, NSW

Source: Australian Broadcasting Corporation. 2009. *ABC Transmitter Frequencies – ABC reception advice* <http://www.abc.net.au/reception/freq> (accessed Dec. 8, 2010).

⁵³ The reality of "adequate" reception will be described by some of those who experienced it in Chapter 6. Appendix 2 of this thesis provides a recent photographic example of "adequate" reception as experienced in the township of Mallacoota after the establishment of the translator station located in the centre of town.

⁵⁴ Villages in main coverage area - Bibbenluke; Cathcart and Bemboka.

The following year a further round of testing was carried out to determine exactly what kind of aerials in terms of technical specifications, could be considered as "appropriate" given the enormous variation in reception. A number of commercially available as well as purpose-designed aerials were tested. At the end of the testing period investigators were confident that in most instances the targeted problems could be resolved with the correct and properly adjusted aerials (*BDN* 2 Dec. 1966, 17).

Rather than provide any hope of remediation, the surveys gave further rise to controversy. With respect to the first of the findings, that is the standard of reception was "as expected" given the topography, the question was asked by various public dignitaries, not unreasonably, why "first class" reception was ever promised (*BDN* 2 Dec. 1966, 17). As to the matter of incorrect aerials it transpired that ABCB investigators had not consulted with the local television retailers and installers prior to testing. This non-collaborative approach was attributed to extreme metropolitan arrogance, an insinuation that the electrical goods suppliers of the south-eastern corner did not know their business. Had "they bothered to ask", Roy Carroll explained, the ABCB technical team would have been made aware that the aerials recommended had already been thoroughly tested and problems had continued to occur (*BDN* 22 Sept. 1966, 4). In addition, the test team were only concerned with the problem of ghosting and picture/sound synchronisation. The retailers of the south-eastern corner recognised that these were just two of a variety of reception irregularities suffered by viewers. The matter was aired at the next meeting of the Bega Valley Council. Members moved that a letter be written to Munro expressing further dissatisfaction with the conduct and findings of the ABCB (*BDN* 22 Sept. 1966, 4).

Surprisingly, given the lack of concrete solutions, once the immediate hoopla surrounding the television investigations had abated all parties appear to accept that in respect to the national station the reception quality presently on offer was as good as was likely to be achieved. At least, the subject ceased to take centre place in the districts' press outlets. The matter of commercial services however remained one of contention and it is to this topic that I shall now return.

5.3 The battle for commercial television round 2: translator services

In March 1966, two months after the exciting announcement of the extension of the national service into Bega-Cooma, the PMG announced CTL was to be granted a licence for the establishment of a translator station to service Cooma and surrounds. Representatives from TWT Wollongong were engaged in discussion with the ABCB with respect to providing a similar service across the Far South Coast (9 March 1966, 1; *BDN* 11 March 1966, 1 & 3). As previously noted the provision of commercial services across the Bega-Cooma district via low-powered translators was not the preferred option of television lobbyists, principally because of fears the district would be split into two, with different towns and villages gaining access to television services at different times.⁵⁵ As it transpired the concerns put to the PMG by special deputation all came to pass. The ABCB's decision to grant CTL permission to service the Monaro and TWT the Far South Coast ended the framing of the Bega-Cooma television district as a single entity. The towns and villages around Cooma would become a part of the Canberra television service area and the Far South Coast would be incorporated into the Wollongong television service area. The delivery of services by a series of translators each of which had to be proposed and endorsed by the relevant company's directorship, applied for and approved by the ABCB and finally sited and constructed, meant that the timeliness of consumer access to a commercial station was staggered over a very lengthy period, determined by place of residence.⁵⁶

As the Monaro and Far South Coast television endeavours progressed at a very disparate pace the issues surrounding the delivery of services is discussed separately beginning with the Monaro district. However, the major focus of this section, and the remainder of the thesis, will be on the Far South Coast where problems persisted for a much longer period – indeed are yet to be fully resolved.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ See Chapter 3, section 3.4.1.

⁵⁶ The ABCB 19th Annual Report notes that the surveying and planning around the siting of translator stations was a difficult and time-consuming task requiring 'substantial technical effort of a very skilled character' (ABCB 1968, 83).

⁵⁷ With the inclusion of North Eastern Gippsland, Victoria for reasons as already discussed.

5.4 CTC-7 comes to the Monaro

The extension of services from Canberra to the Monaro under the auspices of CTL proceeded surprisingly quickly with the first of the stations, Channel 10 Cooma, coming on air in 1966 on the same day as ABSN-8. As will be recalled the ABCB disallowed CTL's bid to establish a television station based within the Bega-Cooma Television District itself.⁵⁸ Monaro residents, however, had not long to wait for more propitious tidings. Before the rejection had even been formalised CTL announced it would seek permission from the ABCB to erect a translator station to service the northern Monaro and Snowy Mountains at the earliest opportunity. Programs would arrive directly from Canberra and a "good" standard of reception was to be anticipated (*CME* 23 Feb. 1966, 1). In early March the licence was granted. The general manager of CTL, Mr G. K. Barlin, pledged "to make every effort" for the opening of the station to coincide with the inaugural telecast of the national station, a mere three months away (*CME* 9 March 1966, 1).

The company's commitment was to be put to test over the ensuing months. The translator station was to be located 30kms north of Cooma on Mt Roberts, the site itself 9500ft above sea-level. The terrain contained slopes ranging up to 35 degrees. Wind speeds of 90 miles per hour were recorded (*CME TV Feature* 24 June 1966, unpaginated).⁵⁹ These "appalling conditions" challenged the tenacity of those engaged in both the construction of the station and the establishment of an electricity supply.⁶⁰ The aerial needed to be encased in steel to protect it from ice and snow. This task was described as being particularly "arduous". In addition to the constraints of the physical environment a critical component, the Filter Plexer, failed to arrive from Italy on the anticipated date.⁶¹ The part was initially held up due to a dock strike in England. When the company tried to freight the device by air, clauses in an international air-cargo agreement between Italy and Australia impeded progress. Remarkably, in the face of

⁵⁸ See **Chapter 4, Section 4.4.4.**

⁵⁹ The unattended station on Mt Roberts was to be operated by radio from the transmitter on Black Mountain in Canberra and would be the "first completely remote controlled" station in Australia.

⁶⁰ The electricity supply had still to be connected when the station went to air in June. As a stop gap measure the translator was powered by deisel generator (*CME* 1 July 1966, 1).

⁶¹ The Filter Plexer is used to mix sound and picture waves.

such formidable challenges the station did open on time, a feat hailed by the *CME* as "a triumph" to the many people involved in the enterprise (*CME TV Feature* 24 June 1966, unpaginated; *CME* 29 June 1966, 1).

If some residents of the Monaro had dual cause for celebration on the day of June 29 1966 with both national and commercial services opening and on schedule, others had twofold reason for disappointment. As already discussed hopes of "first class" reception of the national station were for many television users misplaced. Unfortunately reception of CTC-7 translating on Channel 10 was even more precarious. Those towns and rural properties situated at the furthest extremes of the Monaro experienced the worst of the difficulties but even within Cooma itself picture quality varied widely according to both location and time of day (*CME* 1 July 1966, 1).

The response from CTL to the problem was discouraging. Barlin explained additional tests would be conducted and supplementary equipment installed at the site if needed however any improvements were predicted to be marginal (*CME* 12 Aug. 1966, 1). More positively, the company immediately sought permission to erect two additional translators on the Monaro: one to be sited near Goulburn servicing the western portion of the district and the other outside of Bombala which would boost coverage throughout the Southern Monaro. Over the next four years these two translator stations with the addition of one other, ABSN-8 sited in Cooma, became operational (see ABCB annual reports 1967; 1968; 1969 & 1970). These measures were partially successful. The overall area of television coverage was expanded to include the entire of the Monaro and in those locations within close proximity to the new translators, reception generally improved. Yet, ongoing were both pockets of non-reception and isolated instances of non-reception within places deemed to have coverage. These households had only one further avenue of hope - the commencement of satellite services. Nearly two decades however were to pass before this enterprise would come to fruition via the Australian government-funded AUSSAT service.⁶²

⁶² AUSSAT Pty Ltd was commission 1979 by the Australian Government. The first AUSSAT satellites became operational in 1985 (Smith 2010).

5.5 WIN TV comes to the Far South Coast

Providing the Far South Coast residents with access to commercial television proved considerably more complex and consequently protracted than envisaged by either the regulatory body or the company charged with the execution of the task. In fact, the length of time measured more than twenty years between the ABCB announcing that approval was given for the company to proceed and the setting up of the last of the three translators required to provide a reasonable standard of reception across the Far South Coast. To recap, in March 1966 PMG Hulme announced that commercial television would be provided to the southern sector of the Bega-Cooma Television District via translator services under licence to TWT.⁶³ Within a week of the release of this information the general-manager of the company, Mr Wilton Lean, made public plans to extend its service via a series of translators across the entire of the South Coast of NSW. The first of these, to be located on Mt Mumbulla near Bega, would provide coverage throughout the wider Bega Valley area. *BDN* readers were informed that, all going to plan, the station could become operational in just over twelve months (*BDN* 18 March 1966, 1).⁶⁴ Good news indeed for the long-suffering prospective television users of the Far South Coast. Within months however problems began to surface of both a technical and bureaucratic nature, which were to engage the energies of all interested parties, plus delay the completion of the operation for more than five years.

5.5.1 The long wait

The initial setback related to the craggy and precipitous physical topography which encircled the proposed transmitter site. On September 1966 TWT informed the Mumbulla Shire Council that progress towards the completion of propagation tests, an essential prerequisite to the licence being approved, was "almost at a standstill" because of difficulties in gaining access to the site (*BDN* 30 Sept. 1966, 1). The investigations

⁶³ Mt Mumbulla lies 8km from Bega at 2539 feet above sea level.

⁶⁴ At this time the company also committed to the establishment of a similar unit on Mt Wanderer to service the South Coast Towns of Bateman's Bay and Moruya. The translator became operational without major to-do in 1967 (*BDN* April 5 1966, 2). As this area is outside of the perimeters of this thesis the topic will not be further discussed.

were consequently to be put on hold pending the completion of a thoroughfare to be built by the NSW Forestry Commission for the purposes of logging. Slow progress on the road was made through the early months of 1967 however by May all work had ceased as an outcrop of seemingly impenetrable granite was encountered just short of the summit. After a hastily convened "special meeting" the three Far South Coast local government bodies pledged support in the form of heavy earth-moving equipment.⁶⁵ The construction began again in August and by December was a mere quarter of mile from summit (*BDN* 16 May 1967, 1 & 2; *M&V* 10 Aug. 1967, 3). Once again however the terrain intervened. Another outcrop of "big rocks" was encountered. Rather than making forward progress workers were forced to backtrack, meaning that by June the following year there was still a mile and a half of rough ground to be negotiated (*BDN* 4 June 1968, 1). By this date, however, word had come down from the PMG's department that eliminated any need for urgency. Site access, the community was informed, was but one of several constraining factors that needed to be negotiated if the Mumbulla plan was to be realized.

The most significant of these additional conditions related to the much wider issue of television access across country Australia. Such was the demand for television services from members of the Australian rural populace that ABCB technical staff and facilities were heavily committed with the investigation of different translator sites across the nation (*BDN* 24 Nov. 1967, 1). This revelation provides further evidence that the specific difficulties surrounding the establishment of television services to the Bega-Cooma district were part of the much larger predicament. Work could not proceed at Mount Mumbulla until the ABCB site investigation was complete and the board in a position to advise the company of the equipment required. The ABCB did not consider the Far South Coast a priority as there were many other communities, some of much larger population base in similar need (*BDN* 24 Nov. 1967, 1). A TWT spokesperson reported that the company was in a state of impasse and that community members should expect "lengthy delays" (*BDN* 22 Dec. 1967, 1).

Throughout the following year, 1968, a spate of disturbing news stories around the

⁶⁵ Mumbulla Shire Council, Inlay Shire and Bega Municipality.

matter were published in the *BDN*, each indicating a further postponement of commercial television. In February the PMG announced that two rounds of tests would need to be conducted – one in the summer months, the other in winter – to account for climatic variation (*BDN* 13 Feb. 1968, 1). The ABCB then decided that because of the difficulties already encountered associated with the impenetrable qualities of the terrain alternate sites should be investigated. This would involve a complete field survey of the entire South Coast, covering more than 11,000 square kilometres. If a location other than Mount Mumbulla was chosen the whole process, including establishing access to the site would begin again (*BDN* 21 June 1968, 1).

The following month the *BDN* published a very detailed explanation of the licensing process, surely aimed to provoke. Readers were informed that only once the necessary field investigations were complete and a site selected would the licence be considered. This would involve TWT formulating a proposal. The proposal would then be put formally to the ABCB. *If* the Board approved the plan, recommendations would be made and forwarded to the PMG's Department. The PMG's Department would then pass the recommendations through to the PMG who in turn would present them to cabinet. Only then would a decision would be made. This process in itself, according the *BDN*, was likely to take as a minimum six months. However, when the still to be completed propagation surveys were taken into account a wait of at least two years was predicted, meaning that services would be unlikely to begin prior to 1970 (*BDN* 9 Aug. 1968). As it happened, this estimation fell short of the mark by more than twelve months. What the paper had not foreseen was the imbroglio between TWT and the ABCB over the kind of translator that would best meet the needs of the district.

The initial stages of the long process advanced with uncharacteristic speed. The promised tests were conducted in January and July of 1968. In August the survey team's early findings were made public. However, in a foretaste of things to come Hulme warned that because of "the considerable technical issues involved" a full analysis would take some time (*M&V* 17 Oct. 1968, 3). Investigators envisaged two translators for the Far South Coast, one to be sited around Bega and the other to the south near Eden (*BDN* 9 Aug. 1968, 2). The Bega facility was scheduled to be the first to come into operation. At this juncture the press fell silent. No further reports on the matter were

published until August of the following year when *The News*⁶⁶ announced the submission to the ABCB by TWT for a formal licence application to erect a translator on Mumbulla Mountain. Critically, the PMG pledged to grant the licence providing the technical details of the proposal satisfied the Board (*The News* 8 Aug. 1969, 1). On this rider the process stalled. The company argued that horizontal polarisation would produce a better standard of reception than vertical polarisation as recommended by the Board. Ten months later Mumbulla Shire councillors were informed by a TWT spokesperson that the matter was still unresolved (*The News* 2 June 1970, 1).⁶⁷

Whereas community representatives seemingly accepted the all too familiar delays which directly related to the mountainous terrain without protest, these further instances of "bureaucratic dilly-dallying" were met with ferocity. The PMG's repeated calls for "understanding" on the grounds that the Far South Coast was "only one of a considerable number of areas of relatively small population throughout the Commonwealth" awaiting investigation prompted emotions of "disappointment and disgust" (*BDN* 25 June 1968, 1). In April 1968 an informal coalition comprised of the Bega District Chamber of Commerce and the Mumbulla, Bega Valley and Imlay councils formed with the specific objective of hastening the establishment of a commercial television service. Over the next four years the group harried Fraser, Munro and in particular the PMG, with demands for action, requests for a comprehensive timeframe, applications for progress reports and letters of complaint. In all three formal 'expressions of disappointment' in the Postmaster-Generals Department were written and forwarded to members of parliament [unspecified]. A frustrated Bega Valley councillor went so far as to suggest that:

⁶⁶ The *BDN* came under new management in 1969 and the newspaper became *The News* for a 12 month period.

⁶⁷ The polarization of broadcast signals refers to the alignment of an electric field in relation to the earth's surface. The electronic field emitted from horizontally polarised transmitters runs parallel to the earth's surface and vertically polarised transmitters, perpendicular to the earth's surface (Poole 2001). The ABSN-8 transmitter on Brown Mountain was vertically polarised. As discussed in **Section 5.2.1** of this chapter, Bega-Cooma retailers placed poor choice of polarization on their long list of technological miscalculations claimed to have undermined the efficacy of the local ABC television station. TWT technicians argued that in the case of the Mumbulla transmitter horizontal rather than vertical polarisation would result in the transmission of stronger signals.

One possible solution would be to send the Postmaster-General overseas on a long tour. We might get commercial television during his absence (Ald. Hanson quoted in *BDN* 9 Aug. 1968, 2).⁶⁸

By 1970 even TWT was coming under fire. Of particular concern was a "rumour" that the company was no longer interested in establishing the facility because of the rising cost factors (*The News* 10 Feb. 1970, 3). Community advocates were assured that the company was "anxious to proceed with the installation" but reminded that negotiations with the ABCB were still in progress. This response prompted a further round of complaints and demands for political intervention. As in the past, the efforts of community advocates did little more than goad the local journalists who from mid-1968 were presenting even positive news with a negative spin.⁶⁹ Nothing could be done it would seem to hurry the pace of the PMG, his department or the ABCB.

5.5.2 No more waiting - WIN Channel 6 goes to air

The Mumbulla translator station, to be called WIN Channel 6, finally went to air on 8th November 1971 (*BDN* 12 Nov. 1971, 1).⁷⁰ WIN Channel 6 reportedly quickly became the television station of choice amongst the majority of those who were able to receive programs. In contrast to previous experiences with television services, signals were received clearly and more widely than anticipated. Phone calls were received at the company offices in Wollongong from satisfied customers eager to voice their appreciation (*IM* 12 Nov. 1971). TWT records make note that two independent

⁶⁸ Hanson is referring to the governmental practice of sending parliamentarians to other countries to investigate how a particular endeavour is effected in that place before formulating policy on the matter for Australia. Such exercises are popularly known as 'junkets' and portrayed as a waste of tax-payers money (Alomes and Jones 2009, 8).

⁶⁹ For instance when announcing that a particular stage of the licensing process had been achieved reminding residents of the length of time taken thus far or alternatively warning that the remaining steps were unlikely to be achieved in the short-term.

⁷⁰ The installation cost in the vicinity of \$50 000. The translator was designed to automatically tune itself to the strongest available signal most likely beamed from the station's main transmitter situated on Knight's Hill near Wollongong, 250 miles to the north. However, under certain atmospheric conditions the Mt Wanderer transmitter station was also a transmission option (*The News* 2 June 1970, 1).

audience surveys conducted in the first half of 1972 both of which showed "conclusively" that "WIN-TV has captured a large majority of viewers in the area" (TWT Limited 1977). The directorship was rightfully satisfied with outcome of the Mumbulla venture. However the company's stated goal "to provide a first-class television service to blanket the entire South Coast" would not be achieved until a further translator station to service the southern end of the district could be established (*BDN* 18 March 1966, 1).

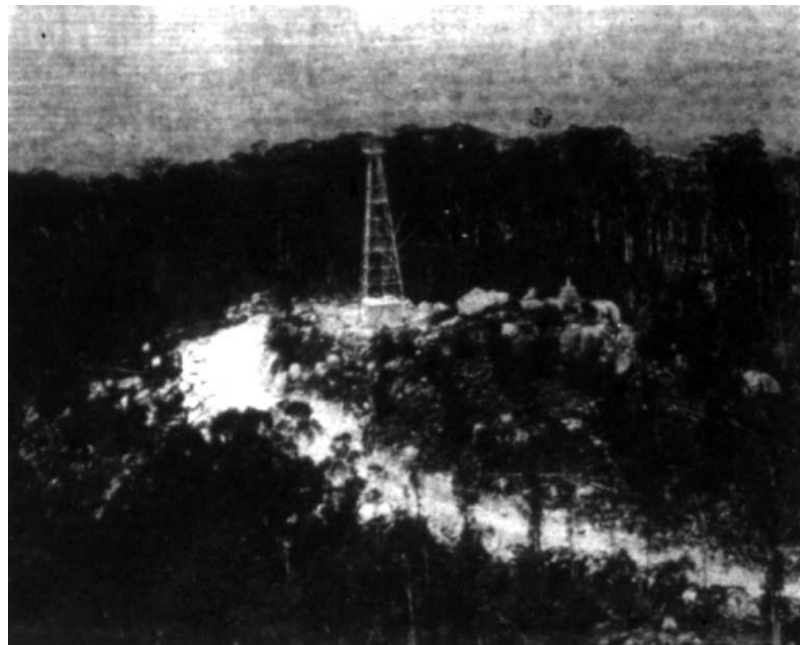


Fig.5.3. Picture of Mount Mumbulla translator station showing gradient of cutting for access road
Source: *BDN*, 20 August 1971, 1.

5. 6 Eden and beyond - WIN TV and the ABC

As mentioned those households located across the Imlay Shire in the south of the district experienced the television predicament most severely. By the end of 1971 some residents were able to pick up "fringe" reception from both the ABC and WIN6 with the assistance of expensive aerials and boosters.⁷¹ In the main though, only one or other of the two potentially available stations was receivable and often for short periods of time. Reception quality varied wildly according to weather conditions. A significant minority still had no access to either station. In December 1970, Hulme announced the approval

⁷¹ After the Mumbulla facility became operational.

of a national translator station for this southernmost locale (*The Voice* 4 Dec. 1970, 1). In the week leading up to the opening of WIN6 the PMG reaffirmed this commitment and added that provision of access to a commercial service was also on the agenda (*BDN* 1 Nov. 1971, 1). To meet this end a facility which could accommodate both services was to be established on Mount Imlay 30 kilometres south-west of Eden. Once operational "a satisfactory service to the Far South Coast from Merimbula to Mallacoota, in Victoria" was to be "expected" (*The News* 4 Dec. 1970, 13).

Given the history in relation to television services and establishment timeframes one wonders why the PMG would think it prudent to offer the people of the Imlay Shire a projected date for the delivery of services from locally-sited translators. However, in announcing the joint facility Hulme stated that the two stations would be brought into operation "about mid 1972".

...the Eden area will be similarly placed to country areas generally with access to both a national and commercial station (*The Voice* 4 Dec. 1970).

It is also somewhat surprising that editor of the *Voice*, W. B. Annabel, appears to accept the word of the PMG without challenge.

This news will be welcomed by the many residents of the Far South Coast who are experiencing difficulty in obtaining a satisfactory reception in some cases even with the addition of costly signal booster (*The Voice* 4 Dec. 1970).

As in the past, this prediction underestimated the amount of time actually required to complete the scheme, by almost four years in the case of the ABC and five for WIN Channel 3. Thus the stage was set for further disappointment and political dissatisfaction. Throughout the events described in the following paragraphs headlines such as 'Bimmil TV now July'; 'What is TV delay?'; 'Bimmil TV how long?' splashed across the front page of the Eden newspaper (*IM* 4 March 1976, 1; 15 July 1976, 1; 30 Sept. 1976, 1). Residents were described as "anxiously" awaiting the completion of the translator.

As with earlier projects, the Eden venture began promisingly. Consultation between the

ABCB and TWT appeared to be progressing steadily and the PMG confirmed his willingness to grant the company a licence once the necessary processes had been undertaken (*The Voice* 4 Dec. 1970). However, by February 1971, site access stalled works. In contrast to the Mumbulla experience, estimated budgets rather than "big rocks" inhibited progress. The costing for an access road [amount not revealed] submitted to the Commonwealth Department of Works by the Imlay Shire Council was deemed so prohibitive that the PMG's department was asked to reassess the estimate before monies would be made available (*The Voice* 25 Feb. 1970, 3). The ABCB ultimately ruled against the Mt Imlay site due to "very high costs". Bimmil Trig, a site just north of Eden was selected in its stead (ABCB 1974). Whilst this location was hailed as being more "convenient", and presumably more cost-efficient than Mt Imlay, the investigation set the project back a further three years. However, once the decision was finalised rapid progress would be made. In November 1975 Mr Bob Whan, now the federal parliamentary representative for Eden- Monaro, announced that the Bimmil translator would be operational by March 1976 (*IM* 4 Dec. 1975, 1).

Unfortunately, in an echo of both the Mumbulla and Mt Roberts' experience, both services were adversely affected by a series of unplanned events which significantly delayed operations. In respect to the national station, firstly an essential piece of equipment failed to arrive from Japan. The part then malfunctioned during a signal test and the translator was shut down while a replacement was reshipped from the supplier. At this juncture, the project became caught up in an industrial dispute involving Telecom⁷² workers which further postponed the component's reinstallation and readying of equipment for action (*IM* 30 Sept. 1976, 1). The ABC Mt Bimmil translator service finally became operational in late November 1976, nine months after the promised deadline (*IM* 18 Nov. 1976, 1). District residents at last had reason to celebrate. The "switching on" of the ABC however put the WIN venture in jeopardy. The major problem involved the positioning of the translator in relation to the ABC unit. The co-sited translator generated interference at a level so extreme that TWT engineers in consultation with Telecom staff took five months to remedy the problem (TWT Limited

⁷² Formerly the PMG's department

1977). WIN Channel 3 belatedly began operations in August 1977 (*IM* 18 Aug. 1977, 1).

The establishment of the Mt Bimmil translator services reportedly brought a marked improvement in access and reception quality of both WIN and the ABC around Eden, Pambula and Merimbula although micro-pockets of very poor or no signal pickup still exist throughout the predicted range. Neither station was as well-received as had been anticipated - or at least hoped for - in the Victorian township of Mallacoota. Despite the establishment of a translator in central Mallacoota in 1991, access to terrestrial free-to-air television remains precarious (see Appendix 2).

5.7 Chapter summary and conclusions

Chapter 5 has witnessed the television deputation's worst fears come to pass. Firstly, the television district was divided into two distinct and separate entities with the Cooma sector, through television programming, strengthening affiliation with Canberra and the Bega sector with Wollongong. Secondly, television services were established across the district at a disparate rate meaning the notion of "having" and "not having" television became a marker of population within the district itself. Finally, the low-powered translator stations that were ultimately established failed to transmit signals of sufficient strength to provide reliable, watchable television to a vast number of the district's households.

Had the "snowy, distorted pictures" of the past "become a memory" as promised by the PMG, so too may have the idea of a "technologically flawless other" and the connotations this discourse propagates of neglect by government and second-rate citizenship. However this was not to be. Indeed, I have yet to speak to any Far South Coast resident who did not experience significant difficulties with signal pick-up throughout the 1960s and 70s. Consequently, the introduction of television to the fieldsite gave existing cultural geographies of exclusion and difference further dimension.

Chapters 4 and 5 in combination also highlight the complexity of the idea of practice as comprised of strategies and tactics. It is difficult to know how much of the petitioning around television was driven from below, the tactical responses of disillusioned individuals entreating their political representative to act on their behalf, and how much was attached to a strategic response of party representative to the political priorities of the era. Interestingly, newspaper commentaries or calls for action often proceeded parliamentary debates. The extent to which residents took part in the fore-mentioned campaigns is also not knowable so many years after the event. Television retailer, Kevin Tetley (2009) recalls lobbying as being "an ongoing thing. I think it was always a subject that was being pushed." Two other project contributors, both children at the time most of the discussed events occurred, recalled their fathers actively lobbying politicians or using radio talkback programs to air their frustration over television services.⁷³ However the majority of the interviewees were not involved and could not clearly recall family members taking part in any kind of protest. As explored in the next chapter, residents of the Far South Coast were more likely to take matters in own hands and "make do" the best way they could. Interestingly, though, many participants were quick to identify the "good" and "bad" television areas both past and present in their own townships and surrounds, indicating that reception issues were and remain a topic of community conversation.

⁷³ Diane Martin and Kevin Smith.

Kevin Smith, interviewed by author, Lochiel, NSW, 27th May 2009.

6 TELEVISION AND THE PRACTICES OF SMALL TOWN LIVING

6.1 Introduction

As the previous chapters reveal, the formal institutionalisation of television services for the south-eastern corner of Australia was an arduous process which spanned decades. Documentary evidence, however, shows that television was being watched across the period of establishment. From 1956 onwards some television signals did make their way into, or in broadcasting terminology "penetrate", the south-eastern corner of Australia. The initially very limited access to signals slowly expanded and improved as new transmitter stations became operational. Unfortunately for many, these new services did not bring the improvements anticipated. Signals, although stronger, bounced off mountains, darted along ridges and hid amongst rocky outcrops. Weakened by distance and consequently highly susceptible to atmospheric conditions, these signals presented images that were at best marred by heavy snow, were frequently distorted and regularly "dropped out" or disappeared completely. On occasions sound and image were picked up from different transmitters, frustrating viewers by providing a taste of two programs that could have been enjoyed if residents lived elsewhere, but were unwatchable within their own television-viewing environment.

Chapter 6 draws from the stories of television related by residents who experienced television throughout the 1950s, 60s and 70s. The thoughts of Larkin and de Certeau aid interpretation of these stories. De Certeau's strongly urges recognition of stories, the popular narratives that circulate throughout a society, in both historical and contemporaneous forms of social enquiry. "Living is narrativizing" he says (de Certeau 1984, 124). Stories, according to de Certeau, provide the instruction and sanction the practices of daily living.

The story's first function is to authorize, or more exactly to *found*... This founding is precisely the primary role of the story. It opens a legitimate *theater* (sic) for practical *actions* (de Certeau 1984, 123 & 125).

This ability to respond tactically to the dictates of the powerful is necessary for survival in a "colonised world" (1984, xix). Rural Australia could be considered twice "colonised": firstly, as with other Australians, by consumer society and secondly, by the need to meet the needs of the majority - those who live in the metropolis - within that regime. In the following paragraphs the engineering feats; household "tricks" and other forms of "making-do" employed by local television users and suppliers to overcome problems of access and reception quality are discussed. The emotional/affective responses of residents to television as a place was forged for the new medium within the many small communities that comprised the district are also considered. Finally, the chapter reveals how the construction of the south-eastern corner of Australia as "being forgotten" has been reinforced through the practices and discourses that developed around television usage.

6.2 A brief history of telling stories and making do across the south-eastern corner of Australia

The passing on of information by word of mouth has a long tradition within the communities of the south-eastern corner of Australia. Throughout the latter decades of the 19th century and into the 1930s the men-folk of Bega would congregate once a week on the verandah of Rixon's Auction House to discuss everything from farming to politics while awaiting the arrival of the mail.⁷⁴ This oral tradition remains. Project participant Diane Martin explained that Merimbula residents like to meet outside the newsagent on Wednesdays, the day the weekly local newspaper goes on sale, to discuss what pieces of news "which we already knew" are included, omitted or misrepresented (Martin 2009). Similarly, when Mallacoota residents were offered a house-to-house mail service around 2007 the townsfolk opted to retain the status quo, continuing to collect mail from boxes at the Post Office, as this practice provided an opportunity to "catch up" with friends and neighbours (Connor 2009; Bruce 2009).⁷⁵

⁷⁴ This practice is referred to in a poem written by deceased Bega resident Kate O'Conner (1926) entitled 'Meditation on Rixon's Verandah'. It is also a matter of local knowledge.

⁷⁵ Laurie Connor, interviewed by author, Mallacoota, Vic, 13 November 2009; Dot Bruce, interviewed by author, Mallacoota, Vic, 12 November 2009.

The residents of the small communities scattered across the fieldsite are also well accustomed to the tactical operations of "making do". Kevin Tetley, local photographer and television retailer, now retired, explained to me that because of the physical and political isolation of the district, the ability to "do-it-yourself" has been essential for the maintenance of households and communities.

It made the people living here very self-sufficient and very proactive as to doing what they could for their own lives. Because it was an accepted fact that they were in this isolated and forgotten corner (Tetley 2009).

Tetley then gave many examples of what people had "done for themselves" to sustain their communities. According to Tetley, the Brown Mountain hydro-electric system was designed and built by locals with many parts constructed or modified on site.⁷⁶ Similarly, the Old Bega Hospital was a "local effort". Community members "got it [the hospital] up and running" and once established donated fruit and vegetables to feed the patients.

All of this is an indication of how people coped with isolation...The story of almost everything around here. Today everything has to be generated from government - but no - it didn't happen that way. In earlier times people didn't make demands like that. They would say 'we need a hospital in Bega. What can be done about getting one *ourselves*' (Tetley 2009).

This "do-it-yourself" attitude came into play when stories of television being watched in other parts of the nation began to circulate across the south-eastern corner. Many residents were prepared and willing to apply ways of operating developed and honed

⁷⁶ The Brown Mountain Hydro-electric scheme became operational in 1943. During the official opening ceremony Mr Jack Beale (MP for South Coast, NSW) acknowledged the role of the community in bringing the scheme to fruition.

They [the virile people of the Far South Coast, with the blood of pioneers flowing in their veins] did not wait for a benevolent government to make a handout. They acted and thus made possible the electrification of the valley 20 years sooner than if they had waited for the Snowy (Beale quoted in *BDN* 15 May 2003).

On the same occasion Cr A. T. Cochrane, chairman of the Bega Valley Country Council, described the system as being built "under a spirit of sacrifice while our sons were at war and by men well over military age and practically by hand" (Cochrane in *BDN* 15 May 2003).

through the necessities of living in localities distant from centres of governance to make TV a feature of their own lives.

6.3 Capturing a signal

6.3.1 The innovative imperative

Irrespective of the region's long history of poor access to communications technologies, residents were initially optimistic about television access. Hope was underpinned by media framing of television overcoming physical barriers. For example, one local newspaper reported that "a TV picture will travel long distances over water." According to the paper this "fact" was "widely recognised" (*M&V* 9 Oct. 1958, 1). Indeed, despite the unsympathetic terrain some signals did arrive from as far away as Sydney. From 1956 onwards a small but dedicated number of broadcasting enthusiasts sought to catch them. These early television users were without exception technologically and mechanically competent, persistent and above all innovative. "You had to be," explains Diane Martin (2009) "because you couldn't pick up TV in the normal way".

Tetley recalls the efforts of a Tathra resident who altered a World War II cathode radar monitor to receive television. The conversion was successful. However while the rest of the nation was watching programs in black and white, this man and his family were treated to varying shades of green. Another of Tetley's associates experimented with a rhombic aerial, which he positioned on Dr George Mountain near the inland town of Bega. The aerial covered an area of approximately a quarter of a hectare and was comprised of copper wire strung around saplings two to three metres above ground level. "I wouldn't say it was a howling success - but it worked" (Tetley 2009).

Vivian (Viv) Smith, Pambula radio technician and mechanic, was similarly inventive in his efforts to capture a signal. Smith worked mainly on his own, constructing aerials, boosters, instruments for testing, and anything else required for the task. One particular aerial he devised was made out of push-bike wheels with a booster system put together out of radio parts packed into a golden syrup tin (Figure 6.1). The aerial wire ran through this device with one end being attached to the bicycle wheel aerial and the other to the television set. The aerial system was set atop a 15 metre telescopic galvanised

iron mast constructed in sections. The structure could be raised or lowered according to the fluctuations of the signals (Smith, K. 2009).

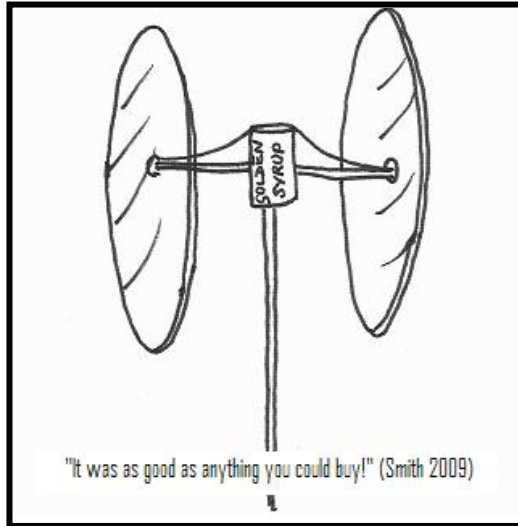


Fig.6.1. Pushbike wheel aerial

Sketch reproduced by kind permission of Ken Smith

For these early television users the entertainment value of television lay in the thrill associated with the chase. Interviewees spoke of “chasing” or “capturing signals”; “playing with”; “mucking around with” or “dabbling in television”. Decipherable images and sounds were certainly hoped for but any signal pickup qualified as success. Ken Smith described his father’s viewing habits:

He [Viv Smith] would watch it day and night. I’ve seen him with a TV, I think the test pattern would come on at 10.00 o’clock, that was just lines and everything, and he’d watch that all day, just adjusting the set (Smith, K. 2009).

According to Tetley, despite many hours spent chasing signals with friends:

I did not know or appreciate what programming was about. What did you see on this magical box? Was it news? Was it a movie? (Tetley 2009)

The puzzle was not solved until Tetley visited relatives in Sydney, saw a night’s broadcasting and realized:

This is what TV is. This is its function (Tetley 2009).

On the ground then, the consumer battle for a working television service did not begin in earnest until February 1962 when both local newspapers announced the imminent introduction of television services, courtesy of WIN Channel 4 Wollongong. As discussed in **Chapter 4** (section 4.4.1) the papers also predicted that most households across the Far South Coast would be able to receive signals. This was an optimistic call given that the transmitter was located at Knights Hill, over 350 kilometres to the north of Bega and well out of the accepted range for reasonable reception of signals.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, a flurry of television purchases ensued (*BDN*, 20 March 1962, 1).⁷⁸ It soon became apparent that the districts' residents were once again to be thwarted by distance and terrain. Despite "a lot of fiddling and experimenting" for many "decent reception" was not achieved (Tetley 2009).

The district's residents responded to the various and varying television reception problems with a range of tactical, or "do-it-yourself" style, problem solving initiatives. Aerials were commonly mounted on owner designed and constructed towers measuring 30 metres and more (see for example Figure 6.2). Merimbula resident Jim McGrath recalls driving into Bega and seeing aerials "going up into the sky – everywhere" (McGrath 2009). An assortment of "household tricks" were also developed and tapped into as required. These included turning the television off and on; switching stations; changing the set's position within the room; adjusting the aerial and covering the screen with blue cellophane or fly-wire to help to ameliorate the effects of snowing. One unfortunate resident chopped down a tree assuming it was partially blocking reception only to discover that in actuality the dense foliage acted as a reflector, redirecting the signal to the house aerial. All image and sound were subsequently lost (Pheeney 2009).⁷⁹

⁷⁷ The WIN transmitter was designed to give coverage from Sydney to Batemans Bay and west beyond Goulburn (*BDN* 20 March 1962, 1).

⁷⁸ Tetley (2009) recalls being commissioned by the *Bega District News* to photograph a semi-trailer laden with televisions destined for Roy Howard and Company electrical store around this time.

⁷⁹ Léone Pheeney, interview with author, Mallacoota Vic, 12 November, 2009.

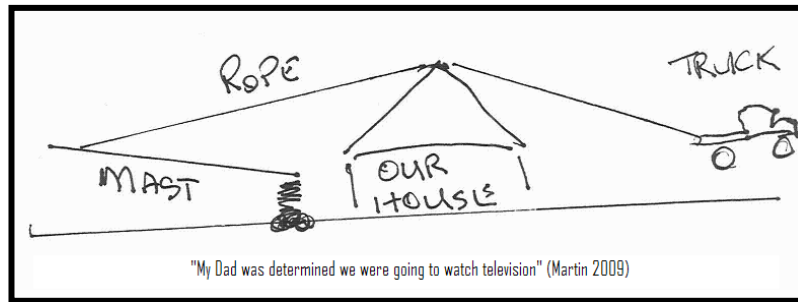


Fig.6.2. Erecting an aerial: Jack Martin "captures" a signal.

The tower erected by Jack Martin comprised of three sections each sliding inside the other. When fully extended the mast reached a height of "100 ft." (30 metres) (Martin 2009).

Sketch reproduced by kind permission of Geoffrey Burke (brother of Diane Martin)

6.3.2 The tactics of making a sale

Selling televisions under these circumstances was extremely difficult. Initially, most televisions on the south-eastern corner were purchased through a second-hand dealership running out of Tathra. Used sets were purchased in Sydney and then sold on, with installation fees incorporated into the cost (Tetley 2009). However, as the 1960s progressed and the demand for televisions grew the district's three major electrical outlets: Armstrong and Evans in Eden; Bruce Devlin, Bega and Roy Howard and Company also of Bega took over the market. Strong competition quickly developed. As relations were amicable enough for the rival dealers to set prices, success lay in reaching prospective clientele and securing a sale ahead of the competition (Armstrong 2009). To this end Roy Howard approached Jack Hobbs, proprietor of the general store in Bemboka, just prior to the opening of the Brown Mountain translator station in 1966. Hobbs was asked to introduce Howard to local community members, so the subject of television could be broached. A great number of sets were sold through this association. By way of thanks Howard gave Hobbs a television set, his first. Hobbs believes that both Devlin and Armstrong made similar arrangements with storekeepers in other small communities (Hobbs 2009).⁸⁰

The supply of televisions to the potentially lucrative outlying properties posed particular difficulties as farmers did not routinely visit the country towns where the retailers were

⁸⁰ Jack Hobbs, interviewed by author, Candelo, NSW, 14 November 2009.

located (Armstrong 2009, McGrath, P 2009)⁸¹. All three businesses employed staff to travel across the district offering personalised television demonstrations. Mobile test units were devised and constructed for this purpose. These units consisted of a telescopic aerial mounted on a trailer that was towed around the house-yard and adjoining paddocks. Sam Alcock who worked on different occasions for both Roy Howard and Bruce Devlin installing televisions described the process:

The masts used to go up 60ft. The picture quality would be noted as the mast was raised.

Sometimes you only had to go 10 feet, or 12 feet or 25 feet or whatever and if you went above that or below that then no picture (Alcock 2009).⁸²

The procedure would often take four or five hours, including time out for travelling and “a cup of tea” (Alcock 2009).

Often the reception was better on higher ground and a signal could be received by erecting a lofty tower on an elevated site. However this was not always the case. Eden-based electrical goods retailer, Alwyn Armstrong, vividly recalls laying aerials along the ground or directing them into the sides of mountains. The trick, he explained, was to “capture” the signals as they travelled along the mountain ridges and contours. On one occasion he recalls hiding an aerial behind a large boulder because the signal was fracturing, then amplifying as it bounced between the faces of rocks, jumbling the received image. Despite Armstrong’s best efforts, a clear picture was rarely obtained. Ultimately, he explained, it was up to individual residents to determine whether the standard of reception available was good enough to warrant the purchase of a television set (Armstrong 2009).

6.3.3 "People don't seem to realize they need permission"

Not all of the operations employed by television users and installers to improve reception met with the approval of authorities. De Certeau (1984, xix) argues that the tactics of “making do” focus on what works as opposed to that which is approved or

⁸¹ Philip McGrath, interviewed by author, Eden, NSW, 27 May 2009.

⁸² Sam Alcock, interviewed by author, Candelo, NSW, 14 November 2009.

recommended by authority. Many of the makeshift television aerials proudly displayed on the properties or roof-tops of designer/builder householders were of such lofty proportions that in August 1961 all local councils were forced to introduce height restrictions in the interests of public safety (*M&V* Aug. 31 1961, 3). Martin recalls her father, Jack, receiving a letter from the Department of Aviation demanding his television aerial be lowered as it “posed a risk to low-flying aeroplanes.” Jack Martin was “very embarrassed” and promptly removed an entire section of the tower (Martin 2009). Not all residents were so quick to follow instruction. In June 1962 under the banner of “Shire Difficulties in Television” the *BDN* reported that television aerials of immense height were still being erected drawing the ire of councillors: “People don’t seem to realize they need permission” (*BDN* 26 June 1962, 1).

The establishment of communal aerials by television installers presented similar concerns.⁸³ Communal aerials were permitted under standing television legislation but only by permission of the regulatory body on payment of a substantial fee. Several of these units were built in the southern part of the television region without the knowledge of the television authorities, at least at the federal level (name of interviewee withheld). Given the height of these structures it seems very unlikely that locally-based representatives of the PMG’s department could remain unaware of their presence.

A similar story of civil disobedience is told about satellite Pay TV services which arrived in the district in the late 1990s. Although outside the general time frame of this thesis this story has been included because Pay TV provided a significant number of residents with their first opportunity to watch television in their own home.⁸⁴ According to one participant the production and distribution of counterfeit smart cards in the formative years of the service, was rife.⁸⁵ These cards allowed consumers to access

⁸³ A communal aerial system comprises multiple television receivers and a single “master” aerial. The receivers are connected to the antenna via cable. Communal aerials are sometimes used in places where access to television signals is uneven. The “master” aerial is sited where signals are best received and “hooked on to” by householders in the vicinity with less favourable signal access (as explained by interviewee).

⁸⁴ Particularly in the district’s most southerly villages and towns.

⁸⁵ Smart cards - decoder cards used to decrypt the signal.

services without payment to the service provider and consequently were much sought after. The forgeries were the work of non-aligned, technologically savvy individuals and were made in homes or workshops across many parts of Australia, including the south-eastern corner.

In the era of counterfeit Pay TV Smart Cards, a word would go around town that the men were in town and you'd go behind the pub to see if you could get one of these cards. You had to be quick and have cash in your hands... there was a thriving market in dodging these cards at one stage. Then Optus and the police started cracking down rather heavily on that so they tended to disappear. It was not the place to be while you were in that business (name withheld).

The practice of counterfeiting smart cards serves as a useful device for considering the relative strengths and weaknesses of strategies and tactics. To continue the story, the legitimate service provider, Optus, did eventually overcome the copying issue by developing a Smart Card that could not be forged. However, if the counterfeiting was as widespread as described by the participant, by the time the problem was recognised and the necessary corrective systems put into place, a great amount of potential revenue must have been lost. Thus, for a short time at least, the quick thinking and actions of consumers, that is both the makers and purchasers of the illegal cards, out-manoeuvred the strategic operations of corporate power.

6.3.4 Coming together to watch television

For those unable to receive television in their own place of residence, watching in an alternate location became the only option. Communal television viewing was a popular activity for many people throughout the 1960s, 70s and, in some locales where reception problems were particularly difficult to resolve, into the 1990s. All interviewees enthusiastically shared their memories of watching television in the company of friends and neighbours. Diane Martin's family owned the only television in Merimbula for many years. She recalls having up to thirty people crammed into their small lounge-room. The adults would sit on the chairs and the children sprawled on the floor in front of them.

We felt like we were about 6ft tall. We literally had everyone come to the house and share our television with us. But the amazing thing was that mostly you could hardly see anything because it was so snowy, or you'd be half way through a movie and it would drop out. It would just be snow. So everyone would just sit round having cuppas or wine – or beer it was in those days (Martin 2009).

The experience is likened by Martin to that of cinema-going in the Merimbula Town Hall in the early 1960s, “only the picture quality [at the cinema] was better” (Martin 2009). Both activities, she remembers, were first and foremost social events, the highlight of which was the exchange of news, and gossip, before, during and after programs.

Communal viewings did not always occur in lounge-rooms. Candelo/Tantawangelo resident Sam Alcock was born and spent his childhood years in Candelo in the Bega Valley but moved to Sydney in the mid-1950s to train in electronics. While in Sydney he "discovered" television. Alcock was immediately captivated, not by the programs but by the technological advancements that made television viewing possible.

Wow! It was magic - it was unreal! Pictures, *pictures* through the air! Unreal! Blew everyone away! (Alcock 2009)

In the early 1960s Alcock returned to Candelo and was keen to share his experience of working television with others. He immediately went in search of a location where a watchable television signal could be received. Just such a locale was soon discovered atop Numbugga Peak, a mountain close to his residence.

I used to hook a little car trailer on the back of the Volkswagen, and a 240 volt generator, a black and white 17inch telly and an extension lead and an aerial. Sometimes 10 or 12 kids in the trailer and the car full. We'd pick a programme, John Wayne or whatever, and away we'd go. And it was steep and the wheels skidding and that sort of thing. We used to go up there, put an aerial up and watch Channel 9 or the ABC from Sydney ... You had to have an extension lead because the generator made a noise to generate the power so it would be 20 yards away. So you'd lug it down there and running the lead out. Someone would be putting the aerial up. Kids would be racing around and tripping over the lead (Alcock 2009).

It is worth noting that Alcock was a young man when these events occurred, just back from the city. In his own words, he was keen to “show off” his technological competency to his friends, “kids” of similar age. His story contains all the elements of

adventure. The journey up the mountain was perilous, the task – picking up a signal – difficult and the outcome of the quest – watchable television – uncertain.

For Mallacoota resident Valerie York television viewing was also somewhat of an escapade.⁸⁶ York first saw television at the Mallacoota Hotel where a set was installed in the lounge.⁸⁷ Up to a dozen local teenagers and children would regularly congregate just prior to 6:00pm on weeknights to watch *Dr Who*.⁸⁸ At the time, there were two other television sets in Mallacoota. If the signal failed mid-show the youngsters would hop on their bikes and throw themselves on the hospitality of one of the other television owners in the township. York vividly recalls riding through the streets of Mallacoota with friends, imaginations stimulated by what had been seen and heard on *Dr Who*, “scared” by what potentially lurked in the dark (York 2009).⁸⁹

Communal television viewing remained a popular past time throughout the 1960s and 70s. However, across the group there was broad agreement that these coming-togethers, whilst ostensibly about watching television, were primarily an occasion to socialize, the more so because the haphazardness of image and sound quality worked against any serious attempt to follow a program.

6.4 Affective responses to television

6.4.1 Ambivalence

Whilst the early television experimenters celebrated any degree of signal pick-up, those who began watching after television officially arrived in the district with the opening of

⁸⁶ Valerie York, telephone interview with author, Mallacoota, Vic, 11 November 2009.

⁸⁷ Proprietors John and Peggy Rudge (2009) bought the television in the late 1960s primarily to provide entertainment to hotel guests, although local residents were also welcome. At the time there was only one other television set in town.

John and Peggy Rudge, interviewed by author, Mallacoota, Vic, 10th November 2009.

⁸⁸ *Dr Who*: Popular science-fiction serial produced 1963 - 1989 by the British Broadcasting Commission (BBC), London. In 2005 BBC Wales relaunched the program and five new series have subsequently been produced.

⁸⁹ Valerie York, telephone interview with author, Mallacoota Vic, 11 November 2009.

ABSN-8 were often annoyed when the standard of reception was poor. As the following comments and anecdotes indicate, because of the vagaries of signal quality a degree of ambivalence developed around the medium. On the one hand residents were excited about the possibility of a further source of entertainment and information, on the other disappointed by television's consistent failure to operate when required.

If the reception was good you couldn't get us away from it. If it wasn't good we'd just do something else outside to get away from moving the aerial (Smith, K 2009).

When it was really snowy – 'cos it was in those early days - I couldn't be bothered watching it (Smith, G 2009).

It was an inconvenience watching something and then not being able to finish watching it (Martin 2009).

Martin also recalls the day the senior students from the local school came to her house to witness the moon-landing. She was very excited and proud to be, as she frames it, "connected with that important event" (Martin 2009). However, as the picture began to waver at a critical moment, the social ramifications of signal failure hit home. Martin felt ill and continued to do so for the duration of the programme. As it transpired both the moon-walk and Martin's reception of the occasion were successes and she gained considerable kudos amongst her peers. Nevertheless, forty years later she still remembers the anxiety of the occasion vividly: "It still makes me sick to think of it" (Martin 2009).

This anecdote also draws attention to the prestige attached to early television ownership. As discussed earlier, the decision to purchase a receiver was determined more by signal availability than cost. Close examination of the small amount of micro-locational data that is available either through newspapers or the interviews reveals that signals were not necessarily at their strongest in the more salubrious parts of townships. Tetley makes a veiled reference to this phenomenon:

If you happened to be living in a *nice* house somewhere where it was very difficult to get TV – which did happen in a lot of instances – yes, it was a big source of disappointment (Tetley 2009).

Therefore the status related to television did not reflect social class or wealth rather connected to notions of hospitality. Community television viewing events gave owners an opportunity to display their prowess as hosts and good neighbours. However, as Martin's "moon-landing" anecdote illustrates, poor reception could spoil the occasion.

Jack Hobbs first saw television in 1963 at the house of a friend who lived out of Bemboka:

Well you had a job to see what things were. Buck said 'that's the bear.' And you didn't know if it was a bear or a draught horse... It was a great way, a new way of entertainment as far as we were concerned. But we made up our mind that we certainly weren't going to get a TV set while the reception was no good – unless it was a whole lot better than what it was at that particular time (Hobbs 2009).

Within media studies the entry of television into everyday life is often equated to television's predictability, reliability and consequent ability to slip easily into the daily routines of consumers. Scannell suggests "that if we properly understand the dailiness of radio, television and newspapers we will have gone a long way to understanding how they (the media) matter for us in the ways that they do" (Scannell 1996, 149). As has been demonstrated, dailiness, reliability and routine were not features of the television service on offer to the population groups under investigation. It should therefore come as no surprise that television failed to "take off" as it apparently did in other parts of Australia (Flew 2002, 173). Indeed, according to a number of interviewees television did not even have a significant impact on their daily lives of children as most preferred to play amongst themselves outside (Martin 2009; York 2009; Smith G 2009; Reirdon 2009).⁹⁰

6.4.2 A clash of cultures

For some residents, even this most limited engagement with television was too much. To them, television posed a threat to highly-valued established social practices and conventions. In their innovative study "Quoting not science but sideboards" Hartley and

⁹⁰ Sally Reirdon (pseudonym), interviewed by author, Pambula, NSW, 26 May 2009.

O'Regan (1985, 63) reveal how the introduction of television to Perth, Western Australia, unsettled conventional meanings and practices attached to particular spaces and places, often resulting in conflict. Such was the case across the south-eastern corner of Australia. Whereas Martin considered providing friends and neighbours with an opportunity to watch television as an extension of traditional home-based generosity, this new interpretation of "rural hospitality" was not shared by everyone.

Hospitality was and remains an important practice that helps stabilize understandings of self and collective identity across the towns and villages of the south-eastern corner of Australia. On the commencement of this project I was directed to a chapter in a travel book, written by Edwin J Brady in 1930, to further my knowledge of the Far South Coast.⁹¹ Brady wrote about South Coast hospitality:

We bided overnight in Bega at the clean and comfortable Commercial Hotel, where, true to South Coast traditions, guests are treated like friends, and feathered-beds are found for favored visitors. Some critical writers have complained Australians lack polish. In this country superficial manners - which mean little - are sometimes neglected; but kindness and honest hospitality, which is common to all classes, will be found everywhere (Brady 1930, 270).

A number of interviewees contended that television practices threatened this version of rural hospitality. Jim McGrath remonstrates:

Before television took hold people were still playing and talking long into the night which is what people should be doing now ... A lot of manners have gone out the door. Television brings out the rudeness in people (McGrath, J. 2009).

Sam Alcock also believed people were "friendlier", "more sociable" in the district prior to the advent of television.

⁹¹ As noted in Chapter 1 & 2 I had lived in the district for over twenty years. However, to be considered 'a local' by local standards one must have "at least three generations in the bone-yard" (local adage of unknown source).

Before television ... household communications and neighbour communications were really close. But when television came in there was no more visiting. You sat at home and watched. And no more music, or learning poetry, or Patterson or Lawson or Will Ogilvie or anything like this (Alcock 2009).

According to Kevin Tetley the impact television was having on the social connections, practices and mores began to be openly expressed within a very short time of the mediums arrival and continued for many years.

Probably the most dramatic change that TV brought socially...Everyone spoke about it....All you heard about was how rude so and so was because they couldn't even turn the volume down. That was a big thing. This was spoken about *years* later. That TV had changed the etiquette of people and the friendly welcome in the homes and so people just didn't visit anymore like they used to - that was very noticeable...I would say that if you looked for one single thing that had the biggest impact with TV, that was it... It meant they could no longer walk into their neighbour's house at any old time and sit down and have a chat. It was common that people would go to visit friends and neighbours and so forth and the first thing they would be greeted with was the finger up to the mouth - shhhh! And people were very annoyed about that. That broke up friendships (Tetley 2009).

Tetley recalls that dinner parties and home-based social gatherings also began to "fall away" as did public events such as dances, theatrical performances and cinema-going (Tetley 2009).

Television brought with it changes to social practices that configured the social life of country towns. The extent and consequence of these changes, however, are variously interpreted according to the subjective position of each story-teller. For Martin, television viewing was a communal event which drew into established social practices, such as cinema-going. For Jim McGrath, Alcock and Tetley, the same activity brought an end to traditional forms of domestic hospitality. "It [talking and playing games] is what we should still be doing" says McGrath. Tetley on the other hand is pragmatic.

Technology does have this effect. There are other things dragging people's attention away now. Just as television was then. It is the computer today (Tetley 2009).

In the main, interviewees were prepared to renegotiate customary ways of operating to accommodate television. Only McGrath and Alcock continue to bemoan the loss of past social practices.

6.4.3 "They think we do not exist!"

A further source of irritation around television services in the district centred on program content, specifically on the dearth of relevant local information and representation that helped make sense of everyday life in the south-eastern corner. In 1984 Hugh McKay wrote in support of the retention of local content regulation in the first review of the policy. He stated: "It is a fundamental human need to define ourselves in terms of other people, and to define ourselves in terms of 'place'" (Mackay 1984, 322). From this McKay deduced that "television can only perform its valuable role of identity-clarification if it offers a significant amount of truly local, regional content" (Mackay 1984, 325). The 1984 and subsequent inquiries determined in favour of the retention of local content regulations which remain in situ today albeit in diminished form.⁹²

However, participants' narratives provided little evidence of this longstanding commitment in their television experience. Indeed, the lack of content that reflected back the lives of participants was a constant source of concern. Participants' concerns fell broadly into two areas: Firstly, local residents were unable to receive information about or of relevance to their own lives and secondly that members of the broader television community were not being adequately informed of the district as a part of that community. The following comments are typical of the group sentiment:

The local WIN Gippsland news is pre-recorded in Ballarat, despite the fact that they keep flogging it as local news with local reporters. It is quite amusing really. Particularly when they can't pronounce local topographical features like Coopracambra or Croajingalong.

⁹² See, for example the 2002 Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) investigation: "Adequacy of local news and information programs". The authority found that the needs of regional television viewers in terms of access to "programs of local significance" were not being met and proposed additional conditions on broadcast licences (ABA 2002, 11).

The only time Mallacoota gets a mention - the only time we are a part of Gippsland - is if there is a murder or a major drama or something like that... PRIME provides an update - usually something we already know. Other than that it is all Melbourne oriented (Connor 2009).

It was sometimes frustrating to think, we're here and there's quite a lot of us, and it's an absolutely magnificent part of the world and we're forgotten (Mann 2009).

It mostly seemed like it was somewhere else. I think it's only really going back 20 years ago or something that a lot of advertisement or news reports or anything came through about Merimbula ... and I would say further down [the southern reaches of the district] that maybe even now they wouldn't even feel as if they exist - so. Because everything still seems to be further up the coast. I would imagine that a lot of people would think that is still an issue (Martin 2009).

I don't think the area has ever been well represented in the television media. Even now the local news focuses on the larger centres such as LaTrobe Valley and Sale. They think we do not exist! (York 2009).

6.4.3.1 A tactical solution - localising television content

In the fore-mentioned appeal for the retention of local content regulation McKay argued along the lines that if viewers are unable to relate to television in terms of sustaining how viewers understand themselves and everyday places, they would lose interest and seek out more germane ways of entertaining themselves (Mackay 1984, 325). By this reckoning television viewers across the south-eastern corner should have "turned off" in droves. However, although participants were annoyed by the lack of locally targeted content they did not turn away from the medium for this reason. Rather, the familiar practice of "do-it-yourself" was drawn upon, in this instance by "poaching" on the property of others (de Certeau 1984, xxi) through the appropriation or localising of content intended by producers to represent different places and people.

This effect was achieved by making links, oft-times quite obscure, between residents and television personalities, scenarios or locations. The tendency first became evident on perusal of the local newspapers of the period. The following is a notable example. A young Canberra-based woman, whose father was a member of the Pambula Band and

grandfather an oyster farmer also of Pambula, "discovered" to the delight of family members, that a "famous" cast member of the popular show "Upstairs, Downstairs" was "a relative". The family was reportedly eagerly awaiting further information about their hereto unknown TV kinswoman. The piece was published on page 1 of the *BDN* (27 May 1975) under the banner "A TV Relative". The explanations given by some participants for their preference for, or the popularity of, particular television programs demonstrate a similar desire to make television personally relevant. Sam Alcock, for example, liked John Wayne movies:

Any westerns really. They were sort of countrified, on farms and horses and cattle (Alcock 2009).

Léone Pheeney and Dot Bruce both loved a *Country Practice*.

We loved *Country Practice*. The fellow that played Richard was Peter Doyalson who came from Bairnsdale and so it was almost local watching Richard on it ... And the writer, Edith Calhoun was her name, she owned the local video shop (Pheeney 2009).

Bellbird was a particular favourite across the interview group and apparently the district.⁹³ "We all watched *Bellbird*, as everybody did" (Mann 2009). Kenny and Gail Smith agreed as did Jim McGrath:

It would clear the pub! Everyone racing home to watch *Bellbird* (McGrath, J).

When asked to account for the wide-spread popularity of the series, McGrath explained:

Well it was just like us, virtually day to day life but a bit more dramatised (McGrath, J)

⁹³ *Bellbird* was a high-rating television program, produced by and aired on ABC television from 1967 - 1977. The story was set in the fictional country town called Bellbird. The storyline focused on the daily lives of the "locals", most often those involved in stereotypically rural occupations such as dairy farming; caring for animals and running the pub. The show's script-writer and director, Jim Davern states: "for many Australians, particularly from the country, the show became a lifeline" (Rowsthorn with Davern 2009, podcast).

2009).

Strangely, *The News* seemed in no doubt that the district's love-affair with *Bellbird* was reciprocated. When two of the serial's stars, known as Max and Fiona, made a guest appearance at the 1970 Bega Rotary Ball the *BDN* lamented: "What a pity Max and Fiona do not write the script. Perhaps Bega would be featured."⁹⁴ There was, however, a counter to this disappointment: "Viewers of the ABC serial will now be able to say 'I know them' and they will add 'what pleasant people they are'" (*The News* 18 Aug.1970, 3).

These are but a few examples. All interviewees had a story or stories to tell about making television relevant to their own lives. Localising television, officially the remit of television regulators, can therefore be added to the list provided by Tetley of things the community had "done for itself" because of the failure of authorities to provide services to "this isolated and forgotten corner."

6.5 Enduring stories of rural neglect and "being forgotten"

It is significant that few of the stories of television relayed by the project participants focused on programs and that such recollections when brought forth were invariably overlaid with a parallel memory of signal failure.⁹⁵ Indeed the kind of reception disturbances described by residents call to mind the "technological veil of semiotic distortion" which has marred the audio-video experience of many Nigerians. This distortion, according to Larkin, has become representative of the Nigerian government's incapacity to provide for the needs of citizens, the more so because of the problem is commonly held to be peculiar to that location (Larkin 2004, 309). In the context of this project, irrespective of the particularities of the events described all participants implicitly or explicitly indicated the belief that the experiences of which they spoke were not the norm in other places. Those residents who had experienced television in

⁹⁴ Played by Terry McDermott and Gerda Nicolson.

⁹⁵ See for example York's discussion of *Dr Who* and Martin's recollections of the NASA Apollo 11 moon landing.

other locations and thus had a point of comparison were particularly derisive of local offerings.

They'd say what a wonderful picture but there wasn't really much of a picture at all. Because I'd actually seen reasonably good pictures in Wollongong a couple of years before (McGrath, J 2009).

Without the snow it was easy to watch. It [television viewing in Sydney] was rather enjoyable (Tetley 2009).

In Sydney we had very clear reception. It was black and white but it was clear and we were very happy listening to it there. But when we came to Merimbula it was somewhat different! (Mann 2009).

We had television there [Sydney] but it wasn't a major issue... we just slipped into watching it without too much happening. It was more when we moved to Merimbula and didn't have it. ...There was obviously a lot of talk-back on the wireless about it, because my Dad used to listen to that a lot and then talk after - that they were going to do something to get better reception for us (Martin 2009).⁹⁶

Larkin also asserts that infrastructures play an important role in the structuring, rationalisation and regulation of society. It follows then that both infrastructural failure or the development of unofficial or "make do" arrangements to stand in its stead brings to light weaknesses in the organizational structures responsible for maintaining societal order and control (Larkin 2004, 291). Across the interview group the stories of the early years of television are intricately interwoven with the notion of neglect by government. Television features as one service amongst many that has failed to be delivered in a timely manner.

⁹⁶ Martin's reference to the discussions on talk-back radio is also informative in that it provides evidence of the consumer drive that fuelled the parliamentary deliberations around the distribution of television services across the country areas. Although she does not designate the "they" that were going to fix the problem, newspaper commentaries of the period confirm that council members, the long-standing local Federal Member of Parliament (MP) Alan Fraser and State MP Steven Mauger led the campaign.

Local people were quite frustrated by their inability to receive good TV over many years; but we were used to this kind of treatment by the government; so it was 'par for the course' (Tetley 2009).

I think we sort of realized that we were the backside of the state and we just had to wait (Hobbs 2009).⁹⁷

The discursive association between television and rural neglect/"being forgotten" was to varying degrees evident in most of the interviews. In all cases, despite the obvious enjoyment interviewees gained from the retelling of their adventures with television, an undertone of still remembered annoyance could occasionally be discerned. "We can laugh about it *now*," mused Holly Mann (2009).

6. 6 Chapter summary and conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated the value of researching from within communities and paying heed to local stories and understandings. The information gleaned from project participants is in concurrence with the data drawn from documentary sources used in previous chapters. Their stories, as de Certeau suggests is likely, also reveal hidden knowledges that appear not to have been recorded. Participants confirmed that the residents of the many small communities that comprise the fieldsite were keen to be part of the television-viewing community as indicated in the documents. However, in the absence of reliable television services, many were not prepared to await the outcome of protests, rather fell back on established ways of "making do" in order to watch television. In some cases residents went to extraordinary lengths to make television "a reality" in their own homes and/or neighbourhoods. Stories are told of the thrills and frustrations experienced by individuals as they came together in unusual ways to watch television. We learn that as television slowly made its way into the district treasured notions of rural hospitality were challenged sometimes to the detriment of long-standing friendships. More often however, customary practices of hospitality were adapted to accommodate television. We then discover that having upset the social equilibrium of the district television failed to fully satisfy: firstly because it was not a reliable form of entertainment and secondly because program content did not reflect local interests to the extent desired.

⁹⁷ Backside: buttocks or rear-end.

Larkin's contention that technologies take on additional social and political importance when they do not operate as designed, particularly when this lack of functionality is associated with a particular location, is also born out in the stories of residents.

Although no participant was involved in the petitions or protests around television service delivery or reception quality referred to in documentary sources, despite the passage of many decades the irritation that underscored these actions was expressed by every participant - albeit in softened terms. Also toned down was the level of aggression towards those held responsible for the delays and sub-standard reception. The language used in both parliamentary documents and local newspapers was openly hostile and pointedly directed towards television authorities, particularly the PMG. Participants, on the other hand, reflected upon their early encounters with television with a mixture of mild annoyance and amusement. The late delivery and second-rate service was identified as a consequence of living within the "forgotten corner " of Australia, where neglect by government is considered the norm.

The following and concluding chapter begins with a brief rumination on the methodological and theoretical approach adopted for this research project as well as a summary of key findings. The implications of narratives of neglect for policy-making and national cohesion more broadly are then considered. The chapter concludes with suggestions for further studies.

7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Histories about absences

This thesis has alerted us to the importance of writing histories about absences. In the context of this project, it would be wrong to assume that because television is not at hand in a particular location it necessarily follows that there is not a history about television in that place. Nonetheless, in our enthusiasm to explore, explain and theorize the experience of television and/or the remembering of that experience communities that have been or are partially or fully excluded from the national audience are often disregarded. This is a regrettable oversight because it is at these sites that our understanding of the complex relationships that exist between television and sense of place/other technologies may be significantly expanded upon or challenged. Under the guidance of Couldry, de Certeau and Larkin who recognize practices as always personal, cultural and spatial accomplishments, this thesis has shown how theories of practice may be used to construct histories of the media whether or not the medium is present, functioning as designed or used as anticipated. The use of theories of practice as a model for understanding relationships between service provision and sense of place has also been demonstrated. This thesis has also provided a strong case for researching from within communities and making use of community knowledge.

7.2 Key research findings

The first aim of this research project was to present an historical account of the establishment of a television service to a place distant from metropolitan cities. To this end direction was sought from historians who "write from below" most particularly Michel de Certeau. De Certeau challenges historians to seek out the "hidden histories" which find expression in the stories of ordinary people in the performance of their everyday lives. My thesis, the outcome of this endeavour, can be thought of in de Certeau's terminology as story that "cuts across" or opposes the insularity of the national story of television, as celebrated in 2006. Evidence gleaned from forgotten newspaper archives; parliamentary debates and the memories of participants reveals that television did not "arrive in Australia" in 1956 and spread rapidly across the nation. On the south-

eastern corner of Australia, despite intense political lobbying in large part precipitated by public outrage, residents experienced a thirty-six year time lapse from the first demonstration of television at an agricultural show in 1957 and the establishment of the last of four local transmitter stations in 1993. However, as **Chapter 6** makes apparent, the lack of official services did not stop some residents from watching or attempting to watch television.

A number of factors contributed to the slow propagation of television throughout the Australian countryside, including the costs and technical challenges associated with the extension of infrastructure across vast areas and at times difficult terrain. However, as made evident in **Chapters 3, 4 & 5** the strategic planning processes and political priorities of television authorities also worked counter to the rapid expansion of television services outside of the capital cities.

In the case of the south-eastern corner two policy incentives - namely the two station rule and localism - were particularly instrumental to the delays experienced in receiving television services. Localism is generally applauded as a popular success. As **Chapter 6** of this thesis makes apparent, television viewers across the fieldsite did want television content that reflected community interests. However, this was not called for at the cost of television services altogether. Ironically, when after a wait of many years a commercial television service licenced under the revised guidelines of localism did become available, viewers continued to feel their need for locally relevant information and community representation remained unmet. It is also ironic that the delays in securing commercial services caused by the rigorous implementation of the two-station rule meant that for many years television in the Bega-Cooma Television District was in a state of monopoly. Most viewers had access to only one source of television news and information, that which was provided under the auspices of the national station ABSN-8. These findings demonstrate that policies which appear fruitful when viewed through the lens of the national as implemented in the metropolis may have entirely different outcomes when transferred to a rural setting.

The second aim of the project was to explore how securing television to the south-eastern corner impinged upon and constituted rural/urban/metropolitan inter-relationships that

shape rural responses to more recent technological advancements. The above findings serve as a reminder that provision of television in Bega-Cooma must be thought about in relation to how the national scale is practiced through regulatory bodies establishing priorities in country Australia. The south-eastern corner was not of major concern to television authorities because many other places of larger population were also in need of services. District residents understood the situation very differently. Contemporaneous documentary sources indicate that the delays and setbacks experienced in the pursuit of television services were deeply resented within the community, as was the sub-standard reception quality on offer once stations became available. Particular offence was taken because residents believed that their experience of television was not replicated in other places. Moreover, that the needs of the residents of the south-eastern corner had again been set aside in the interests of the majority, those Australians who populated the cities. Decades later, an echo of this umbrage is still discernible in the comments of many participants.

7.3 Broader Implications - on "being forgotten"

As discussed throughout this thesis in the places under investigation the perception of neglect by government finds expression in the "forgotten corner" discourse. Television is of course but one component of this particular story of place. However, given the medium's acknowledged ascendancy amongst cultural forms coupled with the length of time taken to get services, the percentage of the population affected and the ongoing reception difficulties, its influence within this conversation should not be underestimated. The "forgotten corner" is not always problematic for residents because the negative connotations attached to this spatial construct are simultaneously counterbalanced by an array of positive associations, first and foremost the widely-recognized beauty of the area. The following poem written by local residents Kate Clery and William Reid (1983) demonstrates how the "forgotten corner" works as a compensatory space.

Verse from the Forgotten Corner

When nature waved

Her magic wand
And adorned the earth
With life
When She gave us trees
Mountains and seas
She *remembered* [my italics]
This corner of ours.

Glowing praise to be sure for the "forgotten corner". However, as the poem implies, the beauty of the region can be a recompense for, but does not completely eradicate, the perception of unfairness associated with decades of neglect by government. The line "She [nature] remembered" quickly brings to mind the "others" who forgot.

For the most part, the story of the "forgotten corner" just hums along beneath the surface.

You just get on with life. If you had to worry about governments giving you stuff, you'd sit on your arse forever (McGrath, J 2009).

It is important though that this apparent acceptance of the status quo, or "get[ting] on with life", is not interpreted as compliance to standing policies or policy makers. As made evident in **Chapters 4 and 5**, by the time television finally arrived in the district many residents had little respect for the legislation making process or indeed legislators themselves. A similar disregard for current strategic planners was evident in comments made by a number of project participants.

The more they forget about us the more they'll leave us alone. I usually refer to the council as being not far enough away. Their offices are 240k away (Marshall 2009).⁹⁸

We kind of believe that we are forgotten. In some ways it's not a bad thing. If you need something done like road works or a pathway or some other problem it is very difficult to get things done. On the other hand they're not *here* very often (Douglas 2009).⁹⁹

The sense of resentment towards and detachment from those charged with the responsibility of service provision keenly felt by some residents can on occasion slip into

⁹⁸ Russell Marshall, interviewed by author, Mallacoota, Vic, 12 November 2009.

⁹⁹ David Douglas, interviewed by author, Mallacoota, Vic, 12 November 2009.

disregard for the law itself. As discussed in **Chapter 6 (section 6.3.3)** a number of the tactical measures employed by residents to gain access to watchable television were not according to regulation. Conversations with interviewees indicate that this willingness to go against authority is still present.

I think like most small towns it will be a case of do-it-yourself. It might not be legal. It might not be official. But as long as you have the where-with-all to roll in a generator and extension cords long enough, and the patch cords fit, and you've done an exercise before-hand to prove it's going to work... Whatever is decided will be a sort of unofficial, ad hoc arrangement. People are going to have to make their own plans (Conversation between two Mallacootian project participants and author. Names withheld).¹⁰⁰

Neither participant's tone indicated that going against the command of authority in this way was a matter of concern or even out of the ordinary. The overall sense of the conversation was that small acts of minor delinquency are common practice, a part of the day to day "do it yourself" maneuvering required to "get on with life" in "the forgotten corner".

The notion of belonging to the "forgotten corner" of the nation can also be used as a rallying point for larger scale political dissent. Mallacoota resident John Rudge has the following to say on "being forgotten".

We always pick up on things if we feel we have been left behind. We get on to the authorities and to the council and others and say: "Hey what about us." Because we are at the end of the line in Victoria and we're over the border of NSW so we do get forgotten ... Here we are on that corner where we just don't exist. So we have had to battle for all our services that we have achieved. And communications is one of them. ...We have always got issues. But the town is a good community. If we get on to a particular band-wagon we are able to muster the troops and talk to the relevant authorities and get something done. Might take a lot of time but we normally get it done (Rudge, J 2009).

A long running dispute between NSW health authorities and South East NSW residents concerning local hospital services is a case in point. Across the course of this ongoing

¹⁰⁰ The participants are considering different ways of maintaining communications in emergency situations, such as fire or flood.

altercation the "forgotten corner" angle has been pushed by resident campaigners. For example, media celebrity and spokesperson for the Save Pambula Hospital Committee, Frankie J. Holden (2009), said the word "forgotten" in reference to the region twice within a brief media statement during a *WIN News* telecast featuring local efforts to reinstate maternity services at the Pambula Hospital. On another occasion local medical practitioner, Dr. Gareth Long (quoted in *BDN* 27 Sept. 2004), quoted figures pertaining to NSW health funding which "demonstrated that the south east was indeed "the forgotten corner of the State"" when advocating for a new hospital in Bega.

The term is also used by members of political parties of all persuasions to garner the support of residents for a variety of purposes. For example, in the lead up to the 2004 Federal Election Kel Watt, Labor candidate for the seat of Eden-Monaro and "seventh generation local", placed the following message in the *Bombala Times*.

As I travel around the region, people constantly tell me that they feel neglected, and like they live in the forgotten corner of Australia. We are constantly told about the economic boom we are supposed to be enjoying, but the fact is that the benefits aren't hitting our region. We are now well into the 21st century, and yet the basic phone services others take for granted do not reach into the Bombala area. TV coverage is second rate, and the Federal Government cannot be bothered trying to extend SBS coverage (*Bombala Times* 4 Aug. 2004).

Note the reference to poor television services and reception. As previously stated and made evident through the above discussion, television is but one element of the discourse of neglect which buttresses the "forgotten corner" narrative. However, it was interesting to observe across the interview sessions how conversations around poor television reception readily slipped into complaints about other kinds of communications devices and their supporting infrastructures. Electricity supplies; mobile phones; timely access to newspapers; the internet as well as the costs associated with these items which were understood to be higher in rural areas than in the cities, were all raised by most of the project participants as matters of on-going concern. Within the "forgotten corner" each technological failure, each instance of being forgotten or being left behind becomes linked to others, past and present. Consequently, the idea that in the eyes of government the south-eastern corner of Australia somehow exists outside of the nation, at least in terms of universal service provision, is constantly reinforced.

7.4 Rewriting the tale

The constant reinforcement of a space such as the "forgotten corner" is not in the interests of common citizenship or the implementation of policy. This is particularly so for communications policy which, as explained in the introduction, has a history of being "a sticky area" of policy-making (Allen 2006). If, however, we accept that spatial configurations are brought into being by practices and narratives as de Certeau contends, locally relevant meanings should not be considered fixed or singular. One way to help reconfigure the tale of the "forgotten corner" would be to ensure that future services work effectively and are provided in a timely manner. This action could allow a narrative featuring the many positive consequences of living in this beautiful part of Australia to dominate the space. As the following letter to the editor recently published in the *BDN* demonstrates, this goal is achievable.

I often describe our part of the world as the forgotten corner. Where services and technology are concerned I have often felt our community is let down, a poor country cousin with only second rate services making their way over the mountain to us. These sentiments were shot down and buried by the care and professionalism I encountered at the hands of the Obstetrics and Maternity team based here in Bega... *For the time being* [my italics] we are so very lucky that even among the old and outdated walls and windows we are blessed that some of the most talented medical professionals have chosen to live and work here in our forgotten corner (Carpenter 2014).

The inclusion of the clause 'for the time being' in this missive is instructive. Carpenter's positive mindset is obviously dependent on subsequent dealings with service providers replicating her experience in the Bega Hospital Maternity Unit.

The national roll out of broadband services to the south-eastern corner presented an excellent opportunity to further "shoot down and bury" the felt neglect attributed to being resident of the south-eastern corner of Australia. A Morgan Poll conducted in the electorate of Eden-Monaro¹⁰¹ just prior to the 2013 Federal election found that connection to the National Broadband Network (NBN) was the "single biggest issue" for voters

¹⁰¹ The NSW section of the south-eastern corner is located within the electoral boundaries of Eden-Monaro.

(BDN 22 Aug. 2013). To date however the venture seems to be adopting a trajectory that is alarmingly familiar. Hopes for a high-speed broadband internet service have been raised and crushed as delivery-styles and user-costs change and deadlines extend.

Currently, the district appears in a state of total confusion over the matter. John Richardson of the Bega Valley Shire Residents & Ratepayers Association (BVSRRRA) has approached the Minister for Communications, the Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP, for clarification. Turnbull is advised that: " people are angry that they have been once again placed at the end of the queue when it comes to the roll-out of the promised new service" and "are deeply unhappy about the fact that they will be expected to make do with a second rate internet service, largely delivered by fixed wireless network or satellite, or receive no improved service at all" (Richardson quoted in McCormick 2014). At the time of writing this thesis the minister has not responded (Ayling 2014). Meanwhile, a Towamba resident with no mobile phone access and a faulty dial-up internet connection complains she feels "cut off from the outside world" (Love quoted in Foden 2014).¹⁰²

This very unsatisfactory state of affairs is unlikely to shift the focus of the "forgotten corner" away from the notion of rural neglect. People in rural areas do make do – they often find ways around the seemingly insurmountable. There is, however, a bottom line. No amount of ingenuity will allow a signal to be picked up where there is no signal to be had. For Governments to regain a level of credibility in terms of universal access to communications technologies promises of service delivery need to be met.

7.5 Conclusion

It is generally acknowledged that electronic communications technologies, including television, create an appearance of connectivity – the seamless breaching of distance and difference through the transformation of time and space.¹⁰³ Herein lays the “magic” of television. From this position it is an easy step to imagine groups of people joined in

¹⁰² In 2015, many of the district's smaller villages and hamlets still do not have access to mobile telephone services.

¹⁰³ This notion was most famously put forward by Malcolm McLuhan, with his notion of the “global village” (McLuhan 1962) but is also the focus of attention in the works of Giddens (1990, 1991); Harvey (1990); Thompson (1995) and many others.

conversation, discussing the complexities of a particular television plot; favourite characters; repeating catch-phrases or singing along with jingles. This is the “glue that unites the nation” (Cunningham 2000, 30). Indeed for countless thousands of television viewers across the globe these scenarios are quite plausible. However, irrespective of source, the stories of television retrieved over the course of this research project focus more specifically on access to services and signals than program content. Rather than generating an experience of television that is “conspicuously universal” as Sweeney (2006, 3) maintains, it is evident that the sub-standard service on offer to this population has produced feelings of separation and difference from urban or mainstream Australia and exacerbated notions of rural disadvantage and "second-rate" citizenship.

7.6 Directions for further research

Across the course of this research project a number of issues were identified that warrant further investigation. Bega-Cooma is not the only television district that struggled to gain access to television signals which suggests many other histories of poor access to television exist, buried in local archives and/or the stories of community members. The retrieval of these "hidden histories" would be to the benefit of the Australian television historiography. Television studies could be advanced through investigation into how practices of television shape/reshape spatial arrangements at different levels, that is in homes; neighbourhoods; towns and regions in either historical or contemporary contexts. Moving beyond television onto studies of communications technologies more broadly, the rollout of broadband across the south-eastern corner is an ongoing issue and worthy of closer exploration. It is also important to remember that the notion of universal service provision does not apply exclusively to communications technologies. Watching the television this morning, 23rd February 2015, the following message scrolled across my screen: "Smaller Queensland towns 'forgotten' as aid goes to bigger towns".¹⁰⁴ There are many "forgotten corners" of policy making and service delivery that could be explored in the interests of social equity and national cohesion. This thesis has demonstrated how theories of practice may be usefully employed to respond to the above and similar research challenges across many areas of study.

¹⁰⁴ The slide relates to a news item which about the small town of Byfield, which faced the brunt of tropical cyclone Marcia. Residents feel assistance has been focused on larger towns meaning their calls for much needed aid have been ignored.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Government Reports and Documents

Australia. Department of Communications. 1984. *Localism in Australian*

Broadcasting: A Review of Policy. Canberra: AGPS

Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA). 2002. *Adequacy of local news and information programs: investigation report*.

http://www.acma.gov.au/webwr/_assets/main/lib310197/regionalnewsrpt.pdf

(accessed February 10, 2014).

Australian Broadcasting Control Board (ABCB).

1963a. *15th Annual Report 1962-1963*. Canberra: AGPS.

1963b. *Applications for T.V Licence: Bega-Cooma Area*. Canberra: AGPS.

1965a. *17th Annual Report 1964-1965*. Canberra: AGPS.

1965b. *Reports and Recommendations to the Postmaster-General on Applications for Licences for Commercial Television Stations in the Bega-Cooma Area, The Murray Valley Area and the Spencer Gulf North Area*. Canberra: AGPS.

1967. *19th Annual Report 1966-1967*. Canberra: AGPS.

1968. *20th Annual Report 1967-1968*. Canberra: AGPS.

1969. *21st Annual Report 1968-1969*. Canberra: AGPS

1970. *22nd Annual Report 1969-1970*. Canberra: AGPS

1974. *26th Annual Report 1973-1974*. Canberra: AGPS

Commonwealth of Australia.

1901. Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act - Sect 51

(Commonwealth Consolidated Acts),

http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/coaca430/s51.html

(accessed 16 May 2013)

1901-2, Parliamentary debates: Australian Senate: official Hansard, vol 1, 1-1057.

1955, Parliamentary papers: General: Report of the Royal Commission on Television, vol 3, 679-809.

1958, Parliamentary debates: House of Representatives: official Hansard, vol 18, 1-1057.

1960, Parliamentary debates: House of Representatives: official Hansard, vol 26, 1-1094.

1961, Parliamentary debates: House of Representatives: official Hansard, vol 33, 1277-2858.

1962, Parliamentary debates: House of Representatives: official Hansard, vol 35, 1191-2543.

1963, Parliamentary debates: House of Representatives: official Hansard, vol 38, 1-1833.

1964, Parliamentary debates: House of Representatives: official Hansard, vol 42, 1227-2213.

1965, Parliamentary debates: House of Representatives: official Hansard, vol 48, 1297-2731.

1966, Parliamentary debates: House of Representatives: official Hansard, vol 53, 1251-2436.

Mackay, Hugh. 1984. Attachment L: The Psychological Significance of Local Content in Regional TV Broadcasting. In *Localism in Australian Broadcasting: A Review of Policy*, ed. Department of Communications, 322-326. ACT: AGPS.

2: Newspapers and Magazines

Bega District News (BDN)

1952. Still no radio station. July 29: 5.

1956. Television has cities agog with expectation. August 3: 7.

1956. Young people decide to stay on land. August 7: 2 & 7

1956. Poor radio reception. August 10: 5.

1956. Television may soon be here. October 5: 1 & 6

1956. Realm Of Fantasy Is Open In Field Of Electronics. December 7: 1.

1957. Television appearance at Bega Show. January 18: 1 & 9

1957. 'TV thrill for Bega' March 1: 1.

1962. Channel 4 Pictures Clear in Bega and District. March 20: 1

1962. TV Services discussed: Councillor states TV totally inadequate on Far South Coast. May 25: 1.

1962. Railway hope in 1912. June 12: 5.

1962. Shire difficulties in television. June 26: 1.

1962. Hearing at Year's End for TV licence. 21 August: 1.

1963. Cooma TV reception subject of report. April 30: 9.

1963. TV Licence for area still available for commercial stn. 7 June: 2.

1963. High costs of relay. 9 July 1963: 1.

1963. Cooma's council told TV estimates low. 9 July 1963: 3.

1963. Cooma-Council tries to speed-up TV. July 9: 2.

1964. Canberra TV Scheme with translator. May 15: 5.

1964. TV licences again open.' November 27: 1.

1965. Applications for TV. March 5: 1.

1965. Fraser makes demand on commercial TV. June 11: 1.

1965. Members doubt value of Regional Comm. July 2: 1.

1965. Comm. TV licence inquiry. July 30: 1.

1965. No Bega Support on TV Licence. August 20: 2.

1965. Only one applicant for TV Licence. September 3: 1.

1965. Canberra TV Supported. September 21: 1&2.

1965. TV Approach "to Minister". September 24: 1.

1965. P.M.G rejects TV submission. October 15: 1.

1965. Commercial Television Receives Setback. October 19: 4.

1965. Member for Monaro Presses for TV. November 12: 4.

1965. No commercial TV Licence. December 24: 1.

1966. Buildings are rising for television. January 29: 1.

1966. Mumbulla translator would improve TV. March 11: 1& 3.

1966. Television Reception Opinion. March 15: 1.

1966. Television Reception Opinion. March 15: 1.

1966. TV Translator Point on Mumbulla Mt. March 18: 1.

1966. TV Translator on Wanderer Mt. April 5: 2.

1966. Roy Howard & Co. – Bega Special Television Supplement. May 31.

1966. Television Service. June 7: 4.

1966. Bega-Cooma TV this month. June 15: 2.

1966. Bruce Devlin's TC Topics – new station's signal in Bega Valley. June 17: 3.

1966. Direct television here. June 28: 2.

1966. Bega people on TV. July 1: 2.

1966. Transmitter in action: New ABC-TV service has early impact. July 1: 1.

1966. TV signals vary: experts advise antenna adjustments. July 5: 1&2.

1966. P.M.G Unmoved – Reception of TV Deficient. August 12: 1.

1966. P.M.G unmoved – reception of TV deficient. August 12: 1.

1966. TV complaints justified. August 23: 2.

1966. Change in TV Opposed. August 23: 2.

1966. Incorrect TV aerials cause ghosting. September 22: 4.

1966. Mauger makes protest on TV reception. September 6: 5.

1966. Channel 4 is anxious to open translator. September 30: 1.

1966. Investigation of TV reception. September 30: 2.

1966. Signals of TV “as expected”. December 2: 17.

1967. Local TV translator depends on road. May 16: 1 & 2.

1967. Minister gives promise on commercial TV. November 24: 1.

1967. Mumbulla TV still delayed. December 22: 1.

1968. TV Translator.’ February 13: 1.

1968. Highway near completion. August 16: 2.

1968. Forestry access roadworks. June 4: 1.

1968. Alternate sites for translator. June 21: 1.

1968. TV delay concerns. July 2: 6.

1968. Delay of TV. June 25: 1.

1968. Railway link 'dead'. August 20: 1.

1968. Commercial TV service still delayed. August 9: 2.

1971. WIN-4-6 starts on Sunday. November 1: 1.

1971. WIN 4-6 picked up over wide distance. November 12: 1.

1975. A TV relative. May 27: 1.

2003. Brown Mountain Hydro is 50 years old. May 15.

<http://www.begadistrictnews.com.au/story/1036383/brown-mountain-hydro-is-50-years-old> (accessed Jan. 31, 2014).

2004. Unanimous support for one large local hospital. September 27.

<http://www.begadistrictnews.com.au/story/1047861/unanimous-support-forone-large-local-hospital/> (accessed Nov. 3, 2014).

2013. Broadband ranks as top issue in Eden-Monaro. August 22.
<http://www.begadistrictnews.com.au/story/1723055/broadband-ranks-as-top-issue-in-eden-monaro/> (accessed Aug. 30 2013).
- Blackley, Grant. 2006. Special Report 50 Years of Television. *B&T Weekly* 56 (2581): 16-21.
- Bombala Times*. 2004. What Watt wants. August 4.
<http://www.bombalatimes.com.au/story/1094573/what-watt-wants/> (accessed Nov. 3, 2014).
- Canberra Times*. 1953. No country tax for T.V. without benefits, says Mr. Howse, MP. March 27: 2. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article2878401> (accessed July 28, 2013).
- Carpenter, Chrissy. 2014. World-class treatment. *Bega District News*, October 2.
<http://www.begadistrictnews.com.au/story/2599145/letters-to-the-editor-october-2/> (accessed Nov. 3, 2014).
- Cooma-Monaro Express (CME)*
- 1962. Canberra T.V. signals being sent out. 4 April: 1
 - 1962. A survey of TV reception. 8 June: 1.
 - 1965. Delay over television angers MHR. 11 June: 1.
 - 1965. P.M.G. refuses deputation's T.V. proposal. October 15: 1.
 - 1965. Commercial T.V. bid fails. December 24: 4.
 - 1966. Mt. Roberts suitable for T.V. mast. February 23: 1
 - 1966. Commercial T.V. for Cooma Area. March 9: 1.
 - 1966. The advent of television. June 24: unpaginated television supplement.
 - 1966. *TV Feature*. Difficulties surmounted to bring commercial television to Monaro. June 24: unpaginated.
 - 1966. Channel 10 delay overcome. June 29: 1.
 - 1966. District has TV troubles. July 1: 1.
 - 1966. Blow to viewers: Cooma doomed to continued poor reception. August 12: 1.
 - 1966. Eden-Monaro enraged by TV blunder. September 2: 1.
- Courier-Mail*.
- 1953. Users could pay cost of TV. March 27: 7.
- <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article50555488> (accessed July 28, 2013).

1953. Urges TV net over country. April 11: 5.
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article50544883> (accessed July 28, 2013).
- Foden, Blake. 2014. "We're cut off": No phone, no internet, no NBN. *Eden Magnet* December 3, <http://www.edenmagnet.com.au/story/2738807/were-cut-off-no-phone-no-internet-no-nbn/> (accessed Dec. 27, 2014).
- Hobart Mercury* 1953. Bitter debate by farmers on television. July 16:11.
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article27158950> (accessed July 28, 2013).
- Imlay Magnet (IM)*.
1971. Channel 6 well received. November 12: 3.
1975. Better TV by March. 4 December: 1.
1976. Bimmil TV now July. 4 March: 1.
1976. What is TV delay? July 15: 1.
1976. Bimmil TV how long? September 30: 1.
1976. Bimmil TV. 18 November: 1.
1977. WIN T.V. now on. August 18: 1.
1980. Reception problems still existing. April 3: 21.
- Magnet and Voice (M&V)*.
1958. First T.V. in Eden. October 9: 1.
1959. TV committee formed. 9 October: 1.
1961. TV aerials. August 31: 3.
1962. TV may soon be a reality on the FSC. 15 February: 1.
1965. WIN withdraws application. 22 April: 1.
1965. Council supports Canberra bid for TV Licence. September 23: 4.
1965. PMG refuses TV. November 4: 1.
1965. Premier Will Back Move for Commercial Television Service to Cooma-Bega Area. November 11: 1.
1965. Fraser continues fight for TV service. November 25: 3.
1966. ABC TV. June 16: 1.
1966. Cause for complaint at standard of TV reception. July 14: 1.
1966. Discouraging reply on reception. August 11: 1.
1966. Princes Highway bitumen from Sydney to Melbourne. December 15: 4.
1967. Work on TV road recommences. August 10: 3.
1968. TV inadequacies in Eden area under investigation. October 17: 3.

- McCormick, Liz. 2014. NBN fiasco as Far South Coast gets sidelined. *Merimbula News Online*. April 16,
<http://www.merimbulanewsonline.com.au/story/2221319/nbn-fiasco-as-far-south-coast-gets-sidelined/> (accessed Nov. 15, 2014).
- Musgrove, Nan. 1959. When will we get TV? This year, next year sometime ... *The Australian Women's Weekly*, Dec. 23: 5 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article43200207> (accessed Dec. 22, 2010).
- Poulter, Kevin. 2006. Television: the elusive goal. *Silicon Chip* (213),
http://archive.siliconchip.com.au/cms/A_106951/article.html (accessed January 15, 2009).
- Sydney Morning Herald (SMH)*. 1965. No television licence for Bega-Cooma. December 23: 11.
- The News*.
 1969. T.V Application is being considered. August 8: 1.
 1969. Commercial TV at last? August 8: 1.
 1970. Commercial TV transmitting station for Bega. February 10: 3.
 1970. Translator for Bega. June 2: 1.
 1970. Bellbird struck the right note. August 18: 3.
 1970. Mt Imlay Approved. December 4: 13.
- The Magnet*. 1992. Centenary Supplement. August 22: 8.
- The Voice*.
 1970. Translator on Mt Imlay. February 25: 3.
 1970. National TV translator approved by PMG. December 4: 1.

General References: books, journal articles and thesis

- ACNielsen. 1999. *Australian television: a ratings history, 1956-1998*. Sydney: ACNielsen.
- Ahearne, Jeremy. 1995. *Michel de Certeau: Interpretation and its other*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Allen, Robert Clyde, and Douglas Gomery. 1985. *Film history : theory and practice* 1st ed ed. New York: McGraw Hill.

- Alomes, Stephen, and Kate Jones. 2009. 'Bad behaviour' in the House and beyond: Australian representative assemblies. *Parliaments, Estates and Representation* 29(1): 159-173.
- Armbrust, Walter. 2004. The ethnography of media. *Anthropology Quarterly* 77(4): 819 - 825.
- Askew, Kelly. 2002. Introduction. In *The Anthropology of Media: A Reader*, ed. Kelly Askew and Richard R. Wilk, 1-13. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Australia. Postmaster-General's Department. 1973. *Broadcasting and the Australian Post Office 1923-1973*. Canberra: P.M.G. Dept.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. 1976. Characteristics of the Population and Dwelling in Local Government Areas. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Canberra: AGPS.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2011. *2011 Census Quick Stats*.
<http://abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/quickstats> (accessed July 30, 2014).
- Australian Government. 2012. The Snowy Mountain Scheme. *About Australia*,
<http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/snowy-mountains-scheme> (accessed July 2, 2013).
- Bailey, Jenny. 2001. *The Country's Finest Hour: Sixty Years of Rural Broadcasting in Australia*. Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Corporation.
- Bailey, Julie James. 1979. Australian Television: why it is the way it is. *Cinema Papers* September-October: 511-515 & 584-585.
- Beilby, Peter. 1981. *Australian TV: The First 25 Years*. Melbourne: Nelson in association with Cinema papers.
- Brady, Edwin J. 1930. The land of milk and honey. In *Australia Unlimited*, ed Edwin J. Brady, 263-273. Melbourne: George Robertson and Company Pty. Ltd.
- Brown, Nicholas. 1995. *Governing Prosperity: Social Change and Social Analysis in Australia in the 1950s*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, Nicholas. 2002. Everybody who has ever done a tree sit always says that the tree talks to you. In *Words for Country; Landscape and Language in Australia*, ed Tim Bonyhady and Tom Griffiths. 84-102. Sydney: UNSW Press.
- Buchanan, Ian. 2000. *Michel de Certeau: Cultural Theorist* London: SAGE.

- Bunker, Raymond and Peter Huston. 2003. Prospects for the rural-urban fringe in Australia. *Australian Geographical Studies* 41(3): 303-323.
- Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). 2014. *The World Factbook*
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/as.html>
 (accessed 28 November 2014).
- Clery, Kate. 2000. *The Forgotten Corner Interviews: Oral history interviews of life from the Towamba, Burragate and Pericoe areas in the early 1900's to the early 1970's*. Eden, NSW: Eden Killer Whale Museum.
- Clery, Kate, and William Reid. 1983. *Verse from the forgotten corner*. Eden NSW: Valley Verse.
- Conley, Tom 1988. Translator's note. In *The Writing of History*, Michel de Certeau, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Corbin Dwyer, Sonya, and Jennifer Buckle. 2009. The Space Between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 8 (1): 54-63,
<http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/IJQM/article/view/2981/5198>.
- Couldry, Nick. 2012. *Media Society, World: Social Theory and Digital Media Practice*. London: Polity.
- Couldry, Nick. 2010. *Media Events in a Global Age*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Couldry, Nick. 2004. Theorizing Media as Practice. *Social Semiotics* 14(2): 115-131.
- Couldry, Nick and Anna McCarthy 2004. *MediaSpace: Place, Scale and Culture in a Media Age*. London: Routledge.
- Cunningham, Stuart. 2000. History, contexts, politics, policy. In *The Australian TV Book*, ed. Graeme Turner and Stuart Cunningham, 13-32. St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin.
- Cunningham, Stuart, and Terry Flew. 2002. Policy. In *The Media & Communications in Australia*, ed. Stuart Cunningham and Graeme Turner, 48-61. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.
- Cunningham, Stuart, and Elizabeth Jacka. 1996. *Australian Television and International Mediascapes*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Curthoys, Ann. 1984. The getting of television. In *Better Dead than Red: Australia's First Cold War*, ed. Ann Curthoys and John Merritt, 123-154. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

- Curthoys, Ann. 1991. Television before television. *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media & Culture* 4(2): 1-13.
- Curtin, Jennifer. 2001. A Digital Divide in Rural and Regional Australia? *Current Issues Brief* 1: 1-20,
http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/Publications_Archive/CIB/cib0102/02CIB01(accessed December 14, 2014).
- Curtin, Michael. 2000. Connections and Differences: Spatial Dimensions of Television History. *Film and History* 30(1): 50-61.
- Darian-Smith, Kate, and Sue Turnbull, eds. 2012. *Remembering Television: Histories, Technologies, Memories*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Davidson, Ken. 1968. Profit - and Loss. In *Ten Years of Television*, ed. Mungo MacCallum, 9-26. Melbourne: Sunbooks.
- Davison, Graeme. 2005. Rural sustainability in historical perspective. In *Sustainability and Change in Rural Australia*, ed. Chris Cocklin and Jacqui Dibden, 38-55. Sydney: University of New South Wales.
- de Certeau, Michel. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life: Arts de faire*. Vol. 1. Translated by Steven Rendall, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- de Certeau, Michel. 1988. *The Writing of History*. Translated by Tom Conley, New York: Columbia University Press.
- de Certeau, Michel, Luce Giard, and Pierre Mayol. 1998. *The practice of everyday life II: living and cooking* Vol. 2. Translated by Timothy J. Tomasik, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ellis, Ulrich 1948. *Rediscovery of a Lost Province: A Plea for the Development of the South Coast East Corner of Australia*. ACT: U. Ellis.
- England, Kim V. L. 2002. Interviewing Elites: Cautionary Tales. In *Feminist Geography in Practice: Research and Methods*, ed. Pamela Moss, 200-213. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Fetterman, David M. 2010. *Ethnography: Step By Step*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Fisher, Eric. 1985. The Introduction of Television into Western Australia. In *The Moving Image: The History of Film and Television in Western Australia*, ed.

- Tom O'Regan and Brian Shoesmith, 55-62. Perth: History and Film Association of Australia (WA).
- Flew, Terry. 2002. Television and pay TV. In *The Media and Communications in Australia*, ed. Stuart Cunningham and Graeme Turner, 173-187. NSW: Allen & Unwin.
- Flew, Terry. 2006. The Social Contract and Beyond in Broadcast Media Policy. *Television and New Media* 7(3): 282-305.
- Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan, London: Allen Lane.
- Frisch, Michael. 2006. Oral history and the digital revolution: Toward a post-documentary sensibility. In *The oral history reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 102-114. New York: Routledge.
- Frow, John. 1991. Michel de Certeau and the Practices of Interpretation. *Cultural Studies* 5(1): 52-60.
- Frow, John. 1992. The concept of the popular. *New Formations* 18: 25-38.
- Fuller-Seeley, Kathy. 2004. The Video Divide: Unequal Diffusion of early US TV ownership 1945-1955. In *Proceedings of the 2004 Society for Cinema and Media Studies Annual Conference*. Paper delivered 2nd March. Atlanta, Georgia.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: UK Polity Press in association with Basil Blackwell, Oxford, UK.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1991. *Modernity and self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Gillis, John, R. 1992. Remembering memory: a challenge for public historians. *The Public Historian* 14(4): 91-101.
- Given, Jock. 2001. Enduring divisions. *Telecommunications Journal of Australia* 51(1): 17-24.
- Glaser, Barney, and Anselm Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Goot, Murray, Rod Tiffen & Australian Film, Television and Radio School. 1995. *Media Barons*. North Ryde: Australian Film Television & Radio School.
- Gorton, Kristyn. 2009. *Media Audiences : Television, Meaning and Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

- Green, Lelia. 1998. *Communications and the construction of community: Consuming the remote television service in Western Australia*. PhD thesis, Social Sciences, Humanities and Education, Murdoch University, Perth.
- Griffen-Foley, Bridget. 2002. The Fairfax, Murdoch and Packer Dynasties in Twentieth-century Australia. *Media History* 8(1): 89-102.
- Hagan, Jim, ed. 2006. *People and Politics in Regional New South Wales*. Vol. 2 1950s - 2006. Sydney: The Federation Press.
- Hagan, Jim, and Glen Mitchell. 2006. The Southeast. In *People and Politics in Regional New South Wales*. Vol. 2 1950s - 2006, ed Jim Hagan, 104-142. Annandale: The Federation Press.
- Hall, Sandra. 1976. *Supertoy*. Melbourne: Sunbooks Pty. Ltd.
- Hamilton, Paula. 1994. The Knife Edge: Debates about Memory and History. In *Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia*, ed. Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton, 9-32. Melbourne: OUP.
- Hanson, Stephanie. 2009. "Electrical wonders of the present age": cinema-going on the Far South Coast of NSW and rural discourses of modernity. *Screening the Past* 24: 1-9.
- Harrington, Stephen. 2014. Television. In *The Media and Communications in Australia*. 4th ed., ed. Stuart Cunningham and Sue Turnbull. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.
- Hartig, Kate, and Gordon Waitt. 1997. The lost metropolitan centre of New South Wales: resolving the unfulfilled claims about Eden, 1843-1920. *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 83(2): 118 - 135.
- Hartley, John. 2006. *TV50*. Melbourne: Australian Centre for the Moving Image.
- Hartley, John, and Tom O'Regan. 1985. Quoting not science but sideboards: Television is a new way of life. In *The Moving Image: The History of Film and Television in Western Australia*, ed. Tom O'Regan and Brian Shoesmith, 63 - 73. Perth: History and Film Association of Australia (WA).
- Harvey, David. 1990. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hauser, Ian. 1974. *The Politics of Television in Australia*. Hons. thesis, School of Social Sciences, Flinders University, South Australia.

- Hawkins, Gay, and Ien Ang. 2007. Inventing SBS: Televising the Foreign. *ACH: The Journal of the History of Culture in Australia* 26: 1-14.
- Herd, Nick. 2008. *Changing channels: an historical political economy of commercial television in Australia: 1954 – 1998*, PhD thesis, Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, University of Technology, Sydney.
- Herd, Nick. 2012. *Networking Commercial Television in Australia*. Redfern: Currency House.
- Horgan, Brendan. 2006. *Radio With Pictures : 50 Years of Australian Television* Sydney: Lothian Books.
- Huggett, Nancy. 2006. Interviewees as primary oral history audiences: popular memory, collaboration and interpretation. In *Dancing with Memory: Oral History and its Audience : Proceedings of the 14th International Oral History Conference*, ed. Rosemary Block and Paula Hamilton, 1-9. Sydney: Oral History Association of Australia - New South Wales.
- Inglis, Kenneth. S. 2006. *Whose ABC?: the Australian Broadcasting Corporation 1983-2006*. Melbourne: Black Inc.
- Inglis, Kenneth S. 1983. *This Is The ABC : The Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1932-1983*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Institute of Historical Research. 2008. *History from below*.
http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/themes/history_from_below.html.
 (accessed July 22, 2010).
- Jacka, Elizabeth. 2006. The ABC and the 2006 federal media reforms. *Media International Australia Incorporating Culture and Policy* 120: 5-9.
- Jacka, Elizabeth. 2002. The future of public broadcasting. In *The Media & Communications in Australia*, ed. Stuart Cunningham and Graeme Turner, 330-369. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.
- Jacka, Elizabeth. 2000. Public service TV: an endangered species? In *The Australian TV Book*, ed. Graeme Turner and Stuart Cunningham, 52-68 & 213-227. St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin.
- Jacka, Elizabeth. 1993. Remapping the Australian Television System. Working paper for Centre for International Research on Communication and Information Technologies (CIRIT). South Melbourne: CIRIT.
- Jacka, Elizabeth, and Tim Dolin, ed. 2007. *Australian Television History*

Perth: Network Books.

Jacka, Elizabeth, and Jock Given. 2002. Digital spaces, public places. *Southern Review* (Adelaide) 35(1): 1-8.

Jacka, Elizabeth, and Lesley Johnson. 1998. Australia. In *Television: An International History*, ed. Anthony Smith, 208-222. New York: Oxford University Press.

Jacka, Liz 2004. Doing the History of Television in Australia: Problems and Challenges. *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 18(1): 27-41.

Jacka, Liz , and Sue Turnbull. 2006. Australian Television History: An Introduction. *Media International Australia: Incorporating Culture and Policy* 121: 65-67.

Jenkins, Henry. 1992. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Kuhn, Annette. 2002. *Dreaming of Fred and Ginger: Cinema and Cultural Memory*. New York: NYU Press.

Kuhn, Raymond. 1985. *The Politics of Broadcasting*. London & Sydney: Croom Helm.

Lane, Karen L. 1987. Broadcasting, Democracy and Localism: A study of Broadcasting Policy in Australia from the 1920s to the 1980s. PhD thesis. Politics Department, University of Adelaide, South Australia.

Larkin, Brian. 2004. Degraded Images, Distorted Sound: Nigerian Video and the Infrastructure of Piracy. *Public Culture* 16(2): 289-314.

Mackay, Ian K. 1957. *Broadcasting in Australia*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

McKee, Alan. 2001. *Australian Television: A Genealogy of Great Moments*. Sth Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

McKenna, Mark. 2002. *Looking for Blackfellas' Point: An Australian History of Place*. Sydney: UNSW Press.

McLuhan, Herbert Marshall. 1962. *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Moran, Albert 2010. *Australia*. The Museum of Broadcast Communications (MBC). <http://museum.tv/eotvsection.php?entrycode=australia> (accessed May 17, 2012).

- Moran, Albert. 1992. Emergence and consolidation of television networks, 1955 - 1986. In *Stay Tuned: An Australian Broadcasting Reader*, ed. Albert Moran, 110 - 115. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Morris, Meaghan. 1990. Banality in Cultural Studies. In *Logics of Television*, ed. Patricia Mellencamp, 14 - 43. Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- National Archives of Australia. 2000. *Your Story Our History: Introducing Television to Australia 1956*. <http://www.naa.gov.au/about-us/publications/fact-sheets/fs115.aspx> (accessed 27 July, 2010).
- NSW. Heritage Office & NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning. 1996. *Regional histories: regional histories of New South Wales*. <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/bioregions/BioregionsNswoutlineHistory.htm> (accessed 15 March, 2014).
- NSW. Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority. 2009. *Far South Coast*. http://www.southern.cma.nsw.gov.au/our_catchment-far_south_coast.php (accessed 30 March, 2010).
- O'Connor, Kate. 1926. Meditation on Rixon's Verandah. In *Bega the Beautiful*, unpublished anthology of poems: printed E. Bootes, Bega [held by Bega Genealogical Society, Pambula].
- O'Regan, Tom. 1993. *Australian Television Culture*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- O'Regan, Tom. 1988. The Background to TV Networking. In *Australian Communications Technology and Policy: A Reader*, ed. Elizabeth More and Glen Lewis, 127-143. Sydney: Centre for Information Studies Publications.
- O'Regan, Tom, and Brian Shoesmith. 1985. *The Moving Image: The History of Film and Television in Western Australia*. Perth: History and Film Association of Australia (WA).
- O'Regan, Tom, and Dona Kolar-Panov. 1993. SBS-TV: Symbolic politics and multicultural policy in television provision; SBS-TV: A television service. In *Australian Television Culture*, ed. Tom O'Regan, 121- 142. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- O'Reilly, Karen. 2012. *Ethnographic Methods*. 2nd ed. Oxon, UK: Routledge.
- Oliver, Paul. 2010. *Understanding the Research Process*. UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.

- Osborne, Graeme, and Glen Lewis. 1995. *Communications Traditions in 20th-century Australia*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Pinkerton, Alisdair, and Klaus Dodds. 2009. Radio geopolitics: broadcasting, listening and the struggle for accoustic spaces. *Progress in Human Geography* 33(1): 10-27.
- Pluss, Martin. 2004. Digital divide in Australia. *Geography Bulletin* Spring: 56 - 59.
- Podber, Jacob J. 2008. Television's arrival in the Appalachian Mountains of the USA: An oral history. *Media History* 14(1): 5-52.
- Poole, Ian. 2001. *Antenna polarisation or polarization*. Radio-Electronics.Com: Resources and analysis for engineers. <http://www.radio-electronics.com/info/antennas/basics/polarisation-polarization.php> (accessed September 27, 2014).
- Popular Memory Group. 1982. Popular memory: theory, politics, method. In *Making Histories: Studies in History-Writing and Politics*, ed. Richard Johnson, Gregor McLennan, Bill Schwarz and David Sutton, 205 - 252. London: Hutchinson in association with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham.
- Portelli, Alessandro. 1997. *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Portelli, Alessandro. 1991. *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press.
- Postill, John. 2010. Introduction: Theorising media and practice. In *Theorising Media and Practice*, edited by B. Bräuchler and J. Postill, 1-26. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Rabbitt, Elaine. 2006. The oral history waltz: publishing there stories. In *Dancing with Memory: Oral History and its Audience : Proceedings of the 14th International Oral History Conference*, ed. Rosemary Block and Paula Hamilton, 1-11. Sydney: Oral History Association of Australia - New South Wales.
- Randles, Sally and Alan Warde 2006. Consumption: the view from theories of practice. In *Industrial Ecology and Spaces of Innovation*, eds. Ken Green & Sally Randles, 220-237. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

- Rawson, Donald. W, and Susan. M Holtzinger. 1958. *Politics in Eden-Monaro: The Personalities and The Campaigns*. Melbourne: Heinemann.
- Ryan, Bruce. 1965. Towns and settlements of the South Coast. PhD thesis, Dept of Geography, Australian National University, Canberra.
- Ryan, Bruce. 1964. A paradigm of country town development in New South Wales. *The Australian Journal of Social Issues* 2(1): 2-19.
- Scannell, Paddy. 1996. *Radio, Television, and Modern life A Phenomenological Approach*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Schneider, William. 2006. Oral history, memory, and meaning: an anthropological perspective. In *Dancing with Memory: Oral History and its Audience : Proceedings of the 14th International Oral History Conference*, ed. Rosemary Block and Paula Hamilton, 1-7. Sydney: Oral History Association of Australia - New South Wales.
- Schrøder, Kim Christian. 1999. The best of both worlds? Media Audience Research between rival paradigms. In *Rethinking the Media Audience: The New Agenda*, ed. Pertti Alasuutari, 1-21. London: Sage Publications.
- Shawcross, William. 1997. *Murdoch: the making of a media empire*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Shawcross, William. 1992. *Rupert Murdoch: Ringmaster of the Information Circus*. Milsons Point: Random House.
- Silverstone, Roger. 1989. Let us then return to the murmuring of everyday practices: a note on Michel de Certeau, television and everyday life. *Theory, Culture and Society* 6(1): 77-94.
- Smith, Ailie. 2010. *AUSSAT Pty Ltd (1979 - 1992)*. Encyclopedia of Australian Science. <http://www.eoas.info/biogs/A000356b.htm> (accessed January 26, 2015).
- Smith, Dorothy. 1999. *Writing The Social: Critique, Theory and Investigations*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Southgate, Beverley. 2001. *History: What and Why?* 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- Stacey, Jackie. 1994. *Star Gazing: Hollywood Ccinema and Female Spectatorship*. London: Routledge.

- Stone, Gerald. 2000. *Compulsive Viewing: The Inside Story of Packer's Nine Network*. Ringwood, Vic: Viking.
- Sweeney, Tony. 2006. Introduction. In *TV50*, ed. John Hartley, 3. Melbourne: Australian Centre for the Moving Image.
- Swidler, Ann. 2001. What anchors cultural practices. In *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, ed. Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr-Cetina and Eike von Savigny, 83-101. London: Routledge.
- Thompson, John B. 1995. *The Media and Modernity : A Social Theory of the Media*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Turner, Graeme 2000. Studying Television. In *The Australian TV Book* ed. Graeme Turner and Stuart Cunningham, 3 - 12. St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin.
- Television Wollongong Transmissions Limited (TWT Ltd.). 1977. *15th Annual Report Year ended June 1977*, [unpaginated], Wollongong: TWT Ltd.
- Unluer, Sema. 2012. Being an Insider Researcher While Conduction Case Study Research. *The Qualitative Report* 17(29): 1-14.
<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR17/unluer.pdf> (accessed October 22, 2013)
- Walton, Peter, Tegan Kop, David Spriggs, and Brendan Fitzgerald. 2013. Empowering All Australians. *Australian Journal of Telecommunications and the Digital Economy* 1(1). <https://telsoc.org/ajtde/2013-11-v1-n1/a9> (accessed July 26, 2014).
- Warde, Alan. 2005. Consumption and Theories of Practice. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 5: 131-153.
- Wikipedia: WikiProject Australian television. 2010. *Television in Australia*.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Australian_television
 (accessed 23 January, 2014).
- Willis, Suzanne, and Bruce Tranter. 2006. Beyond the 'digital divide'; internet diffusion and inequity in Australia. *Journal of Sociology* 42(1): 43-59.

Other reference types: podcasts and television/radio broadcasts

- Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). 2006. *Late proclamation of NSW-Victoria border segment*. ABC News podcast radio program. February 16,
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2006-02-16/late-proclamation-of-nsw-victoria-border-segment/800220> (accessed Feb. 22, 2006).

- Allen, Steve. 2006. *The new media laws*. ABC Radio National transcript radio program, <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/mediareport-1999/the-new-media-laws/3322278#transcript> (accessed March 27, 2008).
- Ayling, Louise. 2014. *Residents seek information on the National Broadband Network*. Power FM Local News podcast radio program. Sydney: Grant Broadcasters Pty Ltd. October 12. <http://www.2ec.com.au/news/45805-residents-seek-information-on-the-national-broadband-network> (accessed October 14, 2014).
- Holden, Frankie J. 2009. WIN Local News television program. Wollongong: WIN Corporation Pty Ltd, October 4.
- Marshall, Cameron. 2010. *Oakeshott and Windsor side with Gillard to form minority Labor Government*. ABC Mid North Coast transcript radio program. September 7. <http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2010/09/07/3005112.htm> (accessed September 9, 2010).
- News Breakfast 2015. ABC television program. Ultimo: Australian Broadcasting Corporation, February 23.
- Rodgers, Emma. 2010. *Conroy questions Turnbull's internet credentials*. ABC News transcript television program September 9. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/09/15/3012836.htm> (accessed September 9, 2010).
- Rowsthorn Peter with Jim Davern. 2009. *Is TV's 'Bellbird' a real place*. Moment in Time: Episode 5 podcast television program. Sydney: ABC Television, 13 March. <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/canwehelp/txt/s2515702.htm> (accessed Nov. 30, 2009)

APPENDIX 1 PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

Alcock, Sam, 73, Tantawangalo

Sam was born and grew up at Tantawangalo and from a very young age was interested in and experimented with sound technology. He moved to Sydney after completing his secondary schooling to study electronics at the Australian Radio School. After completing his training, Sam worked with several different electronics retailers, installing televisions before returning to Tantawangalo in the early 60s. He was employed at various times by Bruce Devlin and Roy Howard, both Bega television retailers, installing television sets across the district. He continues to "tinker" with electronics, and maintains a small cliental of local farmers for whom he works, fixing the old-style valve radios and televisions that this cohort prefers to use.

Armstrong, Alwyn, 89, Eden

Alwyn was the proprietor of Armstrong and Evans, a retail business in Eden, which sold a wide variety of goods including electrical appliances, clothing, toys and furniture. Armstrong and Evans was the only television retailing outlet in Eden throughout the 1960s and 70s. Alwyn was also the first person in Eden to own and operate a television set.

Bruce, Doris, age not provided, Mallacoota

Doris (Dot) has lived in the township of Mallacoota for over fifty years. She is the mother of project participant Valerie York.

Buchanan, Fraser, 49, Pambula

Fraser grew up in Pambula and began working as a television technician in 1975. He was at various times employed by television businesses in Merimbula, Bega and Eden. On returning to the district after some years in Sydney he established his own television/aerial maintenance business. He presently holds the position of President of the Pambula Chamber of Commerce.

Connor, Laurie (pseudonym), 61, Mallacoota

Laurie moved to Mallacoota in 1989 after many years of holiday-making in the township. For a period Laurie was employed by Retravisation in Eden specifically to deliver and install televisions in Mallacoota.

Douglas, David, 66, Mallacoota

David moved to Mallacoota around 1995 to take up the ownership and management of holiday units. David has extensive experience retailing televisions in Australia and New Zealand (NZ).

Hobbs, Jack, 84, Bemboka

Jack Hobbs ran the general store in Bemboka for many years. He is now retired but continues to live in Bemboka. Bega electrical retailer, Roy Howard, approached Jack just prior to the opening of the Brown Mountain translator station. Howard asked Jack to introduce him to his customers, mainly local community members, so he could broach them on the subject of television. A great number of sets were sold through this association. By way of thanks, Roy gave Jack a television set, his first.

McGrath, Jim, 61, Merimbula

Jim grew up on a dairy farm in Lochiel, near Pambula. He now works as a motor mechanic and is an active member of the Pambula Surf Club. Jim first purchased a television in about 1974 as a gift for his parents.

McGrath, Philip, 75, Eden

Philip worked for many years with the PMG department, firstly as a transmitter and receiver of telegrams and later as manager of the Eden Post Office. He left this position to work for Alwyn Armstrong as a manager of Armstrong and Evan's electrical department. As well as managerial duties the position also entailed the delivery, testing and installation of televisions from Eden to Mallacoota. Philip was working at the Eden Post Office during the period when the PMG was responsible for the issuing of radio and television licences.

Mann, Holly, (pseudonym), age not provided, Merimbula

Holly moved to Merimbula from Sydney in 1967 with her husband and three children. The family owned a television in Sydney, which they brought with them and set up on arrival, making them one of the earliest television owning families the township.

Marshall, Russell (pseudonym), age not provided, Mallacoota

Russell worked for many years as an engineer for Telstra. He moved to Mallacoota on retirement in the mid-1990s. He continues to "dabble" with technology, particularly satellite TV and has a reputation in the township as being the person to call for advice on satellite coverage.

Martin, Diane, 57, Merimbula

Diane moved to Merimbula from Sydney at the age of 7 with her family. The Martin's were the first family in the township to own a television set. Diane considers the television helped her and her siblings as "outsiders" to gain acceptance in the community.

Pheeney, Léone, 81, Mallacoota

Léone spent her early years in Mallacoota. As a teenager she moved to Kiama to complete her secondary education and then spent some years away before returning to the township and raising a family. Early attempts to receive television were unsuccessful consequently the family was one of the last in Mallacoota to get television. Léone is the sister of project participant Mione Wilson.

Reirdon, Sally (Pseudonym), age not provided, Pambula

Sally grew up on a dairy farm on Mount Tantawangalo and moved to Pambula on marriage. The couple had seven children many of whom still live in the district. Sally heard about television and "was curious". She talked her husband into buying a set some time in the 1960s.

Rudge, John, 69, Mallacoota

John moved to Mallacoota in the early 1960s with his wife Peggy when they took over the ownership of the Mallacoota Hotel. A television was bought in the late 1960s primarily to provide entertainment for hotel guests, although it was used by bar patrons, locals and visitors alike. At the time there was only one other set in the township.

Rudge, Peggy, 66, Mallacoota

Peggy was co-proprietor of the Mallacoota Hotel when television was first installed.

Smith, Gail, 57, Lochiel

Gail grew up in South Pambula. Gail remembers watching television as a child however the experience was marred by poor reception. Her uncle worked as a technician for the ABC at various times in Bega, Griffith and Canberra which gave her an insight into the workings of the industry. Gail moved to her present home in Lochiel with her husband Kenny in the 1970s.

Smith, Kenny, age not provided, Lochiel

Kenny grew up in the Pambula/Lochiel area. For many years the family owned the only television in the area and hosted many communal television watching events.

Tetley, Kevin, 68, Tarraganda

Kevin grew up in the township of Bega. He first saw television at the 1957 Bega Show. In the mid-1960s Kevin bought the old Star Picture Theatre building where he established a photographic business. The business was later expanded to include the retailing of hi-fi, sound equipment and televisions. Kevin is now retired from business and is an active member of the Bega Historical Society.

Wilson, Mione, 77, Mallacoota

Mione has spent all her life in Mallacoota. The decision to purchase a television in the early 1970s was prompted by the desire to provide her children with an educational tool rather than any yearning of her own. Mione prefers to listen to the radio or read a book for entertainment and news. Mione is the sister of project participant Léone Pheeney.

York, Valerie, 49, Mallacoota

Valerie was born and grew up in Mallacoota. She first saw television at the Mallacoota Hotel where a set had been installed in the "Green Room". In late 1969, Val's father bought a second-hand television in Melbourne and brought it back to Mallacoota. Valerie thinks their set was about the tenth in Mallacoota. Valerie also recalls watching television in Eden where she boarded whilst attending high school.

APPENDIX 2 - WATCHING TELEVISION IN MALLACOOTA

This sequence of photographs show the progress of a "drop out" or sudden signal failure event. The television "drop out" occurred in the Mallacoota motel room where I stayed whilst conducting research for this project in November 2009. Firstly the image rolled, then blurred, became snowy, disappeared completely for approximately ten minutes and finally rectified itself. All four available stations were affected. The problem reoccurred in the same form about an hour later and was repeated on subsequent evenings.

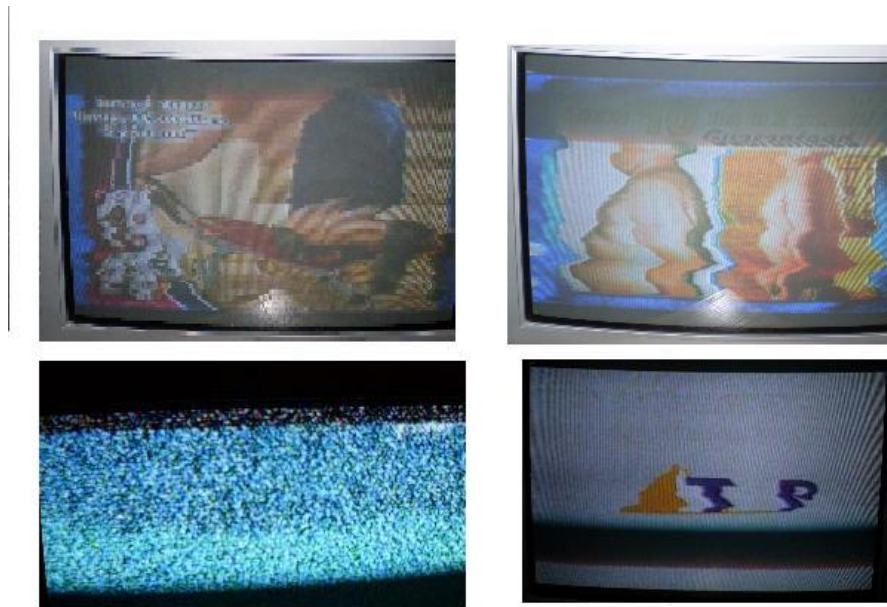


Fig.App.2.1. Watching television in Mallacoota, 2009: A signal 'drop out' event

Source: Personal photographic collection belonging to author.

According to motel proprietor and interviewee David Douglas, my experience of television was fairly typical in that particular location.

If you want to watch something in particular you can't watch it. Or you can only watch part of it. Or the signal is so bad you can't watch any of it. That happens quite often. So you flick over to another channel and that's the same - or worse - or better. They vary between channels. Channel 7 goes out fairly quickly, Channel 9 follows it. Channel 10 usually lasts a lot longer for some reason. I don't quite know what. Maybe they have a better system for up the coast. Channel 2 will stay on when the others are out, because it's satellite. But that will go out when the Telstra tower goes out. So it is all hinging on the one Telstra tower (Douglas 2009).

