"The National Times: bastard of a paper"

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"The National Times - Bastard of a Paper"

by

JESSICA AMOS
SCENE 1 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE, 1984
Fairfax Editor in Chief MAX SUICH leans against a desk, his
shirt sleeves rolled up, with the National Times open plan
office in the background.

KERRY O'BRIEN
[interviewer]
When you have a prime minister who,
even publicly, says he wished the
National Times would close, one
wonders what he says privately?

MAX SUICH
[laughing, arms crossed tightly]
Well he says very much the same
thing, but it's not something that's
going to worry you very much.

SCENE 2 EXT. COLUZZI'S CAFE DARLINGHURST RD. EARLY MORNING.
Media commentator and journalist PAUL CHADWICK places his coffee
back on the table.

PAUL CHADWICK
From its birth on 7 February 1971,
the National Times consistently
ventured where most other Australian
media would not go or were not
allowed to go.

A photo of Premier Neville Wran. Dissolve to:
A photo of Prime Minister Bob Hawke. Dissolve to:
A photo of Sir Peter Abeles. Dissolve to:
A photo of Alan Bond. Dissolve to:
A photo of Roger Rogerson.

PAUL CHADWICK [voice over]
On numerous occasions it angered
politicians, business people, police,
judiciary and Fairfax management with
what it published. Its best work was
the result of patient digging,
cultivation of leaks and bold
disclosure of what it found, whether
the topic was corruption, failings of
government or some aspect of social
change.

SCENE 3 INT. HOME OF GAVIN SOUTER, AUTHOR OF HERALDS AND ANGELS
THE HOUSE OF FAIRFAX 1841-1990.
Souter sits in his kitchen.

GAVIN SOUTER
Discussing the various Fairfax
publications, Hawke acknowledged the
objectivity of the Financial Review,
gave the Herald a pass rather than a
credit and castigated the National
Times as ‘a bastard of a paper’. Max
Suich who was then Chief Executive
Editor of Fairfax and Robert Haupt
then National Times editor defended
the National Times, but the Prime
Minister said he could not be
persuaded that attacks on himself,
Keating, Wran and their friends Sir
Peter Abeles, Warren Anderson and
Kerry Packer were not motivated by a
desire to destroy the most effective
politicians in the Labor Party.

SCENE 4 EXT. GARDEN AT HOME OF DAVID BOWMAN, MEDIA CRITIC,
FORMER EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF FAIRFAX, AND AUTHOR OF THE CAPTIVE
PRESS.
Bowman sits in his garden.

DAVID BOWMAN
Australian history shows that media
groups that get close to governments
prosper, while to oppose or even to
maintain an independent position is
to invite attack. Bob Hawke as Prime
Minister and Paul Keating as
Treasurer had absurdly tender egos,
and the intensity of their efforts to
square or squash the press ( as Lloyd
George put it) was decidedly unhealthy. It was undemocratic. The tragedy is that in the case of the National Times or the Times on Sunday as it became - they won.

SCENE 5 EXT. BODHI RESTAURANT, COOK & PHILLIP PARK, CNR COLLEGE AND WILLIAM STREET, SYDNEY.
Around thirty people - mainly journalists and staff who worked at the National Times and Times on Sunday await the arrival of food at their long table at the outdoors Bohdi restaurant. While Evan talks to the camera, they chat amongst themselves. VIC CARROLL sitting beside Evan listens and chuckles a little as Evan talks. The atmosphere is relaxed. The noise of the restaurant - plates, people laughing can be heard.

EVAN WHITTON
(Former editor of the National Times and journalist at the SMH)
The National Times was the brainchild of Vic "the Sorcerer" Carroll.
(Evan indicates Vic Carroll sitting next to him.) By 1973, Vic had been for a decade the most significant figure in Australian journalism. Most papers still clung to 'objective' reporting, which is fine, so long as the facts do the work. He took the view that facts are often meaningless, and should be interpreted. At Fairfax, he became editor of The Financial Review in 1964 and managing editor of the Review and of his invention, the National Times, from 1970. Vic got his nickname because of his knack for finding and developing promising apprentices, such as Max (gestures to Max Suich sitting along the table) and others.
A photo of the Fairfax building.

EVAN WHITTON [voice over]
I had been working at Truth for some
time but clearly the place to be was at Carroll’s fiefdom within the Fairfax organisation at Jones Street, Broadway. I sent Vic a letter in 1973.


He ended up foisting me on Max – editor at the National Times – who said it would never have occurred to him to employ me!

**Evan Whitton**

They did and after a couple of stories, Vic said, “Everyone seems to want to forget we were ever in Vietnam. I think we ought to reopen the wound.” As I proceeded with the research, I got more interested in the decision-making process, if any, that took us into the war.

**Scene 6 Archival Footage.**

Archival footage of Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies addressing parliament in 1965.

**Evan Whitton [voice over]**

The Foreign Affairs Department offered, and Adele Horin eventually confirmed in Washington, a novel view: that Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies had pushed the United States into the war on the ground in 1965. It followed that he was thus the remote cause of the deaths of millions.

**Scene 7 Archival Footage.**

An early seventies photo of the Fairfax board members.

Evan Whitton [voice over]
So the policy, of ground troops, which of course was a disaster, was ours, and for 10 years we'd been deceived. Critics, including members of the Fairfax board, felt the articles were biased against the Menzies government.

Scene 8. A Photo.
Vic Carroll, Max Suich and Evan Whitton laugh together at the camera in the early 1970s.

Evan Whitton [voice over]
According to Gavin Souter who wrote the official history of Fairfax and had to access to board minutes, Fairfax executive editor David Bowman 'received a joint memorandum from Carroll and Suich in which they stood by the accuracy of my article'.

Waiters deliver plates of food. People eat and talk animatedly.

Evan Whitton
For a while rumours percolated that we would all be sacked, but I didn’t take them seriously.

Former editor of the National Times and Fairfax Editor in chief Max Suich cuts in.

Max Suich
Another major National Times story around this time was the savage bashings of prisoners at Bathurst jail following riots due to horrendous conditions and the consequent cover up by the authorities.
SCENE 10 EXT. ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE. BATHURST JAIL.
Prisoners pace behind bars.

MAX SUICH [voice over]
Wardens, prisoners, administrators provided bland denials of this matter. But National Times journalist Anne Summers obtained confirmation from a warder which helped force a Royal Commission into the prison system.

DAVID HICKIE former National Times journalist - who has been listening - joins the conversation.

DAVID HICKIE [voice over]
I was reading these stories around this time while I studied commerce law at uni. When I finished studying in 1977 - I was 22 years old - I wrote a very naive letter to Max - who was editor then - asking were there any jobs for juniors? He ended up saying, "Look - we could use some help for a week."

SCENE 11 A PHOTO.
A young David Hickie sits on a desk in the National Times office.

DAVID HICKIE [voice over]
I had no experience whatsoever and walked into a very senior office - some of the best journalists in the country.

SCENE 12 EXT. BODHI RESTAURANT, SYDNEY.
David Hickie sits comfortably in his chair while talking to the camera. In the background can be heard the clinking of plates and other people at the table talking and laughing fondly.

DAVID HICKIE
It was a baptism by fire - 7 days a week 24 hours a day because I lived and breathed the newspaper culture - helping these senior people do stories. I liked the team mentality and the excitement of being in an office where people genuinely thought they were working on something worthwhile and you would do it any time of the day or night and nobody ever cared about clocking on and off.

SCENE 13 MONTAGE.
In a photo, Premier Neville Wran, Warwick Fairfax and James Fairfax stand at Fairfax Lookout with Sydney Harbour in the background.

DAVID HICKIE [voice over]
That same year James Fairfax became chairman of Fairfax in 1977 and he was certainly seen as a person who without fear or favour was interested in his papers pursuing the truth. Within a year Max became editor in chief at Fairfax and Evan took over as National Times editor.

In a photo, three men sit together in a race stand. The sound of a horse race being called can be heard faintly.

DAVID HICKIE [voice over]
That year Andrew Clark wrote about a photo of the Chief stipendiary magistrate Murray Farquhar - basically the head of the lower court system in this state - sitting in the members' stand at the Royal Randwick Racecourse with George Freeman.

The 1978 National Times headline 'The Chief Magistrate and the racing ticket' by Andrew Clark.

DAVID HICKIE [voice over]
Freeman was about the biggest SP betting operator and the best known criminal in this state and a third man who was another major crook.

SCENE 14 EXT. BODHI RESTAURANT, SYDNEY.
David Hickie talks to the camera.

DAVID HICKIE
This photograph when it appeared said to everyone - the judiciary is linked arm in arm with the criminals. Most of the working classes who were frequenting the pubs - which was the vast majority of Australians in those days - more or less thought what's wrong with a bit of illegal gambling - we know Fred the local bookie - we know that the money's actually going back to his family - his kids go to the same school as my kids - that happened right through from the depression - through to WW2. In the 1950s and 1960s - two things happened - the volume of money being bet on races substantially increased - tv had arrived and also the TABs started to come into play in the various states.

SCENE 15 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE.
Victoria Street, Kings Cross, Night. Neon lights and hustlers beckon servicemen on leave.

DAVID HICKIE [voice over]
At the same time the arrival of the American servicemen on R&R in Sydney - with very large sums of cash to spend - the drug trade started to take hold and a lot of the people who were in the illegal gambling industry were shown by 1974 Moffitt Royal Commission to be involved in the drug
trade.

SCENE 16 EXT. BODHI RESTAURANT, SYDNEY.
David Hickie talks to the camera.

DAVID HICKIE
International criminals were shown to have visited Australia and had dealt with people who had local criminal convictions in Australia – when that was shown by he Moffitt Royal Commission – certainly people thought – there is a lot more involvement with major criminals in the club and gambling industry then what we realised.

SCENE 17 EXT ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE.

DAVID HICKIE [voice over]
So by the late seventies and eighties when journalists at the National Times were writing about corruption, people know it’s not just Dad having a bit of a gamble – at the illegal casino.

SCENE 18 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE.
No Roses for Michael(1972). One youth injects another with heroin.

DAVID HICKIE [voice over]
People are worried- my son- your son - someone we know is potentially a heroin addict. Illegal gambling becomes the issue of the day because of its links to drug trafficking. Clark’s story was a red rag to the the press.

SCENE 19 MONTAGE.
A photo of Premier Neville Wran in parliament.
DAVID HICKIE [voice over]
However, there was then no independent inquiry into the photo of Farquhar with Freeman and it was frustrating when Wran allowed Chief Stipendiary Magistrate to retire several months later. The implications of Farquhar’s corruption in the photo did not emerge until the Street Royal Commission in 1983.

SCENE 20 EXT. BODHI RESTAURANT, SYDNEY.
Evan Whitton looks around knowingly as he talks to the camera.

EVAN WHITTON
At the start of the 1980s, a friend of mine had a metaphor for Sydney: a stagnant and foetid pool; once in a while, a rotting carcass rises to the surface, rolls over, and slips below the surface again. As the decade proceeded, the rollover rate accelerated rapidly.

People around Whitton laugh grimly and a waiter arrives with cold drinks.

NARRATION
In 1980, David Marr is editor of the National Times and Brian Toohey is deputy editor.

SCENE 21 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE

DAVID MARR
When Brian first came to work for the National Times, he’d start appearing with suitcases or bulky brief cases and you’d think for a while that he was travelling.
The Four Corners footage shows Brian Toohey making his way along a street carrying a bulky briefcase in 1984.

DAVID MARR [voice over]
And you'd check him out and you'd see that he wasn't dressed for travelling and you learnt that those were documents that he'd brought in the suitcase.

SCENE 22 INT. MONTAGE, ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE. 'Cinesound Review, 'The Royal Tour': The Royal Family are farewelled by various dignitaries, including Sir Bob Askin. Dissolve to: In preparation for printing, hands place the letters for the headline 'Askin: friend to organised crime.'

NARRATION
This team edit a story by journalist David Hickie the following year in 1981 about the former Liberal Premier Bob Askin and his payoffs from illegal gambling.

Archival footage (1981) ALP TV advertisement: Premier Wran strolls along a Sydney street with two elderly matrons.

NARRATION
Hickie's story implicates the Wran government because the illegal casinos are still open and still paying off politicians and police. However, Premier Wran prefers to side-step what he sees as a few rotten apples rather than entrenched corruption.

SCENE 23 EXT. BODHI RESTAURANT, SYDNEY. David Hickie talks to the camera.

DAVID HICKIE
As a journalist I was curious as to
why the illegal gambling clubs were able to operate so easily, why weren’t the police shutting them down. That led to a lot of people explaining to me over a period of a couple of years – the relationship of gambling club proprietors like Perce Galea who were leading operators of illegal gambling clubs and their relationship with politicians of the time – especially looking back at the period of 1965 to 1975 when all the American sailors on R&R were constantly in Kings Cross and that happened to coincide with Sir Bob Askin’s period as the premier of NSW. Then when I wanted to publish it in the National Times certainly I did go back to people and say I intend to publish this – a lot of people did get very nervous. There was a lot of pressure on at the time. It was a matter then of establishing a relationship and above all promising if they didn’t want their names revealed – that I wasn’t going to reveal them.

SCENE 24 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE, 1981.
Sir Askin’s funeral attended by many dignitaries.

NARRATION
The story is published just two days after Askin – the second longest serving Premier in NSW – dies and the day before his state funeral.

ABC News, Police Commissioner Fred Hanson stands on a podium.

FRED HANSON
I aim to clean up the image of the local police.
SCENE 26 EXT. BODHI RESTAURANT, SYDNEY.

DAVID HICKIE
The front page of the National Times, alleged that Bob Askin and police commissioner Fred Hanson - who incidentally had been found dead from carbon monoxide poisoning in his garage the previous year - that they each took bribes of $100 000 a year for around seven years from illegal casino operators.

David Marr - who has been listening - joins in.

DAVID MARR
We couldn’t publish before he died because of libel laws. We were waiting for him to die. The ex-Premier died as the paper went to press. We published before he was buried but after a tide of other obsequious drivel had appeared in the newspapers of Australia. The National Times said Askin was a crook.

David Hickie explains the journalists’ strength.

DAVID HICKIE
There was certainly a sense of ‘If something’s too hard for most other people to pursue - well then we’ll give it a go at the National Times. It was an absolute team environment in that office and that bred a very strong loyalty and a close knit group of people who knew each other very well.

As other journalists agree, BRIAN TOOHEY picks up the story.
BRIAN TOOHEY
At the time- Max, who was the editor in chief at Fairfax, stood by the story in the face of criticism from the Fairfax board and people like Premier Wran at the story’s timing. However he then told us that after it’s initial shock - the board wanted us to further investigate the possible corruption of other politicians and police in Sydney.

VIC CARROLL remembers.

VIC CARROLL
There followed six of the most abrasive years in the long history of strained relations between press and politicians. Hickie’s article had pointed at Askin, a Liberal Party leader. But Labor copped the fallout.

SCENE 27 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE, ABC NEWS, 1981.
Bill Allen stares straight ahead as he walks along a Sydney street in a smart suit.

NARRATION
Within weeks, Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser leaks to Max Suich that the Federal Police have information that Deputy Police Commissioner Bill Allen is compromised.

Four Corners ‘Life of Brian.’ MARIAN WILKINSON talks on the phone at her desk.

NARRATION
Suich asks Marian Wilkinson to investigate the allegations further.

SCENE 28 EXT. BODHI RESTAURANT, SYDNEY.
Marian Wilkinson describes the story. Some journalists at the table listen - others talk amongst themselves.

MARIAN WILKINSON
I wrote that several ‘colourful’
Sydney gambling and crime identities
covered costs for Allen and his
family to visit American and Chinese
casinos in May and June 1981 when
Allen was Assistant Police
Commissioner and responsible for
gaming, betting and licensing!

The National Times November 1981 headline ‘Police probe top
cop’s Las Vegas Holiday’ flies off the printing press in a re-
enactment.

MARIAN WILKINSON [voice over]
Despite a subsequent Police Tribunal
Report which condemned Allen’s
behaviour, the Wran government let
Allen retire in 1982 with a pension.

Max Suich leans into the conversation.

MAX SUICH
I had a long and friendly lunch in
late 1982 at which Neville Wran said
Fairfax were attacking his
government. At the same lunch, he
made references to the contributions
to Fairfax classified and display
advertising revenues by State
Government advertising. I took this
as an implied threat to cut back
these revenues.

SCENE 29 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE (1985).
Four Corners, ‘The life of Brian’. Brian Toohey, bulky suitcase
in hand, makes his way through the National Times office,
nodding to colleagues. He sits down at his cluttered desk.
Behind him is a pin-board with newspaper clippings.
NARRATION
Meanwhile also in 1982, Brian Toohey — who has a fearless reputation — becomes editor of the National Times.

SCENE 30 EXT. BODHI RESTAURANT, SYDNEY.
Brian Toohey, his former secretary Rosemary Mears and others laugh as a waiter brings tea.

ROSEMARY MEARS
It was amazing that Brian managed everything he did. He was always so low-key and untidy. We’d say to him, ‘Do your hair, Brian’, ‘Straighten your tie’, and he never knew where anything was. But — naturally if you had secrets you wanted to spill, who better to do it than Brian?

Four Corners ‘The Life of Brian’. Brian Toohey serves an ace in a doubles tennis match.

NARRATION
However Toohey becomes a hero to many. With his genius for picking gutsy stories and drawing hard nosed journalists to him, he goes toe to toe with powerful politicians and business people.

Brian Toohey and WENDY BACON sit in the audience enjoying a 1984 performance of the play ‘Sons of Cain.’

NARRATION
So much so that playwright David Williamson writes a play about a newspaper based on the National Times, in which actor Max Cullen plays the editor based on Toohey.

On stage, actor Max Cullen staunchly tells an actor playing a journalist how it is.
MAX CULLEN
We don’t have much scrutiny in this
country because the press is owned by
three men who aren’t very motivated
to scrutinise.

*Cullen pulls an invisible searchlight into place and his voice
gets louder and louder.*

Now I’ve been offered the chance to
exchange a little torch with three
volt batteries for a bloody great
searchlight AND I’M GOING TO USE IT
TO MAKE THIS COUNTRY A LITTLE MORE
HONEST IF AND IF YOU RECKON THAT’S
MUCKRAKING... you can just piss off.

SCENE 32 EXT. BODHI RESTAURANT, SYDNEY.
*Marian Wilkinson talks to the camera while other people at the
table sip on drinks.*

MARIAN WILKINSON
By 1983, there was still no
recognition by Wran or Keating that
the NSW Labour government, by then in
office for seven years, might be held
responsible for corruption within its
administration. They didn’t
understand that corruption in state
government, whether in the
Magistrates’ court, the Police Force
or the bureaucracy, is one of the
worst expressions of inequality in
the political system. Those with
money or contacts could manipulate
the system. Those without were left
with the unfairness and inefficiency
that corruption breeds.

SCENE 33 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE.
*Four Corners ‘The Greenlight State’ (1993) A police car crawls
slowly along Victoria Street, Kings Cross at night.*
MARIAN WILKINSON [voice over]
As the corruption spread through the
NSW police force like an epidemic,...

Intravenous drug users score drugs in a back lane
of Kings Cross at night.

...These low-income suburbs were
worst hit as organised drug
trafficking and illegal gambling grew
largely unchecked, severely
undermining their communities.

SCENE 34 A PHOTO.
A head and shoulders photo of the burly NSW Corrective Services
Minister Rex Jackson as he crosses a street.

MARIAN WILKINSON [voice over]
In October 1983 I saw Federal Police
transcripts of phone taps which
showed that NSW Prisons Minister Rex
Jackson was meeting or speaking
regularly with a go-between for
several prisoners and their solicitor
and appeared to be soliciting bribes
for the prisoners’ early release.

SCENE 35 EXT. BODHI RESTAURANT, SYDNEY.
Marian Wilkinson talks to the camera.

WILKINSON
Rex Jackson’s fearsome gambling habit
was legendary on just about every
horse and dog track in the state and
so was his losing streak. In short
the minister was in severe financial
difficulties. The rate of early
releases was running at a startling
fifty a month. Basically, the
prisons minister was abusing the
prisoner early release scheme in
return for bribes. Five months after
the Federal Police passed this sensitive information about Jackson to the NSW government, he was still in his ministry despite a NSW police investigation which denied the need for criminal proceedings.

SCENE 36 A PHOTO.
A chummy photo of Jack Ferguson and Neville Wran.

NARRATION
On October 26, Wilkinson sends eight questions to Jackson, the acting Premier Jack Ferguson and Neville Wran, indicating her exact knowledge of Jackson's bribes in return for the early release of prisoners. Jackson or 'Buckets' as he was known—because of the abuse he hurled at other ministers in parliament—threatened to sue for libel.

SCENE 37 EXT. BODHI RESTAURANT, SYDNEY.
Marian Wilkinson talks to the camera.

MARIAN WILKINSON
Between 5.30 pm and 7.30 pm—that evening—on the day the story was due to go to press, the National Times received calls from several government officials asking if our report on Jackson was in fact going ahead.

A photo shows Premier Wran surrounded by journalists at a press conference following Jackson's resignation. Dissolve to:

The National Times headline, 'Why Jackson Resigned - The eight questions that led to a political crisis'.

MARIAN WILKINSON [voice over]
Then soon after 8 pm that day, Wran
issued a press statement, announcing that he had sought the resignation of Jackson knowing that we were going to publish the story the next day - which we did. Once again the Wran Labor Government was plunged into a crisis and exposed as weak on corruption.

A black and white photo shows WENDY BACON working at her desk in the National Times office in 1984.

NARRATION
Journalist Wendy Bacon joins the National Times the same year that Marian Wilkinson's story about Rex Jackson is published.

SCENE 38 EXT. SUMALEE THAI RESTAURANT, BANK HOTEL, NEWTOWN, SYDNEY.
Marian Wilkinson, Wendy Bacon and David Marr and others sit comfortably around one of the huge old wooden tables surrounded by palms and ferns. People move between tables in the background.

WENDY BACON
Jackson's resignation could have been the opening into a wide ranging inquiry into all the material on the Federal phone taps relevant to corruption in NSW, including police involvement in drug trafficking and the early release scheme, which overlap according to the Federal Police phone taps. Instead the NSW government - facing the crisis of Jackson's resignation and with Wran under heavy pressure to reveal more of what he knew of the contents of the Federal material, a special act was rushed through parliament. It had the specific purpose of restricting the use of the Federal
phone taps in the subsequent inquiry. The government allows the inquiry to examine only the phone taps which relate directly to the release of the three Broken Hill prisoners, and not to other criminal proceedings recorded by the phone taps.

SCENE 39 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE.
ABC news, 1983. A police van pulls up outside Darlinghurst Courthouse. Two police unlock the van and Rex Jackson climbs out in handcuffs. The police lead the burly man into the courthouse.

NARRATION
Jackson goes to court and later to jail. However, the journalists are astounded at the coverup of evidence.

SCENE 40 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE.
Four Corners ‘The Greenlight State’. In the light of an interrogation style lamp, journalist Bob Bottom listens through headphones to spools of running tape.

NARRATION
At the time of the Rex Jackson story, Marian Wilkinson receives more tapes and transcripts of phone taps made in 1979 and 1980, from journalist Bob Bottom. Wilkinson faced a dilemma. The tapes have allegedly recorded a Federal High Court Judge involved in injudicious behaviour but they have been illegally made by anonymous NSW police.

SCENE 41 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.
Marian Wilkinson and David Marr listen as Wendy Bacon remembers the events.

WENDY BACON
Marian who first received the summaries knew, from her contacts
with politicians that while the transcripts might not be entirely accurate, they were authentic. Was she supposed to sit on the summaries never mentioning their contents to another soul? Or was she supposed to hand them over to the NSW or Federal Police knowing there would be no proper investigation (as turned out to be the case) and after that was she supposed to destroy the tapes and forget the incident had ever occurred?

A close-up of the National Times November 1983 headline, ‘Big shots bugged’ and graphics.

WENDY BACON [voice over]
What Marian did was outline some of the contents which demonstrated the most crucial issue— that a solicitor who was clearly involved in a variety of criminal activities including the exploitation of illegal immigrants— was having regular dealings with a number of public officials including a judge.

SCENE 42 MONTAGE.
Headlines about the Age Tapes including Marian Wilkinson’s National Times headline: ‘The Phone Taps: The Net Widens’.

NARRATION
Subsequent stories in the National Times and other newspapers cause politicians to name in parliament, people allegedly recorded by the phone taps.

SCENE 43 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.
Marian Wilkinson talks to the camera.

MARIAN WILKINSON
What horrified Neville Wran and the NSW Labor Party was the revelation in Parliament in early 1984, and reported in the *National Times*, that a tap had been placed on the telephone of the old Labor industrial lawyer, Morgan Ryan.

**SCENE 44 A PHOTO.**
*Solicitor Morgan Ryan speaks on the phone.*

**MARIAN WILKINSON [voice over]**
For two years these particular phone taps had recorded this lawyer, Morgan Ryan, on the line to his extensive network in Sydney.

**SCENE 45 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE.**
*Four Corners. A journalist interviews Abe Saffron at an outdoor cafe.*

**MARIAN WILKINSON [voice over]**
That included Abe Saffron, Sydney’s vice king, and many others, lining up shady deals like the appointment of a judge and the payment of $50 000 to a senior government bureaucrat in hope of a casino licence.

*Photos of Merv Wood and Murray Farquhar.*

**MARIAN WILKINSON [voice over]**
It also included the former NSW police commissioner, Merv Wood; the former Chief Magistrate, Murray Farquhar, numerous police officers and immigration department officials; and the odd Liberal Party politician.

*A photo shows Lionel Murphy and Premier Neville Wran happily shaking hands.*

**MARIAN WILKINSON [voice over]**
Disastrously for Labor, the tapes also snared Morgan Ryan's telephone conversations with the High Court Judge, Lionel Murphy who is named in the Queensland parliament after pressure from the National Times and other papers.

SCENE 46 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.
Marian Wilkinson, Wendy Bacon and David Marr and some others sit at the outdoor restaurant at the back of the Bank Hotel and talk to each other and the camera about the Age Tapes.

WENDY BACON
When we discovered that Lionel Murphy was on the secret tapes, we were really not pleased. He was someone on the High Court whose judgements I would have agreed with.

Marian Wilkinson looks directly at the camera.

MARIAN WILKINSON
Lionel Murphy was one of the few genuine left-wing Labor heroes.

SCENE 47 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE INT. 1975.
Lionel Murphy in wig and gown, on his first day as high court judge seats himself proudly behind his desk.

WENDY BACON [voice over]
He advanced the case of the underprivileged and those who were the victim of injustice.

SCENE 48 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.
Wendy Bacon and David Marr listen as Wilkinson explains. Waiters move in the background adjusting tables and serving drinks.

MARIAN WILKINSON
But Murphy was a flawed hero. His association with Morgan Ryan was
injudicious to say the least. The phone taps allegedly revealed Ryan seeking Murphy’s advice after he was charged with criminal conspiracy over an immigration racket.

_Bacon adjusts her seating._

WENDY BACON
Should the journalists, such as Marian, who first received the information have kept it secret?

_A photo of Gough Whitlam’s first cabinet in 1972 including Lionel Murphy._

WENDY BACON [voice over]
Should they have decided as some Labor lawyers suggest that the conduct of Lionel Murphy be excluded from examination because he is a "Good Bloke" or makes judgements sympathetic to left wing causes?

_David Marr talks to the camera._

DAVID MARR
NSW Premier Wran was resisting the calls for the further investigation of this worrying evidence against Murphy by arguing that what mattered most here was the illegality of the taping.

SCENE 49 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE
_Four Corners ‘The Life of Brian.’ Premier Neville Wran stands at a ‘door-stop’ interview, 10 February 1984._

PREMIER WRAN
I think the National Times has behaved very badly in relation to the NSW Police. They first of all were not prepared to provide any material—
they were not prepared to provide any information as to sources-

PRESS CONFERENCE JOURNALIST
(cuts in)
-They claim-
PREMIER WRAN
-They can claim what they like - I’m telling you what the facts are!

SCENE 50 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.
As the journalists talk, people sit at a nearby table.

MARIAN WILKINSON
We took the position that the documents were compiled in the NSW Police Force- therefore copies should be available to them from their own files. The National Times simply would not disclose the source of its documents on this matter to the police or hand over those documents.

SCENE 51 A NATIONAL TIMES CARTOON.
Premier Wran glares at an overflowing box of tapes. His phone is taped up and disconnected.

NARRATION
The government wins the March 1984 election but loses 11 seats because of unresolved allegations. Stories in the National Times and other newspapers about the tapes and allegations concerning High Court Judge Lionel Murphy contribute to the setting up of a Federal Senate Committee of Inquiry on 28 March into Murphy’s conduct.

The National Times headline, “My little mate”: new evidence in the tapes affair - the high court judge and the magistrate’ by Wendy Bacon.
NARRATION
In June 1984 Wendy Bacon publishes evidence given in-camera by Chief Magistrate Clarrie Briese before this Senate Inquiry.

SCENE 52 MONTAGE
Archival footage ABC news: Clarrie Briese walks along a city street towards the camera. He holds up his hand to signal: no comment. Dissolve to:
Clarrie Briese sits in his chambers and looks at the camera.

MARIAN WILKINSON [voice over]
Wendy reported that Briese claimed that in 1981 High Court Judge Lionel Murphy had attempted to use his influence to get the charges against his friend solicitor Morgan Ryan, dropped in the Magistrates' Court, after Ryan was charged with criminal conspiracy over an immigration racket. Bacon wrote that Briese alleged that Justice Murphy had used the words 'And what about my little mate?' in a discussion with Briese about Morgan Ryan.

SCENE 53 INT. HOUSE OF GAVIN SOUTER.
Souter sits in his kitchen.

GAVIN SOUTER
In July, Wendy Bacon reported more evidence by Briese that a district court judge who said he was acting on behalf of a state minister had asked Briese how likely it was that the magistrate hearing the case against Morgan Ryan could be influenced.

SCENE 54 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.
Wendy Bacon talks to David Marr and Marian Wilkinson as well as the camera. Some at the table listen. Some eat. Some chat.
BACON
What the Fairfax press called for and what NSW Chief Magistrate Clarrie Briese wanted when he gave evidence at the first Senate Committee inquiry into Murphy's behaviour, was a Royal Commission into the hidden networks which influence political decision making in NSW because the press was hamstring by the limitations of defamation and contempt law. Instead of an open inquiry, there were secret inquiries and a trial which pursued the narrow and subsidiary question of whether Murphy had been guilty of perverting the course of justice in a case against Ryan.

SCENE 55 MONTAGE.
Jim McClelland and Lionel Murphy stand together in jovial photo at a party at McClelland's house in 1984. Dissolve to: A photo of Jim McClelland, Neville Wran and Lionel Murphy standing shoulder to shoulder at Neville Wran's wedding in 1976.

NARRATION
Another judge, Jim McClelland confides to Bacon and Marr that Murphy had also tried to influence him in regards to the case against Ryan. However McClelland will not release the journalists from his confidence.

SCENE 56 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.
David Marr talks to the camera.

DAVID MARR
We were hedged in by those confidences, and while we sat there, copping this shit being poured on us, and watching the shit being thrown on two fine men, Clarrie Briese and Paul
Flannery who also gave evidence, two judicial figures in the city of Sydney, we had evidence which was of importance and we could not give it. Instead Premier Wran directly attacked the *National Times*.

*SCENE 57 INT. ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE.*

**NEVILLE WRAN**
What are the precise terms of the allegation?

**REPORTER (off camera)**
Well the allegation has been widely reported-

**WRAN (aggravated, cuts in)**
-NO!-the truth is you don’t know what the allegation is – none of you know what the allegation is – except what’s been reported in the *National Times*!

*SCENE 58 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.*
*A long shot of everyone eating and enjoying the company and conversation.*

**NARRATION**
In August 1984, the *National Times* receives another blow when the board reduces the *National Times* editor, Brian Toohey’s control.

*SCENE 59 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE, INT. 1984.*
*Four Corners ‘Life of Brian.’ Jeff Penburthy and Brian Toohey chat informally at Toohey’s desk.*

**REPORTER KERRY O’BRIEN [voice over]**
Toohey’s power as editor was reduced when another senior Fairfax
journalist Jefferson Penburthy was appointed managerial editor on 16 August 1984. At the time the staff went on strike concerned that the paper's hard news edge was under threat.

SCENE 60 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.
Max Suich talks to the camera as others continue their conversations. Waiters bring more plates of food.

MAX SUICH
We appointed a managerial editor because Brian became too involved as a writer. I wanted him to achieve a balance between corruption stories and those about the arts and sports.

Max looks at Brian who laughs outright. Dissolve to:
Long shot of table of people talking.

NARRATION
However the stories about corruption keep coming in the National Times and the SMH and the Wran government tightens the screws on the publisher, John Fairfax and Sons.

Vic Carroll talks to the camera.

VIC CARROLL
The Wran government terminated its contract for classified advertising in the SMH and the AGE with Fairfax in September of 1984. Worth $3 million a year - the contract was known as the 'river of gold'.

Max Suich leans into the camera.

MAX SUICH
State and Federal Governments were
enlivened by guilt, fear of exposure, and with the healthy paranoia that this excites, they put in the boot.

SCENE 61 A STILL SHOT
The Australian Journalism Review headline ‘Press council statement on classified ads.’ Dissolve to: the body of the article where it reads ‘a matter possibly affecting the freedom of the press.’

NARRATION
The press council and others declare concern at this political pressure. Although Fairfax eventually regains the contract the publisher loses $3000,000. It was the money from this contract which had helped Fairfax cross subsidise the National Times which had yet to make sustained profits.

Four Corners ‘The life of Brian’. Fairfax Editor in Chief Max Suich leans against a desk, sleeves rolled up, in the cluttered National Times office.

MAX SUICH
The actual removal of advertising is without doubt the most significant act that has happened in the five years that I’ve been in this job.

SCENE 63 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.
Vic Carroll remembers.

VIC CARROLL
Due to this development and others, the last two weeks of September 1984 were possibly the most dramatic of the stormy 1980s.

Marian Wilkinson cuts in.
MARIAN WILKINSON

But it was only weeks later in October 1984 that the National Times faced a contempt of senate charge because it had published Briese’s secret evidence.

SCENE 64 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE, 1984.

ABC News ‘Senate contempt hearing’: Journalists hover with microphones and cameras. Brian Toohey and Max Suich sit back against a wall chatting together quietly.

ABC REPORTER [voice over]
Both Mr Toohey and the Chief Editorial Executive Mr Max Suich had no regrets about publishing the in camera evidence. Mr Suich described the information on the tapes as hair-raising to which the Briese evidence had added weight at a time of considerable public debate about the need for an inquiry into the administration of justice in NSW.

Wendy Bacon talks to another journalist at the same hearing.

ABC REPORTER [voice over]
The journalist who wrote the article, Ms Wendy Bacon, told the committee that there had been coverup after coverup in NSW and widespread corruption in court cases.

SCENE 65 A PHOTO.

Wendy Bacon, Max Suich and Brian Toohey leave Parliament House together following contempt hearing.

NARRATION
Bacon, Toohey and Suich refuse to apologise for alleged contempt. Fairfax is found guilty of contempt with the threat of foreboding fines if there is any further contempt
charge. However, in the meantime the National Times has published a controversial story by Brian Toohey in September 1984.

SCENE 66 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE.
ABC news, Royal Commissioner Frank Costigan.

NARRATION
Toohey uses summaries in the story from the Costigan Royal Commission into the Painters and Dockers Union, which were not intended for publication.

The National Times headline 'Delays over Costigan's controversial recommendations' by Brian Toohey.

NARRATION
Toohey includes allegations that a prominent businessman, code-named 'the Goanna', has financed a tax avoidance scheme that he is linked to the trafficking of illegal drugs, that he is implicated in the death of a bank manager, and that he has deliberately frustrated the Costigan Royal Commission.

SCENE 67 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE.
ABC news (February 1984): Kerry Packer hurries down the street, after giving evidence before the Costigan Royal Commission.

FOUR CORNERS PRESENTER ANDREW OLLE
[voice over]
Mr Kerry Packer, media baron and multifaceted businessman subsequently identified himself, on September 28, as the Goanna. He sued the publisher of the National Times, John Fairfax and Sons Ltd for defamation.

Close-up of apology in newsprint: "John Fairfax and Sons Limited
sincerely regrets and apologises for the embarrassment and hurt caused to Mr Kerry Packer and his family by the article...”

NARRATION
Fairfax sides against the journalists when it settles with Packer out of court.

Four Corners presenter ANDREW OLLE addresses the camera with a cartoon of Brian Toohey on a pretend National Times cover in the background.

ANDREW OLLE
Well this week the National Times and other Fairfax publications carried an unequivocal apology to Mr Packer and stated that they were not aware of any evidence to support the Costigan allegations. No journalist likes being forced into a public back-down.

Brian Toohey responds to Four Corners interviewer.

BRIAN TOOHEY
My role as a journalist is to tell people what's going on—just because someone wants to keep it secret is no reason for the journalist not to do it.

SCENE 68 MONTAGE
National Times headlines: 'Heroin and the cops connection - Another case raises serious concerns about the role of the NSW Police and the drug trade', 'Drugs and police: a disturbing pattern', 'Dying detective names policeman over shooting.'

NARRATION
Tension continues to rise between the journalists and the powers that be in NSW because Wendy Bacon’s ongoing stories about corruption in the NSW Police Force aggravate Premier Wran
who does not want to upset the powerful NSW Police Force.

SCENE 69 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE.

NARRATION
The title of Wendy Bacon's November 1984 story refers to a tradition amongst Sydney's crooked cops.

SCENE 70 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE.
Four Corners 'The Greenlight State' (1993). Detective Rogerson and other detectives stand around at a crime scene in the 1980s. Cut to:
Roger Rogerson watches two men haul a body into a body bag at another crime scene.

NARRATION
Bacon's story reveals that the most highly decorated police person in the NSW police force - Detective Roger Rogerson has been charged with the attempted bribery of fellow detective Michael Drury.

SCENE 71 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE.
'Blue Murder' (1995). An assassin takes aim. Two bullets then pass through a window into another man as he is feeding his child in his kitchen.

NARRATION
Rogerson is also implicated in the subsequent attempt on Drury's life.

SCENE 72 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE.
Four Corners 'The Life of Brian' (1985): Wendy Bacon talks on her phone at work while leafing through a pile of documents.

NARRATION
Wendy Bacon's story compiles other allegations; that Rogerson murdered
drug trafficker Warren Lanfranchi, attempted to murder an ex prisoner and that he was involved in armed robberies when he was a member of the Armed Hold-up Police Squad.

SCENE 73 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT. Wendy Bacon explains while other journalists listen or continue with their own conversations. The atmosphere is relaxed.

WENDY BACON
We were trying to build up a case for a Royal Commission into corruption in the NSW Police Force. We were arguing that corruption was endemic.

SCENE 74 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE EXT. ABC News (1985): With Darlinghurst Courthouse in the background, Roger Rogerson, crowded by the press, elbows his way through the courthouse grounds to the exit.

ABC REPORTER [voice over]
For Roger Rogerson, it was the third time he faced a criminal charge and his third not guilty verdict.

SCENE 75 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT. Former Managing Editor for the National Times JEFFERSON PENBURTHY talks to the camera.

JEFFERSON PENBURTHY
Then in 1985 the Wran Government charged the company as publishers and Wendy Bacon with contempt of court for the barbecue set story about Roger Rogerson which I edited - because it was published the day after Rogerson received the summons for attempting to bribe Drury.

SCENE 76 MONTAGE. The name of the court case at front of transcript: 'HER MAJESTY'S ATTORNEY GENERAL IN AND FOR THE STATE OF NSW V
JOHN FAIRFAX AND SONS LIMITED AND BACON.' Cut to:
A close up of Justice Glass’s face speaking at the contempt
hearing in the NSW Supreme Court. (It is a recreation.)

JUSTICE GLASS
This is the first time a journalist
had been charged with contempt in
this country, is it? We are left to
our own devices then to conjecture
why this lady was singled out. In my
opinion the charges of contempt
should be dismissed.

Newspaper headlines and print about Roger Rogerson: ‘Police
Killing: Storm Grows’, ‘The Lanfranchi file’, ‘...the puzzle on
how Warren Lanfranchi and Detective Rogerson arrived at their
fatal encounter...’, ‘...suggested that Sergeant Rogerson had
killed Lanfranchi because he had cheated police in a heroin
deal...’

NARRATION
The National Times lawyer proves that
allegations against Rogerson had been
publicised for several years. So the
story cannot be prejudicial and is in
the public interest. The victory is a
vindication for the journalists.
Also, Wendy Bacon’s stories help make
the NSW Police Force dismiss Rogerson
in 1986 after years of grisly
allegations. The Wood Royal
Commission finds in 1997, that
corruption in the NSW Police Force is
indeed “entrenched and systemic”.

SCENE 77 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.
Brian Toohey, Wendy Bacon, JEFF PENBURTHY, Max Suich, Vic
Carroll and others sit outside the restaurant at one of the long
wooden tables.

BRIAN TOOHEY
Geoff Kittney, Geraldine Brooks,
Wendy Bacon and I had written a story
about an allegation about Sir Peter Abeles - originally published in the SMH.

SCENE 78 INT. ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE.
Sir Peter Abeles addresses the 1983 Australian Economic Summit.

BRIAN TOOHEY [voice over]
The SMH had had to use the Freedom of Information Act to get the information.

SCENE 79 INT. OFFICE OF STEPHEN MAYNE.
Stephen Mayne - former owner of Crikey.com - talks to the camera.

STEPHEN MAYNE
Abeles was a transport magnate who acquired his knighthood from Bob Askin over a hand of cards. He was notorious for issuing various stopper writs against critics in the 1970s and 1980s.

A photo of Sir Peter Abeles talking directly into Neville Wran’s ear.

STEPHEN MAYNE [voice over]
He insulated himself against much media scrutiny by forging alliances with senior media and political figures.

Four Corners ‘Flying High: Sir Peter Abeles’: Passengers board an Ansett plane while another Ansett plane takes off. Cut to: TNT vehicles rumble along.

FOUR CORNERS PRESENTER MARIAN
WILKINSON [voice over]
When you consider that in 1987, seven out of every one hundred dollars in Australia was spent on transport -
you begin to understand the power of Peter Abeles and TNT in the 1980s.

SCENE 81 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.
Brian Toohey explains the story for the camera while the others sip drinks. In the background people make their way to their tables.

TOOHEY
The allegation concerned an Australian transport industry mission to China in June 1985 which somehow became an exclusive tour for Sir Peter Abeles’s companies—TNT and Ansett. I wrote that it was an example of Abeles’ incredible influence on Bob Hawke.

Close-up of text of story over which a photo of Abeles’s public relations agent—Martin Dougherty—is gradually superimposed: "Hawke as Prime Minister has more contact with Abeles than any other businessman, both at the business and personal level... Soon after the 1983 election victory Hawke put Abeles high on the invitation list for the Economic Summit. Abeles was a powerful advocate of Hawke’s economic strategy— with the prices and incomes accord as its foundation... In August last year, Abeles was appointed to the Board of the Reserve Bank... a position that allows an intimate insight into the conduct of the country’s monetary policies... and most significant of all, ready access to most of the key figures in the financial community..." Dissolve to:

A photo: Martin Dougherty and Laurie Connell in suits walk along a city street with their brief cases looking somewhat surprised.

JEFFERSON PENBURTHY [voice over]
Abeles’s public relations agent, Martin Dougherty somehow heard about the story on Abeles before it was published.

Former Managing Editor Jefferson Penburthy talks to the camera.
JEFFERSON PENBURTHY
Dougherty rang me – he said that Sir Warwick Fairfax and the Fairfax board were unhappy about the upcoming story and with me because I hadn’t ‘tamed’ the National Times. Moreover that Sir Peter Abeles was a close friend of Sir Warwick and Lady Fairfax. I told Dougherty that basically I wasn’t interested.

SCENE 82 INT. HOME OF GAVIN SOUTER.
Souter sits in his kitchen.

GAVIN SOUTER
Dougherty contacted Suich who stood by the journalists but grimly warned Penburthy that the story had better be right. Like his two predecessors Brian Toohey and David Marr, Penburthy encountered the full force of Suich’s temper! After one such experience he reported that the chief editorial executive’s face had been so contorted with rage as to have been barely recognisable!

In a re-enactment, the headline: ‘Peter Abeles – Empire of Influence’ by Wendy Bacon, Geraldine Brooks, Geoff Kittney and Brian Toohey – rolls rapidly through the press.

GAVIN SOUTER [voice over]
At a board meeting on 19 September in 1985, the day the issue containing ‘Empire of Influence’ went to press, Sir Warwick said he was considering what should be done about the National Times.

Souter talks to the camera.

GAVIN SOUTER
He said people regarded it as a
publication which wanted to capitalise on people's mistakes.

SCENE 83 EXT. GARDEN AT HOME OF DAVID BOWMAN.  
David Bowman sits in his garden with a cool drink.

DAVID BOWMAN  
Managing editor Jefferson Penburthy had proved to be a journalist and not a policeman. So the next step was to transfer Penburthy, appoint Robert Haupt editor in January 1986 and give Toohey the empty title of contributing editor.

SCENE 84 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.  
The journalists talk informally. The sound of plates clinking can be heard in the background.

WENDY BACON  
I think that the questions we raised, when Brian Toohey was the editor at the time, I think he felt there were significant political questions to be asked about the relationship between Sir Peter Abeles and leaders of the Labor Party but if no-one else is asking those questions, it can look like obsession, it can be called obsession and it was. But I think when history is told I think there is now quite a lot of material that I think will be published.

Max Suich cuts in.

MAX SUICH  
As well pressure because of the stories - there was also financial pressure. Newspapers such as The Australian can take 20 years to make sustained profits. The National Times had lost $12.8 million since it
began. Fairfax did typically cross subsidise journalism about important issues which often attracts less readers than lifestyle journalism. However I thought we might stand more of a chance if we made the National Times a Sunday paper and a broadsheet instead of a tabloid. It eventually became the Times on Sunday.

WENDY BACON
The first story in the Times on Sunday, on 10 August 1986, which was only two weeks after the National Times closed - it was the same people - the same team - was a story about Warren Anderson, supermarket developer and good friend of Treasurer Paul Keating, and in particular their dealings with antique clocks.

MARIAN WILKINSON
Anderson's company, New World Developments, had by now become one of the biggest shopping centre developers in Sydney.

Close up of 'The multi-level world of Warren P. Anderson' by Brian Toohey, Colleen Ryan and Wendy Bacon with photo in article of Warren Anderson.

WENDY BACON [voice over]
His success involved employing stand over men Tom Domican and Tim Bristow to bully opponents to his supermarket sites like restauranteur Albert Ling - someone cut his hotwater pipes, smashed his electricity meters, set fire to his building and fired two bullets into it.

Wendy Bacon sips from a glass of water as she talks.
WENDY BACON
Other opponents were surprised when Anderson turned up to a council meeting with the then Youth and Community Minister Rex Jackson.

MARIAN WILKINSON
What emerged later was that Anderson gave thousands of dollars to Jackson for gambling. Anderson was also actively cultivating his friendships with both ALP heavyweight Graham Richardson and Paul Keating. He made large donations to the ALP.

BRIAN TOOHEY
But his companies rarely recorded a profit despite his obvious wealth.

SCENE 85 EXT. BAD MANNERS CAFE, GLEBE, SYDNEY.
Journalist and author of ‘Sense and Censorship’ Michael Pollak comments.

MICHAEL POLLAK
Toohey objected to the pretensions of powerful men like Anderson who sought to put themselves beyond media scrutiny. He noted that men like Anderson and Sir Peter Abeles, a Hawke confidante, had the clout to influence what was written and said about them.

SCENE 86 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.
Wendy Bacon adjusts her seat as she remembers.

WENDY BACON
Keating was seriously very angry about the article and I think the Fairfax press began to pay.

MAX SUICH
I initiated a meeting with Prime Minister Bob Hawke to try and smooth relations for the benefit of our Canberra correspondents without a lot of success (laughs ironically) - Hawke called the National Times a 'bastard of a paper' - he thought it was out to destroy the Labour Party.

SCENE 87 MONTAGE.

National Times and Times on Sunday Headlines: 'Murphy forces gather. Preparation for an appeal against Lionel Murphy's conviction', 'Murphy versus the Crown. Evidence from the historic criminal trial of High Court judge Lionel Murphy', 'Temby rejects advice to charge Murphy again', 'The judge who would not take the oath. Comment on the acquittal of Lionel Murphy', 'I can no longer remain silent'

NARRATION

Around the same time as the Anderson story, the political crisis surrounding the Age Tapes and the imminent Commission of Inquiry into Lionel Murphy's conduct implodes.

SCENE 88 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE INT.


LAURIE OAKES

Lionel Murphy has terminal cancer.

SCENE 89 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.

Evan Whitton speaks to the camera.

EVAN WHITTON

On 21 August, the Hawke government introduced legislation to terminate the Murphy inquiry 'forthwith'. The terms were breathtaking. The documents and allegations made against Murphy at the inquiry were to be suppressed forever. Any person
disclosing the allegations could be imprisoned for six months or fined $5000, or both.

SCENE 90 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE.
ABC NEWS. Presenter Damien Morecroft speaks to the camera.

DAMIEN MORECROFT
No further investigations will be pursued into the conduct of Justice Lionel Murphy, following his death from cancer. Tributes were paid to Murphy in federal parliament.

SCENE 91 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE INT. ABC NEWS (1986).

NEWS-ANCHOR
A close friend of the late judge, Lionel Murphy, former South Australian Attorney General Peter Duncan accused National Times reporter David Marr of fanaticism.

A photo of Peter Duncan seated in parliament.

PETER DUNCAN
[voice over: ABC sound recording]
To the tormentors I say you have misjudged this man in life. You have had your victory - the victory of evil over good.

SCENE 92 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.
Some of the other journalists listen as Wendy Bacon explains.

WENDY BACON
There will be many who will think I have been harsh on Murphy. It is likely the stress of the last two years contributed to his early death. His death was a reminder, if I needed one, of the pain you can help cause as a journalist - not that I believe
I was the cause of his misfortune. In the end journalistic activity - or equally political activity - would become paralysed if you stopped every time you were going to cause pain.

SCENE 93 EXT. GARDEN AT HOME OF DAVID BOWMAN.  
David Bowman remembers events.

DAVID BOWMAN  
By this time, some of the best and brightest journalists, makers of the paper’s reputation, had moved out - Marian Wilkinson, Wendy Bacon and others. Of the top investigators, only Brian Toohey remained. Only occasionally did the new paper come near the promises. Circulation, after the initial flurry, fell back to hardly more than the old paper. Given more time and certainly more resources, Haupt might have yet established a successful newspaper.

A photo of Chris Anderson

DAVID BOWMAN [voice over]  
Instead after only 17 issues, he found Chris Anderson, editor in chief of the Sydney Morning Herald, installed as editor-in-chief of the National Times on Sunday also. Anderson bought new resources, but also new uncertainties, new pressures. The spirit of the old National Times was fading fast.

SCENE 94 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.  
Brian Toohey sips on his coffee as he talks.

BRIAN TOOHEY  
Around this time in 1986, the Hawke government was quite naked about
wanting to change the rules of media ownership to punish the Fairfax group.

SCENE 95 EXT. ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE.

BRIAN TOOHEY [voice over]
They openly welcomed an American citizen, Rupert Murdoch, to take over the Herald and Weekly times Group.

A photo of cheery Rupert Murdoch surrounded by reporters.

BRIAN TOOHEY [voice over]
It was the largest media group in Australia, which owned one of the major TV networks, HSV 7. Fairfax then bought HSV 7 from Murdoch’s News Corp. but was later forced to sell it when the Hawke government’s cross media ownership proposals became law.

SCENE 96 INT. ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE.
Bob Hawke addresses parliament.

VIC CARROLL [voice over]
In an outburst to a Labour caucus meeting on 15 September, Hawke gave vent to Labour’s conspiracy theory about the Fairfax group.

SCENE 97 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.
Max Suich speaks to the camera.

MAX SUICH
In January 1987, I had a five hour interview with Paul Keating about the Herald and Weekly Times take-over by Murdoch.

A photo of Paul Keating.
MAX SUICH [voice over]
Keating said he had consulted Murdoch and Packer about his plans for separating ownership of print and television.

Max Suich speaks to the camera.

He had not consulted Fairfax he said because of attacks in some of its publications on Keating, his friend Warren Anderson, the Prime Minister, Kerry Packer and Sir Peter Abeles. Keating says his motives for getting involved in the HWT take-over included a desire to hurt Fairfax. He was very blunt about the fact that the NSW right were 'deal makers' and that they provide favours to 'our crowd' in return for favours given.

SCENE 98 EXT. COLUZZI'S CAFE DARLINGHURST RD.
Paul Chadwick pushes his empty coffee cup away as he talks.

PAUL CHADWICK
The deals of 1986 - 1988 were the most far reaching of many pacts between politicians and proprietors in Australian media history. The decline of the Times on Sunday and the media generally at this time of political pressure was also evident in the recall and pulping of about 40,000 copies of the January issue by Editor in Chief Chris Anderson against editor Robert Haupt's judgement - after a late objection by executives to part of a report about the take-over of the Herald and Weekly Times by Murdoch and the role of entrepreneur Robert Holmes a Court.
SCENE 99 A PHOTO.

Satirist Max Gillies as Bob Hawke, holds up a sign: 'LEFT WING'.

GAVIN SOUTER [voice over]
In April Brian Toohey wrote an article which was full of vehement rhetoric against the new style of ALP leadership.

SCENE 100 EXT. GARDEN AT HOME OF DAVID BOWMAN.

David Bowman speaks to the camera.

DAVID BOWMAN
Robert Haupt had called on Brian Toohey for a 'front foot forward' piece of journalism. Toohey wrote an article called 'The Death of Labour.'

SCENE 101 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.

WENDY BACON
As editor, Toohey, fought to run what he regarded as one of the biggest stories of the 1980s - links between certain entrepreneurs and leading political figures.

SCENE 102 EXT. GARDEN AT HOME OF DAVID BOWMAN.

DAVID BOWMAN
Editor in chief Chris Anderson told Haupt he didn't want the piece used. It was a deceptively low key confrontation. No shouting. Haupt made the necessary changes - then two days later he rang Anderson and resigned. It was unusual of course. Not many editors resign on point of principle these days. Mostly they swallow what comes. What made this article so troublesome that the editor had to be overruled? The only credible explanation lies in the
force of its criticism of Hawke and Keating. The pressures were on
Fairfax to come to terms with Hawke and Keating.

SCENE 103 EXT. TAMARAMA BEACH CAFE.
JOHN BIRMINGHAM squints in the sun as he recalls events.

JOHN BIRMINGHAM
What happened then was that the
Fairfax management, up to their nuts
in a messy take-over, and staring
down the barrel of the government’s
media cross ownership laws killed the
story. Toohey and editor Robert
Haupt left - resigned in disgust.

SCENE 104 EXT. GARDEN AT HOME OF DAVID BOWMAN.

DAVID BOWMAN
Fairfax appointed yet another editor
- Valerie Lawson to replace Robert
Haupt. Toohey knew it was the end of
the road. He was offered a post on
the SMH, but in the end it turned out
to be a hollow gesture, a 12 month
contract job, not a staff position -
no security; work subject to frequent
review - this after 15 years in the
front line - so Toohey went. From
first to last it had taken nearly
three years to ease him out.

SCENE 105 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.

BRIAN TOOHEY
In some ways it was a thing I hadn’t
experienced before in journalism.
I’d been reporting on the Whitlam and
Fraser governments in what I often
thought was a very hard-edged sort of
way- and they certainly did- but it
never crossed their minds to
interfere, to try and get you sacked or whatever, let alone push for the paper you were writing for to be closed down.

SCENE 106 EXT. GARDEN AT HOME OF DAVID BOWMAN.

DAVID BOWMAN
While one of the last issues of the National Times had claimed that the Times on Sunday would be the same team and listed 18 journalists, seven had left by June 1987 left and two more wanted to leave. Others who were not listed had left or gone on leave. It was a heavy list of defections and casualties.

SCENE 107 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE EXT. (1987)
ABC News: The coffin of Sir Warwick Fairfax is carried at his funeral.

MAX SUICH [voice over]
Sir Warwick Fairfax had died in January of 1987.

SCENE 108 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE INT. (1987)
ABC News: Warwick Fairfax jnr speaks on the phone in his office.

MAX SUICH [voice over]
One of his sons - also called Warwick then considered launching a take-over bid through his newly formed company Tryart - for the Fairfax company.

A photo of Laurie Connell and Warwick Fairfax - both smiling as they sit in Connell's office.

MAX SUICH [voice over]
He engaged Laurie Connell - who had been Alan Bond's merchant banker - to organise the bid for a huge fee of $100 million.
SCENE 109 INT. HOME OF GAVIN SOUTER.

GAVIN SOUTER
Connell told Warwick he may have to sell some Fairfax papers to cover the costs of the bid. Warwick allegedly said he didn’t mind as long as he retained control of the SMH. So they decided to try and sell the Times on Sunday and some other papers entrepreneur Robert Holmes a Court to raise finance.

SCENE 110 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.

MAX SUICH
I decided that I would resign once the sale of the Times on Sunday was complete. Tryart had nothing in common with the old Fairfax company. I tried to organise finance to buy the paper without success. .

SCENE 111 EXT. COLUZZI’S CAFE DARLINGHURST RD.

PAUL CHADWICK
On 20 October the stock market crashed. Among its most bloodied victims were Holmes a Court, Connell and indirectly Warwick. Holmes a Court handed back the loss making Times on Sunday, which found New Fairfax had neither the means nor the inclination to sustain it as Old Fairfax had.

SCENE 112 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.

VIC CARROLL
The Times on Sunday was living from week to week with a shrinking staff of journalists. Talks about a sale
had virtually ceased. Journalists
time became increasingly occupied
with fruitless speculation about the
future. The internal communications
system spread rumours like a virus:
who was leaving, who was being
sacked, who was being asked to stay.

A Financial Review headline: ‘Times folds after 17 turbulent,
controversial years’.

VIC CARROLL [voice over]
Since the Tryart take-over and the
-crash, the company now had a $2.6
billion debt. Times on Sunday staff
were stunned when they first heard
about the closure via Australian
Associated Press.

Vic Carroll speaks to the camera.

Chris Anderson then announced the
closure of the Times on Sunday and
The Sun to angry meetings of
journalists on Monday 14 March. The
Times on Sunday had published its
last issue the previous day. Staff
at the remaining papers walked out
for 24 hours until they were
satisfied with the redundancy for the
376 staff who had lost their jobs.

SCENE 113 INT. OFFICE OF VALERIE LAWSON.
Journalist VALERIE LAWSON talks to the camera.

VALERIE LAWSON
Given the support of the Fairfax
board and 12 months of continuous
stability, we would have begun to
achieve results. Murdoch and John
Fairfax gave The Australian and the
Australian Financial Review -
Australia’s other two national papers
15 to 20 years to make a profit. The old board promised to give us that amount of time too but the Tryart take-over changed all that.

SCENE 114 EXT. COLUZZI’S CAFE DARLINGHURST RD.

PAUL CHADWICK
Australian journalism became poorer and tamer with its passing.

SCENE 115 EXT. SUMALEE RESTAURANT.

JEFF PENBURTHY
With corruption and the spread of organised crime in Australia in the eighties, the National Times became Australia’s most quoted and followed up paper certainly breaking more difficult stories than any other.

Photos of Murray Farquhar, Bill Allen, Rex Jackson, Roger Rogerson, Peter Abeles and others crowd the screen.

JEFF PENBURTHY [voice over]
Its greatest tribute lay not in the loyalty of its readers but the hostility it engendered within those power groups which had things to hide.

Rosemary Mears - Brian Toohey’s former secretary - cuts in.

ROSEMARY MEARS
We had to hide so much secret information that we never knew where everything was. We’d never know who it was going to be on the phone or at the door. It could be a politician, a judge, a policeman, or even a criminal.

David Hickie who has been sitting beside Rosemary Mears looks around as he gives his impressions.
DAVID HICKIE

There really was a sense that this newspaper existed and was funded by the Fairfaxes to fill a public interest role. I don’t think it’s existed before or since in the Australian media – it was just a fantastically exciting decade of a bunch of very highly skilled journalists.

SCENE 116 ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE.

Four Corners ‘The Life of Brian’ (1985) National Times journalists and staff talk animatedly over lunch in a restaurant.

The following text appears:

Wendy Bacon is now an Associate Professor at the UTS School of Journalism and a freelance writer.

David Hickie runs Gadfly Media.

Max Suich and Brian Toohey write for various Fairfax publications.

Evan Whitton most recently worked on the screenplay for the police drama White Collar Blue.

Marian Wilkinson is a senior journalist for the SMH.

Most of these journalists have also each authored several highly respected books.

THE END.
THESIS FOR THE DOCUMENTARY SCRIPT

‘THE NATIONAL TIMES - BASTARD OF A PAPER’ ©
Thesis for the documentary script ‘The National Times - Bastard of a Paper’

**Introduction: “The right to talk politics”**

“How would I describe working at the National Times - the best fun I’ve ever had in my life...”,

Former National Times journalist David Hickie, in a personal interview, 2002.

“From birth on 7 February [1971], it [the National Times] consistently ventured where most other Australian media would not go or were not allowed to go. On numerous occasions it angered politicians, business, police, judiciary and Fairfax management with what it published. Its best work was the result of patient digging, cultivation of leaks and bold disclosure of what it found, whether the topic was corruption, failings of government or some aspect of social change...”


“Discussing the various Fairfax publications, Hawke acknowledged the objectivity of the Financial Review, gave the Herald a pass rather than a credit... and castigated the National Times as ‘a bastard of a paper’. Suich and Haupt defended the National Times, but the Prime Minister said he could not be persuaded that attacks on himself, Keating, Wran and their friends Sir Peter Abeles, Warren Anderson and Kerry Packer were not motivated by a desire to destroy the most effective politicians in the Labor Party...

[Prime Minister Bob Hawke was speaking with Chief Editorial Executive of John Fairfax and Sons Limited, Max Suich, and the then editor of the National Times, Robert Haupt, in September 1986 at a meeting organised by Suich].”


The documentary script ‘Bastard of a Paper’ tells the story of the *National Times’s/Times on Sunday’s* (1971-1988) “muckraking” which contributed to the removal from office (and sometimes the subsequent conviction) of several corrupt public servants in the late 1970s and 1980s. These included the then NSW Chief Stipendiary Magistrate Murray Farquhar; Deputy Commissioner of Police Bill Allen; Corrective Services Minister Rex Jackson and highly decorated Detective Sergeant Roger Rogerson. Thus, “Disclosure journalism plays an
important role in informing the public of allegations of wrongdoing and bringing pressure to bear on appropriate authorities, such as Parliament, to investigate those allegations..." This quality weekly also helped force systemic reform including the establishment in 1984 of the ongoing NSW Crime Commission. National Times stories about corrupt practices in the NSW Police Force were affirmed by the Wood Royal Commission finding in 1997 that corruption went "all the way to the top." Writer Evan Whitton and former editor of the National Times defines corruption as "anything that rings the TILT! bell on the pinball machine of democracy, e.g. favours, cover-ups of embarrassing truths, improper benefits including bribes and extortion." Discussion of systemic reforms such as the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) is limited as debates about their success and failure is a subject for another thesis.8

Brian Toohey’s National Times/Times on Sunday editorial agenda and articles criticised the close relationships between the then Labor Prime Minister and Treasurer (Bob Hawke and Paul Keating respectively) and businesspeople such as Alan Bond. Toohey, who was forced to resign in 1987 after around 15 years as a journalist and editor for Fairfax, has been vindicated by subsequent revelations of corporate fraud on the part of high flying businessmen and ‘Labor mates’ such as Bond, Christopher Skase and Laurie Connell.9 Moreover, the ‘carve-up’ of the media in 1987 which assured Rupert Murdoch’s dominance of the Australian media - was aided by Hawke and Keating.10 Commentators now recognise the 1980s in Australia as a time of unforeseen corruption11 and also as an era of entrepreneurial fraud and greed.12 National Times/Times on Sunday journalism about corruption in the NSW government and bureaucracy invoked the anger of the right wing of the ALP as did its stories about the ‘sell-out’ of Labor politicians to big business. The documentary ‘Bastard of a Paper’ implicates this tension in the demise of the National Times and the downfall of the Times on Sunday.

Chapter One of this thesis introduces the theme of the script - that ‘the public right to know’ is inadequately protected in Australia. It is defined by former Canadian Chief Justice Sir Lyman Duff:

There can be no controversy that such institutions [parliament] derive their efficacy from the free public discussion of affairs, from criticism, from answer and counter-criticism, from attack upon policy and administration and counter-attack; from the freest and fullest analysis and examination from every point of view of political proposals...13

Society largely relies on the media for information. Australian writer Donald Horne in effect elicits the importance of the public right to know when he recalls ironically that as a journalist in the parliamentary press gallery in the 1960s,

another of my functions, and that of parliament... was to keep a great silence about everything else. By our daily silences, parliament, the press
gallery and I were organising all other issues out of public discussion. The only reference I remember to the Aborigines, for example, was when one of the Labor members referred to ‘the poor bloody boongs’, and that made a story because objection was taken to his use of the word ‘bloody’...14

Chapter One submits that Australian culture generally undervalues the democratic role of the media. For example, how often do courses about Australian history teach about struggles for a press free of licensing restrictions in 1800s Australia by publisher Edward Hall? Hall battled for a press which could criticise government policies free of retribution.

In the 1980s, the National Times especially challenged the Wran government to act against longstanding corruption in the judiciary and police force which - like previous governments - it had ignored. As part of a broader agenda to silence critical media (which it interpreted as the press’s traditional political conservatism), the right wing of the Federal Labor Party retaliated against the publisher of the National Times/Times on Sunday - John Fairfax Limited - and favoured supportive media owners. Paul Chadwick in Media Mates: carving up Australia’s media (1989) affirms, “By late 1988, Murdoch’s dominance of the print media was unassailable... The wishes of Bob Hawke and Paul Keating had been fulfilled beyond their dreams. HWT was dead. Old Fairfax had been transmuted into manageable form...”15 The National Times/Times on Sunday was a microcosm of the ‘tug of war’ between politicians and ‘watchdog’ journalists in the 1980s.

Chapter One argues that the public right to know is again under siege from the current Howard government which denigrated whistle blower Andrew Wilkie, bullied the outspoken head of the Federal Police Mick Keelty, lied about the ‘children overboard incident’ and restricts access to refugee detention centres. In Not Happy John! (2004), journalist Margo Kingston argues that by attempting to ‘relax’ the cross media ownership laws, John Howard is sacrificing the public right to know so as to maintain the support of media mogul Rupert Murdoch and to vanquish Fairfax’s tradition of editorial independence.16 Hence, ‘Bastard of a Paper’ - about the relationship between the press and the government - is highly pertinent.

Chapter Two reviews the literature relevant to the upsurge in investigative reporting during the 1980s and the history and theories of such journalism. However, it does so only to elucidate the National Times in the late 1970s and 1980s and not other sections of the media such as ABC Television’s Four Corners due to limited space. For the same reason, this thesis does not cover the response to - or taking up of - National Times/ Times on Sunday stories in the wider media. Sally Walker, in her article - ‘The media and the Parliament - the National Times case’ - calls the 1983-1985 National Times reports ‘disclosure journalism’ rather than investigative journalism” because it was based on leaks.18 Conversely Julianne Schultz says of investigative reporting;
A definition developed by Bob Green of *Newsday* encapsulates three key elements: that it is the work of the reporter, not a report of an investigation undertaken by someone else; that the subject matter is of public importance; and that it contains information that others who are frequently powerful would prefer remained secret (16). Much investigative journalism will draw on investigations by others, for example the reporting of the Westpac letters in 1991, although under Greene’s definition such reports would not qualify, even though they were a matter of public interest that some hoped to keep secret (17).¹⁹

Peter Grabosky and Paul Wilson in *Journalism and justice: how crime is reported* (1989) affirm that,

Some forms of investigative reporting arise from, or are fuelled by unauthorised disclosures, or leaks by persons close to a potential scandal (Toohey and Wilkinson, 1987).²⁰ These may come directly to the reporter from disaffected police, bureaucrats, elected officials, or even criminals...²¹

The validity of the liberal democratic ideal of the media - that we rely on journalists to force politicians to be accountable - is assumed despite its fragility and failings. The thesis is that it needs to be bolstered. However the method - such as a Bill of Rights - is a subject for further discussion.

Research for the script invalidated the criticism that *National Times* adversarial journalism could be sourced to Fairfax’s history of antipathy towards the Australian Labor Party (ALP).²² Relative to other media companies, Fairfax nurtured strong reporting.²³ James Fairfax who became chairman of Fairfax in 1978 believed in editorial independence.²⁴ Moreover, various texts - such as *Mr Big: The true story of Lennie McPherson and his life of crime* (2005) by Tony Reeves - attest to a thickening thread of journalists including himself - who took an assertive approach to writing about corruption in the late 1960s and 1970s of whom the *National Times* reporters were arguably a continuation.

Reeves contributed to the independent publication *Nation Review* along with mainstream newspapers. *National Times* editor and later Fairfax Chief Editorial Executive Max Suich had also worked at *Nation Review*’s predecessor - the independent publication *Nation* - alongside George Munster. (*Nation* combined with the *Sunday Review* to become *Nation Review* in 1970.) Former *National Times* investigative reporter Wendy Bacon said Munster was “the first journalist I met who talked about the usefulness of company and land title searches, tax avoidance schemes and corruption in business.”²⁵ Marian Wilkinson, onetime *National Times* journalist, also freelanced at *Nation Review*, at which Munster also worked.
Donald Horne in *The Lucky Country Revisited* (1987) and Max Walsh in *Poor Little Rich Country* (1979) both describe a surge in university education in the 1950s and 1960s. The emphasis on liberal political science in some university subjects, created a new intellectual market for a more analytical journalism such as that which typified *Nation*. Student activism and political events in the 1960s and 1970s supported social conscience values of this era which coincided with traditional muckraking concerns.26 Journalist Mungo MacCallum, in *Mungo: the man who laughs* (2001), describes the bold ethos of 1970s coverage of politics of which *National Times* reporters and editors such as Brian Toohey were emblematic.

This tradition was nurtured by changes - in the relationship between the public, the press and politicians - in favour of the public right to know. Activism in the 1960s and 1970s had a role in this changing relationship. The Vietnam War especially undermined the traditional objectivity of journalism which had sometimes become a ‘cover’ for passivity which reputedly typified traditional crimes roundsmen. At the same time, corruption increased during this era because Sydney was a favoured rest and recreation destination during the Vietnam War and the era of “sex, drugs and rock’n’roll.” Some soldiers brought with them a taste for heroin.

The thesis examines the relationship between ‘public’ opinions and journalism to the extent that it rejects the ‘mobilisation model’ wherein ‘muckraking’ incites public protest which leads to reform. Hugo de Burgh in *Investigative journalism: context and practice* (2000), James Ettema and Theodore Glasser in *Custodians of conscience: Investigative journalism and public virtue* (1998) and Protess et al in *The Journalism of Outrage: investigative reporting and agenda building in America* (1994) all dismiss the ‘mobilisation model’. By the late seventies, reform minded politicians such as John Hatton7 and John Dowd28 were calling for reform. Also, the murders -linked to organised crime - of community figures in the 1970s like Donald Mackay and Juanita Nielsen caused public concern. During the 1980s, election polls and public opinion polls indicated community disquiet.

During the 1970s, at least eight high profile royal commissions had explored areas related to drug trafficking, police corruption and organised crime.29 Justice Athol Moffitt describes organised crime

as repetitive, high profit crime conducted virtually as a business, based on syndicates of some permanence, having among its essential characteristics the use of sophisticated business practices (particularly in the area of money laundering) to conceal its enormous profits, the deliberate abuse of civil liberties to protect its agents, and most importantly, the systematic use of bribery and corruption to hamstring the normal operations of the law, and to facilitate its entry into more legitimate areas...30
In *A quarter to midnight, the Australian crisis: organised crime and the decline of the institutions of state* (1985), former Royal Commissioner Moffitt argues that successive Liberal and Labor politicians in power had ignored royal commission recommendations and had failed to deal with entrenched corruption. Thus, the *National Times* was not alone in calling for reform.


Michael Steketee and Milton Cockburn in *Wran: An Unauthorised Biography* (1986), Vic Carroll in *The Man Who Couldn’t Wait* (1990), Marian Wilkinson in *The Fixer - the untold story of Graham Richardson* (1996) and Rodney Tiffen in *News and Power* (1989) all elucidate the role of the the right wing of the ALP in the political drama in the 1980s. It became increasingly powerful in the 1970s and 1980s. Premier Neville Wran came to power in 1976, after a ‘country mile’ of Liberal government. Gough Whitlam’s Federal government had just been dismissed, after only a three year break since the interminable Menzies era. Premier Wran eschewed Whitlam’s idealism. Instead, he wanted the support of big business and especially that of media tycoons such as Kerry Packer and Rupert Murdoch. Wran, and others, were motivated in part by the press’s history of supporting the Liberal Party. Federal politicians Bob Hawke and Paul Keating imitated Wran. This ascension of the ALP ‘machine’ created a context which was particularly hard on investigative journalists. It also supported the further concentration of media ownership which contributed to the closure of many newspapers in the late 1980s, including the *National Times/ Times on Sunday* after seventeen years.

Chapter Three details how the above information from literature, archival footage and three interviews shaped the script. This commentary justifies the political view in the script - that the doggedness of *National Times* journalism was justified by the public interest in disclosing allegations of long-standing corruption. The reporters were galvanised by their roots in adversarial journalism and in a 1970s Australian culture which was more appreciative of dissent (such as the opposition to the Vietnam War conscription ‘lottery’ or the mass demonstrations against the tour of the South African Springboks in 1971). However, ‘Bastard of a Paper’ avoids a ‘holier than thou’ tone. The commentary links entrenched corruption in NSW to unenforceable and overly zealous laws relating to gambling and alcohol. This thesis does not examine the *National Times/ Times on Sunday*’s circulation or financial losses. It presumes that the market for investigative and ‘quality’ journalism is notoriously small and such journalism is labour intensive.
Chapter Four justifies the traditional ‘talking heads’ documentary style of ‘Bastard of a Paper’ and compares the script to a conventional fiction film narrative. ‘Bastard of a Paper’ needed this style if it was to ‘re-present’ the National Times team of hard-nosed journalists reacting to a dramatic historical and political context in the 1980s. Linda Williams’s analysis of the documentary The Thin Blue Line, directed by Errol Morris, argues for an adaptation of this style to subvert its ties with any pretence to ‘absolute’ truth. Fiction film techniques (such as film noir mis en scene) are juxtaposed with ‘talking heads’ to ‘un-suture’ the documentary medium’s baggage of ‘absolute’ truth. Its constructedness becomes obvious. Williams criticises ‘docu-auteurs’ and cinema verite for effacing their manipulation of events and the medium. Metro writer Anna Dzenis also supports the use of ‘talking heads’ in the documentary ‘River of Dreams’ directed by John Hughes. Hughes constructed relative truths by splintering the ‘realism’ of the film image.

While ‘Bastard of a Paper’ has not reached this stage of stylistic development, the structure is in place with which to create a film which acknowledges its unique perspective on a controversial era in Australian politics for comparison with the current era. This thesis validates the theme of the script - that political expediency typically overrides the public interest. It suggests that the public relies on somewhat embattled reporters to force governments to be ethical despite journalists being at a disadvantage in the face of government power and commercial pressures.