

Length assigned: 400 words

Grant family In 1942 Walter J. Grant (1904-61) became a major shareholder in Western Broadcasters Pty Ltd, which owned the licence for Dubbo's eight-year-old commercial station, 2DU. A Scottish-born engineer who had worked at 2KY, Grant had helped to establish 2LT Lithgow in 1939. He waged a long, ultimately successful, campaign for an increase in 2DU's transmitter power, ensuring that 2DU was one of the regional stations heard furthest across New South Wales. R.G. Osborne, an Australian Broadcasting Control Board chairman, remarked that 'Wally' 'really understood country broadcasting'; in just one day in 1944, 2DU had raised £101,070 for the Second Victory Loan, and in the 1954-55 floods, 2DU had become a vital link in communications. Remembered by Osborne as a most 'entertaining character', Grant served as an alderman on Dubbo Council from 1947 to 1952, expressing an early interest in the possibilities of tourism. However, a consortium with which 2DU was involved in 1959 failed to secure a television licence.

After Grant's death in 1961, his widow, Christine, was managing director of Western Broadcasters Pty Ltd until 1972, and then chairman until 1977. Their daughter, Janet M. Cameron (1938-), formerly a teacher, became managing director, and her husband, Dugald, chairman. By 1986 Grant Broadcasters Pty Ltd owned radio stations in Mudgee, Nowra and Parkes. Then, in what Janet Cameron described as 'the worst decision I ever made', the company sold three stations, keeping only 2ST Nowra. This was a time of acute uncertainty in the broadcasting industry, and Cameron accepted a lucrative offer for most of her company.

Soon regretting the decision, Grant Broadcasters bought stations in Muswellbrook, Bega, Wollongong, Bendigo, Geelong, Mildura, Murray Bridge and Darwin. In 1990 Cameron became a founding shareholder in, and director of, Sea FM. Her experience with a listed company was not a happy one. Describing herself as a 'plain-vanilla kind of person', she was irritated by analysts who were never content with good, organic growth, and were always urging new, 'sexy' purchases. When Sea FM was taken over in 1996, Grant Broadcasters banked a healthy profit.

Cameron concentrated on building up her family company, taking advantage of new rules allowing broadcasters in regional areas to acquire second licences, and buying nine Tasmanian stations in 2000. The company was now worth \$125 million, and Janet's three children occupied executive positions in it, with Grant and Dugald Cameron junior looking after the Sydney and Melbourne operations, and Alison O'Neil the chief financial officer. Janet Cameron was also active in the industry, serving, from [TBC], as the first female president of the Federation of Australian Radio Broadcasters.

By 2010 Cameron's network had interests in every state and territory, and she travelled frequently between them. Grant Broadcasters owns half of the Capital Radio Network, including 6IX Perth, in partnership with Kevin Blyton. It is also involved with the Radio Sales Network and operates narrowcast licences supported by local tourism organisations.

Bridget Griffen-Foley

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Media Watch The origins of the 13-minute weekly television program that has monitored the Australian media since 1989 have more to do with the then ABC managing director's desire for revenge on his perceived enemies than with concern over the standards of print and broadcast journalism. During 1988 the corporation's fractious new managing director, David Hill, endured regular criticism from the Fairfax press and asked his assistant, Tony Ferguson, to explore the possibility of using the ABC's own outlets to mount a counter-attack. Ferguson consulted widely with old colleagues from his time as executive producer of *This Day Tonight* in the 1970s. They suggested a program roughly based on the British institutions *What the Papers Say* and *Points of View*, broadened to include radio and television.

After a series of established ABC presenters auditioned unsuccessfully, a Sydney barrister and former journalist, Stuart Littlemore, was appointed host. Littlemore sidestepped any indication that he should single out the ABC's critics and devised the program's tightly-written 'illustrated lecture' format. Transmitted on Monday nights, the program was named *Media Watch – The Last Word* before the subtitle was dropped in 1992.

From the outset, Littlemore insisted that this was not news or current affairs, but rather a program of critical commentary and review – a platform for well-informed and properly researched opinion about the performance of the Australian media. The intention was that *Media Watch* should be told from the standpoint, and on behalf, of media consumers. For that reason, it maintained that the conventional journalistic requirements of 'balance' and offering a 'right of reply' were not applicable to its content. This position provoked sustained hostility from the mainstream media and in 1994 ABC management decided to cancel *Media Watch*, a decision which was quickly overturned after staff objections. But the program did disappear from ABC screens in 2001, reportedly because it had aired an aggressive interview with the then ABC chairman, Donald MacDonald. Shortly after a former Fairfax executive, Mark Scott, became managing director in 2006 the program was instructed to follow editorial policies more in keeping with those expected of current affairs. *Media Watch* continues to negotiate this difficult path: it is about, but also part of, the media. An additional – often uncomfortable – requirement of the program is that to maintain its credibility and independence it needs to be as critical of ABC as it is of commercial media output.

The principal concerns of *Media Watch* are offences against the journalists' Code of Ethics: plagiarism, undeclared conflicts of interest, intrusion, breaches of privacy, deliberately misleading reporting, sensationalism, undisclosed commercial influence, falsehoods, manipulation of images, unsubstantiated opinion, racial and sexual prejudice, and incitement. A secondary theme has been the consistent failure of Australia's systems of media regulation to discourage and punish ethical lapses. This serious fare is punctuated by more humorous material that highlights journalistic ignorance, sloppiness and lapses of taste. David Salter, who produced more than 200 episodes, described the job

of *Media Watch* as being ‘to bring the worst impulses and excesses of its colleagues to account in a public way’, and to thereby help lift the standards of Australian journalism.

Among the more notable *Media Watch* items over the past twenty years have been: the revelation that a newspaper column by Alan Jones was plagiarised from a Frederick Forsyth novel; footage showing that a Channel Nine crime reporter had implied he was acting for police to obtain photos of a shooting victim; confirmation that a *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist campaigning to save deer from culling in a national park had a previous conviction for illegal hunting in the same park; that a Channel Seven current affairs program had faked footage of being chased by police on Majorca; that ABC news had fabricated ‘live’ two-way interviews between their studio presenter and overseas correspondents; that a series of ‘welfare cheat’ exposés in the *Herald Sun* was without factual foundation; that the ABC’s then managing director, Brian Johns, had authorised coverage of a political function in contravention of the corporation’s guidelines; and that most Australian women’s magazines routinely invented stories about celebrities and published faked photographs. The most celebrated *Media Watch* revelation came in 1999 when the program presented proof that Alan Jones and another powerful talkback radio host, John Laws, failed to disclose to their listeners that they had been handsomely paid to provide favourable on-air comment about companies including Optus, Foxtel, Qantas and the major banks. These ‘cash for comment’ exposures, which resulted in an Australian Broadcasting Authority inquiry, won *Media Watch* three Walkley Awards.

The presenters of the program have been Stuart Littlemore (1989–97), Richard Ackland (1998–99), Paul Barry (2000), David Marr (2002–04), Liz Jackson (2005), Monica Attard (2006–07), and Jonathan Holmes (2008–).

David Salter

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Sydney Star Observer The *Sydney Star Observer* (SSO) is the oldest gay and lesbian newspaper in Australia. Founded and initially edited by an American, Michael Glynn, who had emigrated to Australia in 1971, it first appeared in July 1979 and has not missed an issue since. Initially known as the *Star*, the weekly has, in its various manifestations, given an important voice to Sydney's – and Australia's – gay and lesbian communities, and brought to them news and views on matters of concern and relevance to them.

Like all community newspapers, the SSO has fulfilled several important functions. Firstly, it ensured that anything, no matter how obscure, that in any way involved anything 'homosexual' was reported and commented on. Secondly, it allowed a gay perspective to be presented, important at a time when the mainstream press was rarely neutral about issues involving homosexuality. Thirdly, it played a major role, during the 1980s, in helping to promote a sense of gay identity, and thus of creating a gay 'community'. Its editorials directly addressed the issues of identifying as gay, and it often included notices urging readers to 'Think gay, buy gay', encouraging them to shop locally in the emerging gay precinct around Sydney's Oxford Street. Finally, over the years, it recorded the various controversies that involved the community, and enabled the presentation of a variety of lesbian and gay viewpoints.

Some of the breaking stories the SSO has reported on include, in July 1981, the first appearance of AIDS in America; in May 1983 the first AIDS case in Australia, and of key community responses including the formation of the AIDS Council of New South Wales and the Bobby Goldsmith Foundation; in 1984 the decriminalisation of male homosexuality in New South Wales; in 1996 the sidetracking of the Wood Royal Commission into police corruption; in 2002 Sydney's Gay Games; and the battle, won in 2003, for the equal age of consent. The newspaper has also covered numerous Oxford Street bashings and the recent fight for gay marriage.

The ownership structure of the parent company, Sydney Gay Community Publishing, is unique; since February 1988 the shareholding has been dispersed among the lesbian and gay communities. To stop any one individual taking control, there is only one vote per shareholder no matter how many shares they may own. Thus the SSO remains one of the few truly community-owned gay and lesbian newspapers in Australia.

Garry Wotherspoon

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