



Fairfax

Editorial Newsroom Review

Staff Information Pack

June 2012



Fairfax

Introduction from Garry Linnell

Our future begins today. We are proudly unveiling the most significant editorial transformation in this company's history.

The blueprint will fundamentally change the way we work. It is a new operating model that will deliver our unique and independent journalism to rapidly expanding digital audiences while continuing to ensure our newspapers remain centres of excellence.

The new model means our newsrooms will be based around our audiences. It will allow more flexibility, more sharing and more transparency about how we work.

But the best things about us – our pride in our independence, our desire to be the pulse of the cities we serve, our demand to be first and best along with the trust and faith our readers place in us - will not only remain but be strengthened.

This model is your model. You helped create it. We have looked at some of the best ideas tried elsewhere. We have adopted and adapted some of them. But our newsroom model is unique.

As it should be.



Overview

- We are undertaking the most significant editorial transformation in Fairfax history.
- Our new operating model will enable us to meet changing media consumption habits and demonstrates a new direction for Australia's leading quality mastheads.
- Our goal is to deliver independent news coverage to our audiences wherever and whenever they find us.
- We will operate as one newsroom - across platforms, across geographies and across seven days.
- We will retain and enhance our unique "local voice" that audiences expect.
- We will think and act "digital first".
- We will build on our 180-year heritage of fearless independent journalism to create a world-leading newsroom for the digital age.



A brief history

- In November, Metro CEO Jack Matthews announced the Editorial Newsroom Review – a central pillar of the Metro strategy to create quality journalism across platforms.

“It is critically important that we construct and implement the best operating structure to suit our newsrooms” – Jack Matthews

- In March, 12 senior editors from across the Metro division formed the project team. They had 10 weeks to deliver an operating model by June 4.
- The team asked for help: almost 100 editorial staff participated in working groups, while several hundred attended staff sessions and gave their feedback.
- On June 12, senior editorial management endorsed the final report.
- From July 2, the transformation begins.



Who took part

Steering Committee

- Lorna Raine
- Garry Linnell
- Darren Burden
- Peter Fray
- Paul Ramadge
- Amanda Wilson
- Rod Quinn
- Mike Van Niekerk
- Glenn Burge

Content - Melbourne

- Alex Lavelle
- Andrew Webster
- Ben Schneiders
- Craig Dixon
- Dewi Cooke
- Jewel Topsfield
- Ken Merrigan
- Mark Baker
- Mark Hawthorne
- Mel Fyfe
- Michelle Griffin
- Patrick Smithers
- Peter Munro
- Scott Spits

Project Team

- Greg Moses
- Rod Wiedermann
- Steve Foley
- Darren Goodsir
- Daniel Sankey
- Gay Alcorn
- Sean Aylmer
- Peter Gearin
- Sherrill Nixon
- Grant Newton
- Conal Hanna
- Stephen Hutcheon

Content – Syd

- Asher Moses
- Connie Levett
- Heath Gilmore
- Helen Anderson
- Ian Fuge
- Jo Tovey
- Judith Whelan
- Mark Coultan
- Nadia Jamal
- Peter Hannam
- Richard Woolveridge
- Simon Morris
- Stuart Washington

Production

- Andrew Forbes
- Basil Hegazi
- Carlos Monteiro
- Craig Platt
- Michael Schlecta
- Roy Fleming
- Peter Harrison
- Steve Jacobs
- Tanya Adams
- Tim Scott
- Simon Holt
- Patrick Baggoley

Content - Canberra

- Chris Wilson
- Gillian Lord
- John-Paul Moloney
- Karleen Minney
- David McLennan
- Scott Hannaford
- Simon Holt
- Ben Doherty

Presentation

- Andrew Meares
- Bill Farr
- Darian Eckersley
- David Dick
- Ian Vaile
- Jamie Brown
- Liam Phillips
- Matt Martel
- Michael Howard
- Sandra Harrison
- Tom McKendrick
- Vicki Lascaris
- Marco Mana
- Simon Morris
- Andrew Webster
- Dionne Gain



This is what you said ...

“We just create lists rather than story ideas”

“(News conferences) have a culture that inhibits debate, inhibits criticism ... there’s editor gaming”

“Reporters will file digital-first and copy will be subbed for digital first, not for the paper. It changes the culture”

“Whole story planning needs to be done at the start”

“We have to maintain competitiveness. We want our reporters to be the hungriest and the best.”

“We stand and fall on our credibility, our quality”

“The problem now is too many editors are commissioning reporters”

“We are a rolling news organisation”

“It’s a revolution, we have to take risks. We shouldn’t be afraid to fail”

“Someone has to have ‘skin in the game’”

“Using social media should be seen as part of the workflow”



... and problems you identified

Silos

- Across geographies
- Across platforms
- Across days of the week
- Our current way of operating leads to duplication, confusion and platforms not always getting the best content.

Duplication

- Occurs in content creation
- Occurs in production
- Occurs in editorial management
- While the situation has improved, we still waste the effort of editorial staff and managers because planning and commissioning decisions are not transparent or disciplined.

Print-first ways of working

- Stories subbed many times
- Stories held off web unnecessarily
- Online not included in planning
- With about 90 per cent of our staff reporting to print editors and a daily rhythm revolving around a newspaper, we do not treat our online audience equally and we create additional work for our staff, particularly in production.

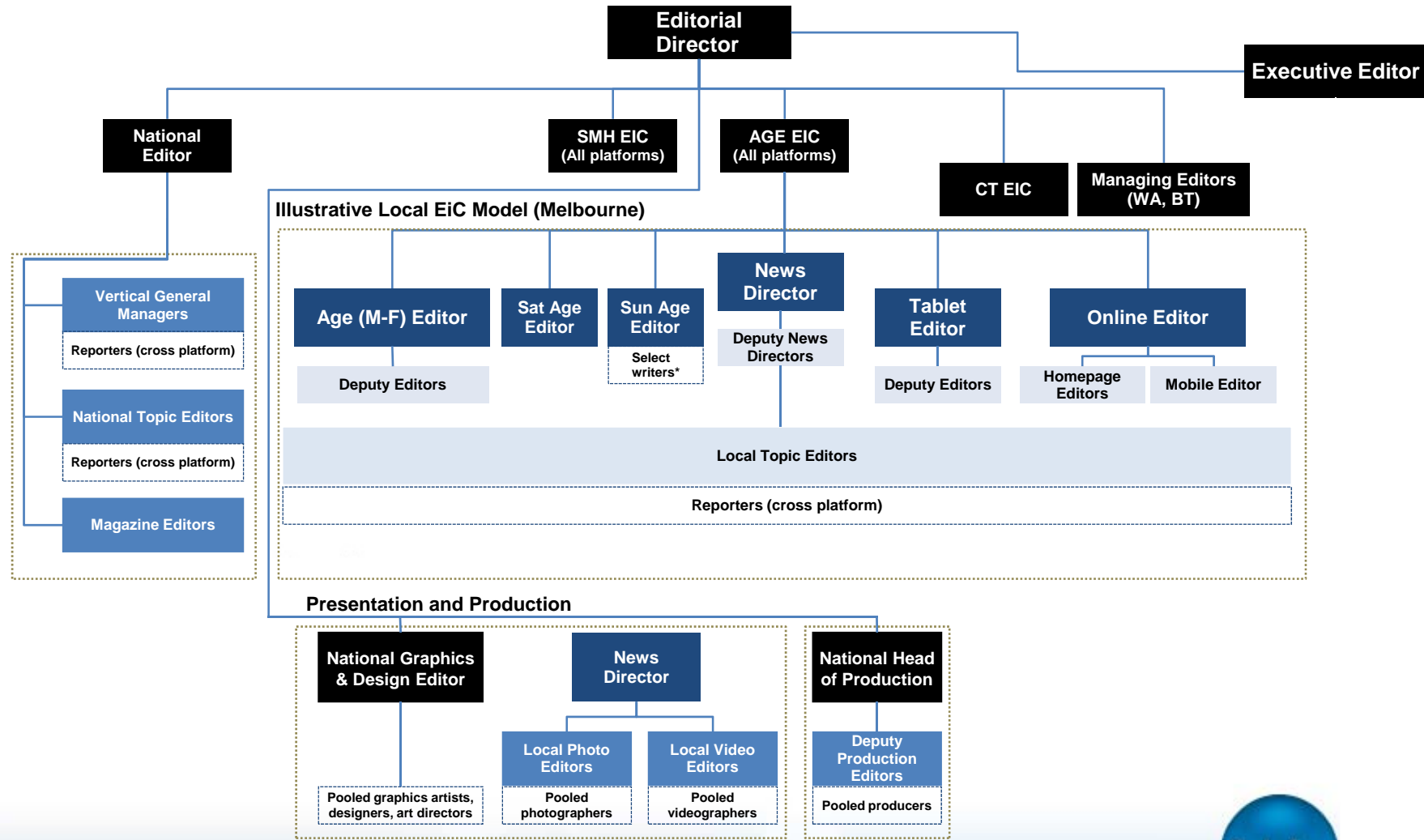


Finding the answers

- 1 Change the way we work to drive the Fairfax Metro strategy
- 2 Work in smarter ways to create audience-focused, quality independent journalism and more unique content for all platforms
- 3 Become digital first newsrooms, while still producing quality newspapers
- 4 Create fully integrated newsrooms across geographies and platforms
- 5 Remove unnecessary duplication and waste through better and more transparent planning and commissioning, and building improved organisational discipline
- 6 Preserve the local voice of each platform and meet the needs of local audiences
- 7 Drive greater editorial innovation by harnessing the power of combined newsrooms and unified ways of working



The new organisational structure

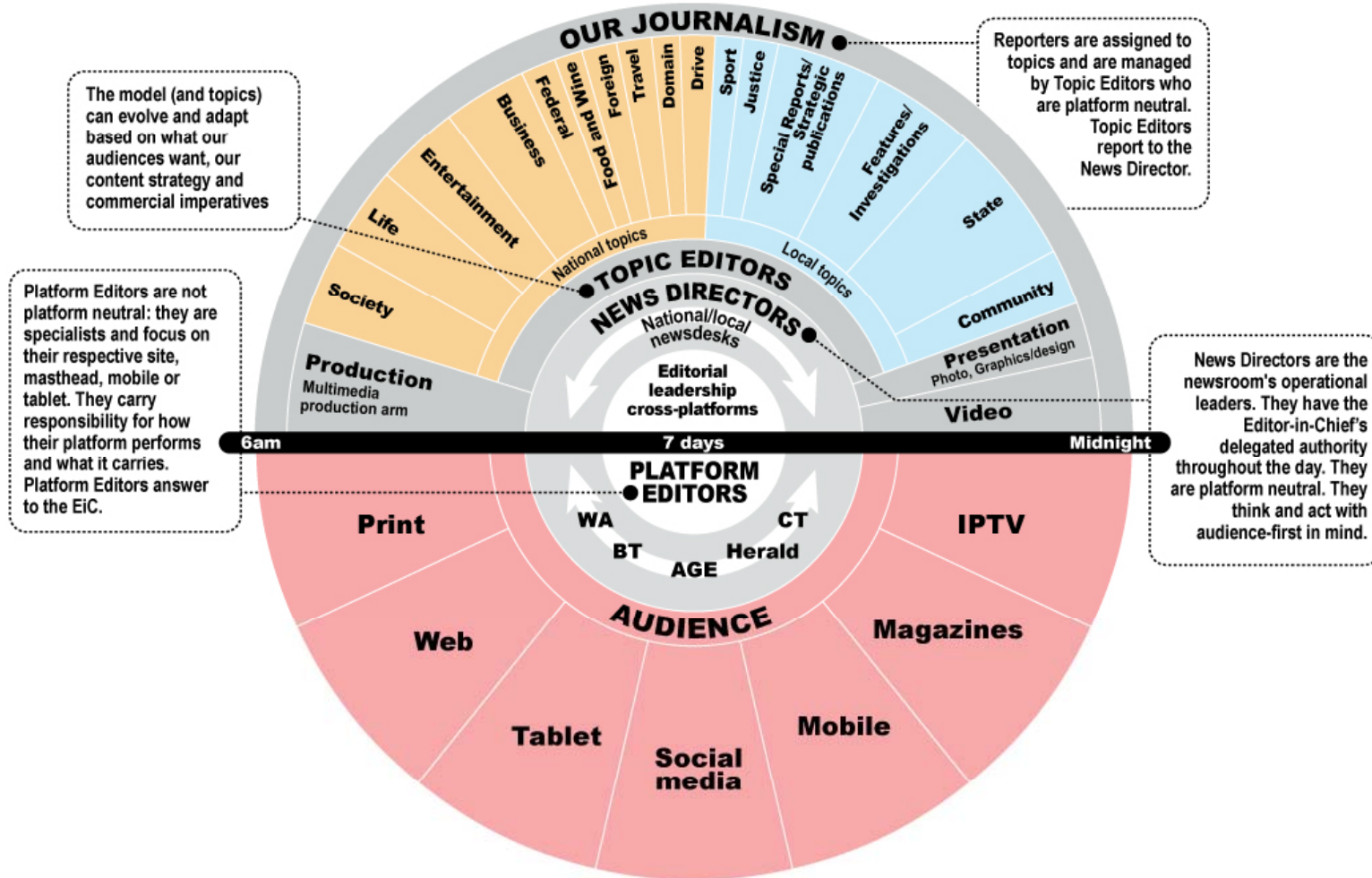


Note:

- Breaking news reporters (first responders) report to Online Editor
- *Weekend and magazine staff to be incorporated into topics. In a transition, Sunday papers and magazines will have a small dedicated staff



Our model



A closer look at the roles

Editor-in-Chief: oversees journalism across all platforms – a transformative change from the current situation in which print and digital are managed separately. The EIC is the ultimate arbiter in the newsroom and the internal and external figurehead. Reports to the Editorial Director.

News Director: the newsroom’s linchpin, effectively the head of content. Platform-neutral, the News Director is the EIC’s delegate in day-to-day operations and forward planning. When questions are raised about when and where a story is published, the News Director makes the final call. News Directors chair the daily and weekly news briefings, manage quality control and Topic Editors’ needs/performance and ensure Platform Editors’ needs are met. They will be supported by deputies to ensure news director presence 6am-late across seven days.

Platform Editors: The editors of our newspapers, websites, tablet apps and mobile sites are the champions of our products. They are totally immersed in delivering journalism for targeted audiences, and must know intimately their platform’s strengths, audience reach/needs and demographics. They are not passive curators of journalism in the newsroom, but are expected to be active in ideas generation and execution by liaising with Topic Editors and News Directors.

Topic Editors: Topic Editors lead a team of journalists and are responsible for delivering 24/7 coverage of assigned rounds to all of the platforms. A platform-neutral role, they will be active in daily and weekly news briefings, maintain newslistings and diaries, manage the performance of the journalists in their team, oversee the production of online and print sections and liaise with fellow Topic Editors. Editors of national topics report to the National Editor, editors of local topics report to the News Director.

Reporters: Reporters will no longer be aligned to one platform – they will be organised into topics and will produce their stories for all platforms. Their aim will be the same: to set the agenda by breaking exclusive stories, finding fresh and compelling new angles and engaging our audiences.

National Head of Production: a new role to lead a cross-masthead, cross-platform production team, elevating the quality of our online journalism.

Producers: for the first time, digital, newspaper and magazine production staff across geographies will unite to form a multi-skilled production team.



Key roles – Platform editors

Aspects that will stay the same

- The platform editor will be accountable for the content, presentation and production of their platform (e.g. daily newspaper, online). They 'own' the platform and are responsible for its overall direction. The presentation of unique, trusted, independent journalism in a form that engages readers will remain the platform editor's key focus.
- The platform editor will still:
 - Ensure the unique voice of the title is maintained and enhanced
 - Make key decisions about the selection and placement of content
 - Ensure deadlines are met
 - Ensure editorial standards, policies and ethics are maintained
 - Be an ambassador for the platform and Fairfax brands

Things that will be different in the future

- Will no longer directly commission reporters to provide content for the platform. Content will be commissioned through local and national topic editors.
- The platform editor will:
 - Answer to the EIC
 - Take direction on content from the News Director
 - Make decisions about story placement earlier in the day
 - Consider content to be reverse published
 - Monitor audience analytics
 - Participate in local and national news briefings
 - Participate in regular scheduled planning meetings
 - Discuss story plans and specific requirements with journalists



A closer look at the topics

National topics		Local topics
Federal - federal politics including National Times	Entertainment - including film, TV, music, arts and culture, books	State - including urban affairs, state politics, transport, rural, consumer affairs, health, education and general
Business - all business news including commercial property, small business, personal finance	Domain - including residential real estate news	Justice - including crime, courts and legal affairs
Foreign	Food&Wine	Sport
Travel	Drive	Investigations/Features
Society - including environment, social affairs, technology, science, workplace, religion, indigenous affairs	Life - Including fashion, beauty, celebrity/gossip, family, diet/fitness, home	Community - including social media, letters, opinion, Reader's Ed, Press Council, leader writers
		Special reports/Strategic Publications



Key roles – Topic editors

Aspects that will stay the same

- Journalism will be focused around topics, current examples include Business, Drive etc.
- We are still asking our reporters to be ‘topic specialists’ and ‘know their rounds’.

Things that will be different in the future

- A topic editor is responsible for planning and commissioning content on a specific subject/group of subjects for publication across platforms and titles.
- A topic editor:
 - Answers to a News Director
 - Manages a team of topic-aligned (but not hard-wired) reporters
 - Is platform neutral, but accepts the new digital first way of working
 - Plays a lead role in content planning. Attends regular topic briefings local/national, as well as news briefings and planning meetings as required
 - Oversees the commissioning and creation of rich content packages
 - Commissions content across 7 days
 - May (continue to) create content
 - Contributes to a transparent newlists/s
 - Works nationally (if within a national vertical)

Key roles - Reporters

Aspects that will stay the same

- A reporter's core responsibility will be to produce unique, trusted, independent journalism. Their role as a story-teller will not change.
- A reporter will continue to:
 - Demonstrate accuracy, fairness, and speed where required
 - Generate ideas
 - Respond to and fulfil editors' brief
 - Adhere to Fairfax's ethical code of conduct
 - Discuss stories and career development with senior editors

Things that will be different in the future

A reporter:

- Adopts a digital first focus (i.e. produce digital ready content as a priority)
- Writes to multiple deadlines
- Works across a seven day roster (between 6am and midnight)
- Learns new story-telling skills
- Reports to a topic editor. Cease the old practice of 'editor-shopping' of their stories.
- Accepts that stories will be published across a range of platforms and titles.
- Plans in a more effective way
- Understands their content generation requirements (number of stories required for which platforms and associated deadlines)



Key roles - Producers

Aspects that will stay the same

- The production of quality, independent journalism will continue, with producers responsible for quality control across platforms
- Content packages for print will still require specialised skills
- Content packages for digital products will still require specialised skills

Things that will be different in the future

- The role of the producer is to ensure content is ready for publication across platforms. The producer is part of a national production pool, created to focus effort and resource to meet the publication requirements of different platforms. The aim is to minimise double-handling (reduce re-subbing), iron out bottlenecks and create a workflow that suits content production for all platforms.
- The producer:
 - Is the key point of contact and coordination between platform editors and production teams
 - Ensures content is edited using digital-first workflows
 - Plays a significant role in tasks that add value
 - Answers to a Deputy Head of Production (who reports to a National Head of Production)
 - Ensures multi-media content packages are assembled across platforms in the correct format
 - Is multi-skilled and will be called on to perform a range of editing tasks (eg headline writing, copy sub-editing, layout et al) for all platforms
 - Will be rostered on to meet multi-platform deadlines



Key roles - Visuals

Aspects that will stay the same

- We will continue to place great emphasis on our visual journalism – world-leading photography, short-form video, graphics, design and multimedia.
- We will continue to recognise the need for specialists in the fields of photography, video and art/design.

Things that will be different in the future

- We will create a national art department, incorporating our graphic artists, designers, cartoonists and illustrators.
- This department will be led by a national Graphics and Design Editor, who will be responsible for the look of all products across platforms.
- The department will work from a national job list.
- Video and photographic teams will remain state-based and led by local Video and Photo Editors, but will work in a more collaborative way nationally.
- Video and photo journalism will be considered when a story is planned and commissioned.
- Data visualisation will become a major focus of our story-telling, using interactive graphics to bring our journalism to life.



Good planning will be crucial

Topic planning

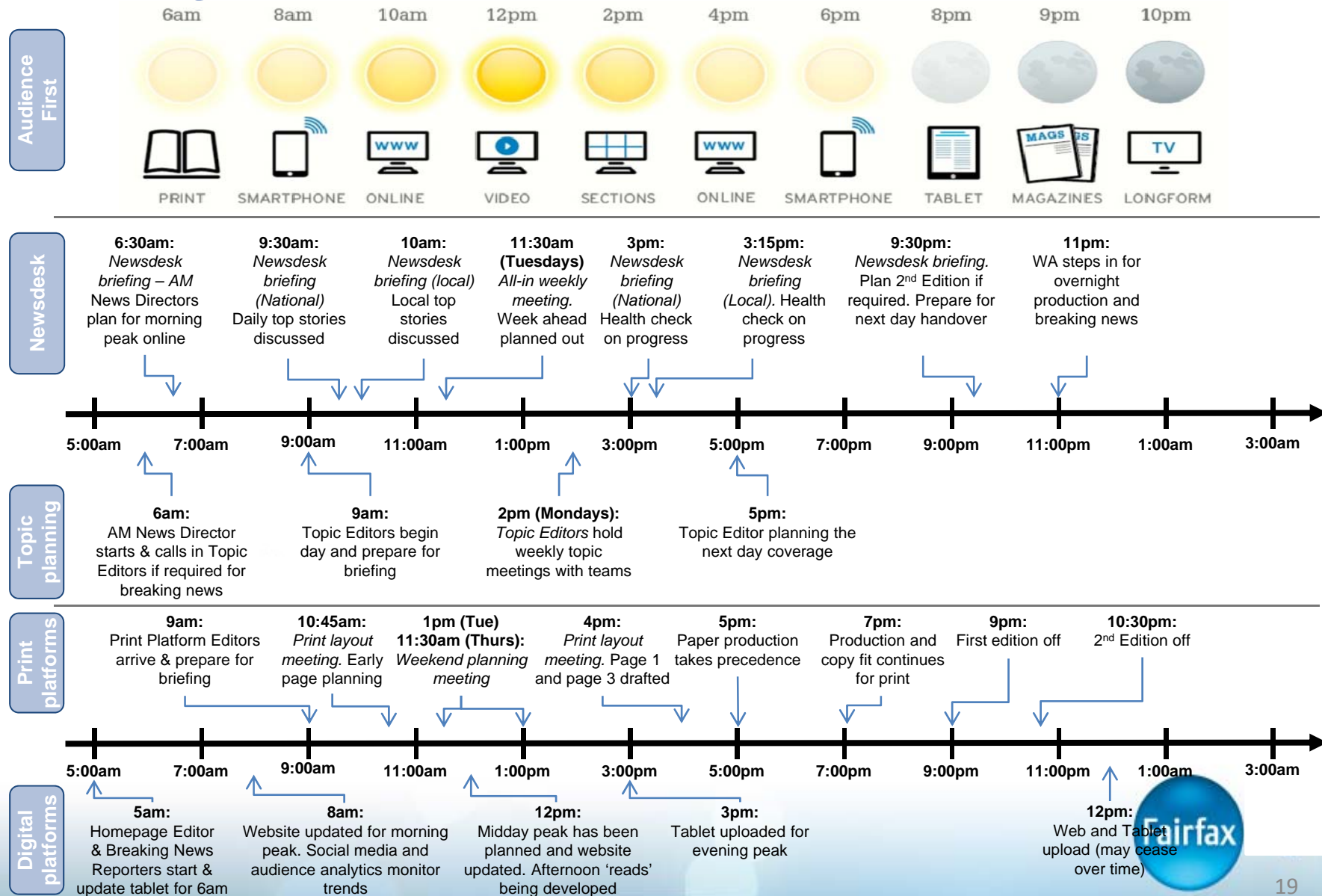
Topics will run the following regular meetings;

- **Monthly (local and national):** long term strategy, product innovation, commercial opportunities and unique content development, as well as upcoming special events
- **Weekly (local and national):** forward planning for the week ahead
- **Weekly all-in (local and national):** forward planning for the week ahead across all topics – attended by Platform Editors
- **Daily briefings:** Topic editors should be in touch with all reporters every day to understand what they are working on, and act as a sounding board for ideas.

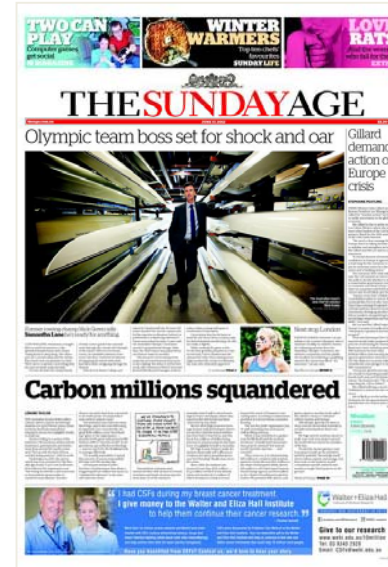
Platform planning

- Weekly platform meetings will focus on medium and long term planning initiatives
- These meetings will occur for each individual platform (i.e. print, web, tablet, mobile and social media). Sub-platforms such as Magazines and Sections will also run planning meetings (which reflect the requirements of the platform i.e. longer range planning for Mags for front page and features etc.)
- Platform Editors will also attend topic planning meetings to get visibility of ideas in development and to shape and influence topic planning
- Platform planning will also occur monthly and may involve commercial/product aspects

A day in the life of the newsroom



Weekends and magazines



- The importance of our weekend newspapers is recognised in this model. The Saturday and Sunday papers will continue to have dedicated editors, and will now benefit from the full resources of the newsroom.
- Journalists working for weekend papers and magazines will become part of appropriate topic teams.
- But during a transition period, the Sunday papers and magazines will retain a small dedicated team of reporters.

A new way of working

Who we are, how we operate

1. We are a 24-hour a day, audience-focused, multi-platform newsroom embracing a digital future
2. Our processes are disciplined and transparent. Our planning is consistent, our meetings well-run and productive. We work to and meet multiple deadlines for our online, tablet, mobile and print products. We are organised, but never conformist - we reward creativity and passion, encourage risk, and allow for failure
3. We have the balance right between covering breaking news quickly and comprehensively and producing unique, complex journalism that keeps institutions accountable and our audiences informed. We strive for excellence in all that we do
4. We will continue to create quality, independent journalism across all platforms without fear or favour. We remain committed to upholding our various masthead codes of conduct and MEAA code of ethics
5. All platforms are not equal: a focus on our digital future is our priority. Yet we will sustain and protect our respected print products and ensure they serve their audiences well
6. A shared, comprehensive national newslist is one of our greatest assets. It underpins our integrated newsroom and we are collectively responsible for it - we get out what we put in
7. We collaborate and cooperate to achieve the best result for all mastheads, platforms and topics. Our leaders understand that ideas and debate are our strength - yet we recognise that the editor's word is final
8. We are multi-skilled, well trained, and flexible in the way we work. We don't hide in platform or geographic silos, but seek to reach our audience in multiple ways through text, photographs, graphics and - increasingly - video. We embrace the opportunity of social media and user-generated content to engage with our audiences in new and deeper ways
9. We use audience, competitor and social data/analytics to give us insight into how we're going. We invest in these tools, build them into the way we work, communicate their results broadly, and respond to their findings
10. Our mastheads understand and serve our local audiences. Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra, Brisbane, Perth - these are our cities and we know what interests them better than anyone else. Our structure is national and we share our journalism as widely as possible, but we never forget that our local audience matters most of all



What will be different

- Topics will be platform-neutral, delivering coverage for all platforms 24/7. Journalists will be expected to think about all platforms and audiences when they plan and create stories.
- Topic Editors will roster journalists to ensure all platforms are serviced 24/7, meeting rolling deadlines. What this means in practice will differ depending on the size and complexity of the topic – but it does mean more journalists will be required to work earlier in the day and on weekends.
- Journalists who are subject matter experts will be expected to contribute their commentary or analysis to meet the needs of a digital audience.
- Not all stories will be published digital-first, but many – including our exclusive journalism – will. News Directors will lead the careful consideration of when stories should be delivered to our audiences.
- Duplication and over-commissioning will be eliminated. National news briefings, disciplined planning processes and transparent newslists ensure coordination across geographies.
- We will adopt digital-first efficient ways of working that eliminate wasteful re-work, such as stories being subbed many times, and ensure our online content is of the highest quality.
- We will use reader feedback and audience analytics to help guide the journalism we do.
- We will have a greater focus on video. Video editors will be involved in all news briefings and planning meetings.
- Social media will be integral to our newsrooms. A Social Media Editor will be appointed to oversee engagement with our audiences through social media but all journalists will be trained in social sharing.



New definitions

Digital first

- 'Digital first' is an emphatic declaration of change. It means having standard processes that allow all content to go digital platforms first as well as building digital skills and capabilities into the organisation

Audience first

- Audience first is about making editorial decisions with the needs and wants of the audience foremost in mind. In many cases, this will mean having a 'digital first' mindset and considering what the best content is for the best platform at the right time (e.g. when a story may be held for the paper). This relies on an intimate understanding of the audience through data

Distribution platforms

- We will produce content that can be distributed across distribution platforms, aligned to specific audiences requirements (timing, content type etc.)

Masthead/Brands and Platforms

- The unique voice for each masthead/platforms must be maintained whilst leveraging national content

Topics

- 'Topics' are groups of similar types of content allowing for deep and specific content expertise around particular issues. Topics can be national, local or a mix of the two

Geography (national and local) and scale

- Geography is a significant driver of the model as it dictates local audiences and the physical location of staff. Technology investment will be required to facilitate the national nature and coordination of the single newsroom

Commercial and product innovation

- There will be an increased commercial and product focus in the new operating model – and integration across the Fairfax business through formal (processes, planning, scheduling) and informal (knowledge building) practices

Operating Model



What's happened overseas?

We looked at newsrooms around the globe and drew on their experience to customise an operating model for our Metro newsrooms

Key Aspects

- **Daily Telegraph** : Integration of print and online
- **The Guardian, London**: Combined Observer (Sunday), Guardian print and Guardian.co.uk staff in one newsroom
- **Christian Science Monitor**: Moved from a 6 day print publication to a web facing newsroom with 1 weekend print product
- **Washington Post**: Physical integration of print and online, move to a single publishing platform
- **Northcliffe Media, UK** : Integrated a series of weekly and daily regional and metro papers, and a website

What worked

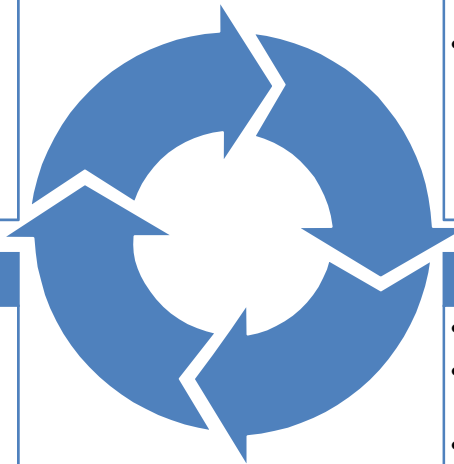
- **Daily Telegraph, London**: Creation of hubs, increased communication; Common CMS across digital and print
- **The Guardian, London**: Moving from platform focus to combining staff into topic pods
- **Christian Science Monitor**: All staff use analytics plus Google trend monitoring; Lots of positive feedback from managers around 'digital wins'
- **Washington Post**: Newsroom moved to a 24 hour operations
- **Northcliffe Media, UK** Each title had its own unique voice and role

Application to our model

- **Daily Telegraph**: Unique news being delivered at key peak times for a digital audience
- **The Guardian, London**: Common ideas around 'topic editors'
- **Christian Science Monitor**: Embed analytics into the editorial process; Forward planning is key
- **Washington Post**: implementation of a new CMS system to manage print and digital content simultaneously
- **Northcliffe Media, UK**: retaining the unique title of each brand/masthead

What didn't work

- **Daily Telegraph**: Broadcast type video – talking heads
- **The Guardian, London**: Still experimenting with mobile journalism
- **Christian Science Monitor**: According to CSM editor, they didn't move fast enough to a digital newsroom
- **Washington Post**: Digital wasn't promoted enough during transition phase
- **Northcliffe Media, UK**: reporters had affinity to their masthead that had to be balanced with their wider readership potential



What happens next?

- Editorial leadership (Editor-in-Chief, News Director) to be confirmed by Garry Linnell
- What happens on July 2?
 - We start thinking digital-first and our newsrooms will work in a more collaborative and collegiate way with greater communication and sharing across platforms and geographies.
 - While we wait for our newsroom leaders to be appointed, we will continue to do our business as usual.
 - More detailed staff briefings will be held this week.
- What's the rollout after that?
 - Position descriptions will be released
 - Newsroom leadership roles (e.g. Topic Editors) will generally be advertised and filled, except where deemed commercially sensitive (e.g. direct reports to the Editorial Director)
 - Journalists will be confirmed in topics
 - Timing for expressions of interest for topic areas to be confirmed
 - Training for new roles, skills and responsibilities will begin
 - Once our newsroom leadership roles are filled, we begin to work in line with the model
 - A more detailed time line for the model's implementation will be released shortly

