

Email from Richard Woolveridge to SMH staff:

Dear all

I know by now you are all used to newsroom challenges and have worked wonders to meet them. Well, it's only three weeks till we all face another big one when the Herald goes compact.

While you have all been battle-hardened by the speed of newsroom changes so far, this one will make new demands, not least in the number of stories, pictures, graphics and chunkies needed to satisfy the compact's daily appetite.

Weekday papers will have between 17-19 early general news pages. Each one of those pages will need between one and three stories, and most will require illustration with photos or graphics. We would also like to use more chunkies in the form of "balcony briefs" (or upper storey stories which stretch across the tops of a spread).

So, in a nutshell, whereas, there were some 18 stories and 10 briefs in today's EGN broadsheet pages, we're going to need to generate at the very least double that number, and preferably three times for choice and balance, to fill the equivalent compact.

Given the number of pages, there will also be strict page deadlines, with the early pages going "off stone" by 2.30pm, which will place new demands on copy flow.

We will be setting up a chunky basket in cyber and, when that's done, I would appeal to you to start filling it with briefs from your topic areas.

Apart from page leads (the length of which will vary from 450-700+, depending on layouts), I estimate we will need about 24 chunkies a day, plus a selection of up to 25 x 250-350-word stories.

We also need many more picture ideas, so please let your creative juices cascade and pitch ideas.

Each day until March 4 I will be roughly laying out a mock compact edition with the stories that are briefed for the broadsheet during the day to see how we are travelling.

It will be a challenge but the good news is that, unlike the very small broadsheet papers we have had of late where not all stories are afforded the treatment they might otherwise be given, this new world will be far more accommodating.

It would be of enormous help if, from now, topic editors and/or reporters could keep me advised during the morning and early afternoon of what stories are definitely coming and by when (and at what proposed length, and whether with an image), and what stories are uncertain but possible. This will help the production team plan the book.

I am sure with the abundance of professionalism on the floor we will quickly get into a rhythm, but while we learn the steps of the new dance, your help would be greatly appreciated.

Many thanks