

Greg Hywood, CEO Fairfax Media
Dear Mr Hywood

Fairfax Media is the victim of outdated management assumptions: Try planning

I have received a letter stating the Fairfax Media plans to outsource the jobs of subeditors and many designers employed at the Sydney Morning Herald and the Age.

It does not explain the nature of the outsourcing or why it is being done. Since the Fairfax Press, like a major shopping centre developer, normally has a 360% controlling view of the living and communicating environment, one wonders why Fairfax would reduce its staff and lose their expertise, rather than redirecting them to better pastures in open company with others, ideally in order to grow many related businesses better. From the letter I received it seems the Fairfax press resembles Sydney University in apparently having little idea or will in regard to growing its businesses in ways which can better support communities besides their old boys and their outdated market paradigms.

For centuries the Fairfax press has been a vital source of information to the public. I am a self-funded retiree and formerly a university academic and public servant who retired shortly before the global financial crash of 2008. Since that time I have increasingly appreciated the improved reporting of the News Hour on SBS TV and the improved reporting of the Australian press and TV even more. For information rather than trade, I read the Sydney Morning Herald and Australian Financial Review comparatively fully almost every day and have done so for years. Fairfax business requires more cooperative and open planning to establish the conditions for the community support necessary to implement better Australian national and related organizational and individual direction.

On a recent Insiders ABC TV program you described Fairfax business as levying advertisers by creating audiences for Fairfax products and its advertisers' products. Your business model appears traditionally geared to achieving the interests of stockholders and also seems likely to become more intellectually impoverished or costly over time. Fairfax cannot compete in US or other English speaking markets which are increasingly crowded with diverse information and entertainment product and which have historically been able to deliver many larger audiences than Fairfax much more cheaply. Big fish in big markets necessarily also try to appeal to the lowest common denominator of human interest in any room, to foster sales and gain support for niche products and markets. Fairfax cannot compete with the US approach. It should openly plan with others instead.

The Fairfax management model is doomed because of choice of a failed market paradigm which is discussed later. Fairfax should take and foster more openly planned approaches to product and service delivery to make them more competitive and also to improve the range and quality of all service delivery in regional industry and community contexts. Since clans and societies have progressed from killing each other towards duelling lawyers and beyond, one sees peace and all qualities that may go with it increasingly rest on good communication. We are all primitive communicators in one way or another.

There is much more room for personal and product and service development through collaboration outside, rather than inside the tea room which delights in its narrow view.

Ideally, Fairfax should help design employment openly and flexibly to meet the common need and individual employee taste in related cooperative regional growth contexts aimed at more sustainable development. Marxists may see this as the great era when more may go fishing, study or do other things they like, as well as work. (Fairfax knows no local?)

Fortunately, Australia has always had the British BBC example of cultural leadership. This comparative power has also declined as the rise of information technology has expanded the huge US product and market reach in every direction. There is grave danger in everyone seeing everything increasingly from the view of the US journalist, who has also become increasingly driven by dominating US commercial and government directions as time goes by. After seeing a film on US correspondents in China recently, I had to point out that when I first went on a teachers' tour to China in 1976, young Australians never stopped talking, questioning and singing about sex and politics. Many of the Chinese we met in schools, teaching colleges, hospitals, factories and communes tried to answer all our questions. Pre-schoolers dressed as small pigs sang about politics charmingly. Nobody ran away from us. I wrote on the philosophy and organization of the Kwantung Teachers' College and was published in Education News, Vol. 15, 1976.

The US view is often biased and their emotion is all as they are not allowed to speak the apparent truth about their own country and their rulers, as seen by many in the rest of the world. Our students will get the wrong idea unless also given the corrections from other perspectives which are not hand picked clones. Others may be less polite but clearer.

When in Shanghai this year I recalled first seeing the Bund one evening in 1976. Young couples stretched along the river embankment as far as the eye could see, shoulder to shoulder, each only talking to a special lover. At the time it seemed to me that this was the equivalent of parking, without the embarrassment of a St Christopher medal pinned to one's bra. That was a time when Catholics came to Australian universities and deserted the family teachings in droves. If American government has clearly shown such a hostile and undermining attitude to the Chinese government and people that the latter have not wanted to speak to US journalists, it is hardly surprising. It is important now not to let American journalists dictate the past as well as the present and the future. In my early lifetime, Australians often demonized the Chinese as being like Godless rabbits wanting to overrun our country. In later lifetime we most often hear their one child policy means they have no human rights. It seems the poor bastards can't win. To repeat the mistakes of the past would be worse than a farce. Baby, you know that's not right. Try planning.

Stiglitz (2010) pointed out there has been so much success in labour saving production in much of the world that there is a problem of persistent unemployment and low demand, which is then dealt with poorly through encouraging personal or government debt until another crisis. A new global vision ideally puts less emphasis on generating demand for material goods by those already over consuming and spending. It requires shift in the collective direction of investment towards saving natural resources and protecting

environments – the factors of production and quality of life the market undervalues. Better cooperation between Australia, China, the US and many other nations to achieve the aims of a better quality life for all are ideally designed in related regional contexts.

The global financial crisis clearly demonstrated that many ruling financial, legal and political assumptions, which also require and privilege commercial in confidence behaviour, serve citizens poorly. For example, compared with most other OECD countries, US citizens now have poorer health, inadequate and more expensive health care, obscenely wide income differentials, lower minimum wages, fewer paid holidays, higher education costs, more unemployment and unstable employment, lost savings, huge government and personal debts, major homelessness, the highest murder rate in the OECD and many deaths and injuries from constant war. US and related legal and financial bodies are a bad advertisement for US ‘democracy’ because the rich buy the support of US politicians, academics and journalists. Tell more US journalists, academics and those who own them and their product this or they will crush us more.

A key inquiry into telecommunications competition regulation was initiated by the former Treasurer, Peter Costello. The Productivity Commission (PC 2001) attitude to its own inquiry into allegations of unfair use of market power in telecommunications was summed up in its quote from the Hilmer Report (1993) on national competition policy:

The central conundrum in addressing the problem of misuse of market power is that the problem is not well defined or apparently amenable to clear definition.... .Even if particular types of conduct can be named, it does not seem possible to define them, or the circumstances in which they should be treated as objectionable, with any great precision.....**Faced with this problem.....the challenge is to provide a system which can distinguish between desirable and undesirable activity while providing an acceptable level of business certainty** (My italics). (PC, 2001, p. 154)

The current Treasurer has stated that what the Australian business community wants most is certainty about the direction of carbon pollution reduction plans and the carbon price. The design of low risk green investment models is also vital in this context. I therefore attach some related discussions of regional policy and planning direction which may be useful to the Fairfax press and others in all regional contexts where clearer direction for sustainable development is being sought. See more at www.Carolodonnell.com.au

Develop the Fairfax plan with a stakeholder model and better theory of competition

I write as a Fairfax media key stakeholder as I buy two newspapers daily and have seen this presence in my life as a key instrument of self orientation since 1975. One must clearly understand the distinction between key stakeholders and stakeholders in any organization, including Fairfax. This is necessary to gain clearer, more accountable direction and aims which first openly recognize *those to whom the organization ideally seeks to be of service and those who pay for the production of this service*. These are the **key** stakeholders. External service providers to the business and others with an interest are its *stakeholders*, but they are **not** the **key** stakeholders of the business.

Government often tries to make this clear. Lawyers destroy this by going back to legal and commercial practices and theories where only the financial interests of traders exist.

Fairfax Media should consult with its many stakeholders with a view to planning and restructuring many linked organizations and communities to support all global, regional and local news gathering, work, education, training, entertainment, travel, accommodation and other government, business and community functions better. More information on regional development and related communications and work relationships in Sydney and Broken Hill is below and attached. Cricketers, footballers and Christians may lead others as usual. (God knows who or what they do. I have ignored them.)

In 1993, Hilmer's report to Heads of Government defined competition as, 'striving or potential striving of two or more persons or organizations against one another for the same or related objects'(1993, p.2). However, laws don't define competition and courts have historically assumed that competition is conducted between traders purely for money. The asset sharing assumptions that gradually developed in families in the 19th and 20th centuries are subjected also to older basic assumptions about the appropriate treatment of the male estate. We have not even begun the necessarily related discussion of gender relations. Why not? One guesses that if one did so honestly the answers for many questions would also be too obviously educational about the idiocy of lawyers.

An ideal competition model assumes administration is ideally conducted broadly as research into the outcomes of service. This is ideally conducted in many ways designed to serve current and future management and community aims increasingly broadly. In the case of Fairfax, competition is ideally designed openly and cooperatively with others to serve the organizational and related regional interest in delivering social and environmental benefits to all. This ideally begins internationally with the poorest people living in natural environments which are increasingly being turned into deserts or monocultures in which the global biodiversity, heritage and culture is fast being lost.

In this historical international context, the national and regional aid and trade efforts are ideally related as part of a more broadly managed progression of more fair, scientific and democratic development for current and future generations. Quality of life depends increasingly on harnessing all funds more effectively to support management to achieve all social and environmental goals better in future. James Mackenzie, Chairman of Pacific Brands, who was with you on the Insiders on ABC TV, said he supports Australian direction to reduce global warming because our production cannot compete in low wage markets. Innovation is the best way forward, which is the direction Fairfax is offered here. James MacKenzie said the necessary management transition depends on ability to understand high end manufacturing requirements and he does not. I bet few do. Fairfax should talk to universities and other stakeholders seeking related directions. (Tell Insiders dick-heads Barry and his mate that Kevin said grey foxes, not grey beards.)

For planning purposes one assumes that pursuing regionally planned and increasingly open development direction together is better than total ignorance of how everybody in the region is travelling with their friends. Regional Development and Resource Sector

Employment Taskforce directions appear broadly good for cooperative development between Sydney and Far West NSW (which appear to have complementary needs) or elsewhere. Working with Gunter Pauli and European initiators of 'The Blue Economy' may also provide more practical direction, as discussed in the attached. The Productivity Commission (PC) report on Rural Research and Development Corporations provides related directions for Australia. Trade and aid may be constructed in related contexts.

In the recent Sydney Ideas debate 'The authority of science: Is science just another voice in the policy debate?' Professor Christian List of the London School of Economics' contrasted the concept of aggregative democracy with deliberative democracy. He prefers the latter and so should you. Deliberative democracy assumes the combination of belief and the related desire to make rational decisions ideally drive development directions, rather than the aggregation of particular numbers being the main driver. This change is necessary to protect the interests of future generations from destruction at the hands of current sectional interests. It is also necessary to recognize and protect the legitimacy of spiritual belief and the reality of emotion against the excessively controlling demands of those who may more easily pretend to be objectively detached. In general, List's distinction between two democratic forms provides the capacity for belief and more scientific approaches to evidence to drive development regionally or universally. The rights and duties of individuals in regard to self-determination are also jealously preserved in this ideal process in which greater individual freedom is also a major goal.

Design employment openly and flexibly to meet common need and individual taste

The email I received about outsourcing sub-editors and designers jobs at Fairfax states:

Journalists at the paper are taking several steps to convince management at Fairfax Media their decision is flawed and should be reversed. Many members of the community for whom the papers are important have asked how they can help to protect their quality and integrity; characteristics we believe are vital if they are to survive and ensure Sydney and Melbourne don't become one newspaper towns.

In regard to media, one first considers the concepts of 'quality and integrity' as ideally related to the quality of the search for truth by all. As 'the fourth estate', the primary duty of the media is to attempt to clarify the world and its parts so life is conducted in more broadly and deeply informed ways in the public interest. Newspapers, TV, the internet, videos and radio appear best equipped for broadly harnessing the views of experts and others who have been or who may be affected by many issues which ideally are of broader concern, to bring them to wider public view for judgment and related information. Media provides a key part of the process of learning upon which we embark to enrich or destroy ourselves. Ideally media provides for the safe expression of emotion so broader learning and judgment are peacefully achieved and not by the gun or a lawyer.

From the consumer perspective, including in relation to media services, the primary issue of concern is not how many providers operate in a market but the quality of their product

or service and its related outcomes. To the extent that all have different needs and wants, quality may also be in the eye of the beholder. (I want a girl, just like the girl, etc. etc.)

TV started when I was a child in Queensland. On Sunday we watched BA Santamaria, followed by Ed Murrow followed by Bertrand Russell, all on one channel. At the time I could not understand the first two but fell in love with Bertie. My point is that there is nothing essentially wrong with being a one newspaper town, any more than it would be bad to have a town with one lawyer or one sheriff. While a town with one lawyer might be lucky if it had a few sensible people instead of a lawyer, in a town with no newspaper, only one might be considered fine, depending on what it was like. For instance I'd take 'The Australian' instead of the lawyer if not stopped by the law. It seems more modern.

Fairfax writers and others on TV have helped me understand why so much of my retirement money was suddenly lost without warning in 2008; why 'ethical' and 'green' investments are 'high risk' and were hardest hit; why investments are opaque and what the men managing money did with it. One greatly fears too many professionals. I do not trust them not to exploit my ignorance and weakness, as a result of their enthusiasm for increasingly specialised work, study and research, in which they may primarily support each other at the public and individual expense, while confusing the potential consumer and each other. Seeing psychologists or related researchers on TV often makes me want to leap through the screen and ask them more searching questions, and not in a good way.

One of the benefits of more openly planned approaches to Fairfax business is the related capacity for this to place many professional drivers in more clear, broad, open and apparently rational service contexts, to better engage and inform the public. For example, in 2009, the total operating revenues of 39 Australian universities were \$20.5 billion yet they only had one million students. Academics may like their secret research but the key stakeholders who pay for it should ask them to open up their cross-subsidised books. Ideally we are all only here to help and to have a good time.

Even if Fairfax newspaper circulation declines further, the key important function that quality newspapers such as yours and also Google, television and radio provide, is showing people more of the multiplicity of interests which operate in all market places so all may understand more and make better informed choices, which suit their particular interests better. In societies which claim to seek fairness, to take matters into the open for clearly accountable development and problem solving is likely to be the most protective, democratic, educational, cheap and effective, collective decision strategy. No custodian of Australian funds should subject Australian people to secrecy, courts and the lawyers' rush, as lawyers and their closest mates win. If Fairfax still declines, as consumers are subjected further to US product thrusts, at least we would be able to say we struggled and did not go blindly along as if we were Nazis. How many academics can say as much?

When the news media is increasingly allowed to be perverted by commercial and related sectional interests we increasingly face repression instead of the search for truth. In this context I urge you to open up your industrial issues for public discussion and to do the same for many related issues. For example, there appear to be many mismatches between

skills development and work opportunities in Far West NSW and Sydney. It seems of benefit to both regions to grow through better related planning and management. Many elected representatives appear well placed to address this by assisting coordination to achieve regional aims and directions faster than by waiting for markets to operate more blindly, slowly and uncertainly within the normal constraints. How could Fairfax help?

Reading Fairfax newspapers has been of great assistance to me, (on a par with TV, books and government reports), in helping me make submissions to government inquiries on many matters, in an attempt to help find better ways forward for all. Although unpaid, and unacknowledged in career advancement, this has for many years been my most important work, as I know that submissions to public inquiries nearly always reflect the perceptions and related professional interests of those who made them. It is usually very difficult for anybody to discern the broader context and related public interest unless they have been following the Australian story for a very long while. I have and so try to help. (I am not against radio, the 'Australian' or other media they are just not part of my life.)

Open up the Fairfax discussion and financial books to encourage others to do so

Ideally, Fairfax should openly discuss its immediate industrial and related commercial concerns in newspapers, on TV or anywhere else, so others may also understand and plan their ideal future better in the context of Australian regional development for more sustainable development. Since 2008 UniSuper appears to have gained clearer investment direction which also has potential for supporting much better communication. Work cooperatively to assist placement of workers and students to maximum advantage.

Fairfax is not alone in its problems. We all need to understand about superannuation and other investment better, not simply because saving through superannuation accumulation is the legal obligation of all Australian workers and employers but because investment can increasingly easily lead to the enhancement or destruction of the conditions of people everywhere. For example, the SMH (15.6.2011 Business Day p.3) stated:

Last week Business Day reported that MTAA Super fund in recent months had been quietly selling its holdings of infrastructure and had appointed the investment bank Macquarie Group to oversee sales of key assets.

We recall when MTAA was listed as top earning industry superannuation fund in Fairfax publications and need to know much more about how MTAA and Macquarie activities relate to global energy, transport directions and other matters. We have a right to know. I hate Macquarie because they lied about what they could do for the average punter every night on prime time TV for a year before the crash. They knew and that was their target. One sees philanthropy reported on in newspapers but I recall that about six months before the global crash an Australian Financial Review article put many more builders' collapses down to bad management. No wonder many become bitter. Jesus, I would be livid.

Openness is what most distinguishes scientific and democratic thought and development from typically feudal, tribal or mafia actions. Instead of guns or lawyers, words ideally

invite only verbal responses which may be similarly interested and/or honest and searching. The rights of individuals, minorities, the poor and other groups are ideally best protected in broadly related contexts of open discussion, where many may consider themselves against anybody else, for reasons others may ponder. In this context one naturally encourages Fairfax to discuss its organizations industrial issues as openly and objectively as possible, in its normal (but in this case more intimately informed) fashion.

If better linked, many may pursue employment and community development better

It appears axiomatic to many teachers and in the construction industry that any money spent in students travelling to nest near well endowed or refurbished educational institutions with many huge and small lecture rooms, libraries and offices is money well spent, especially in bigger cities. To benefit many more, however, the clear and inviting presence of paid work, on the job skills development, cheap housing and cheap transport must first be designed and delivered in ways that are both organized and attractive enough to improve the chances of many more green and productive exchanges than currently occur. Better coordinated work, training, education, housing and transport are also necessary to enable the broad, close and critical relationships between theory and practice that are vital for greener and more inclusive forms of production. This is also necessary to benefit Australian and related regional communities. How can Fairfax help?

Young people are more likely to suffer as a result of accidents and from depression than older people are, except when the latter reach the age when they begin to fall over. However, over every life time, an Australian's poor diet, lack of exercise, smoking, alcohol intake, unemployment and chronic disabilities, which may be related to their lifetime of study, work, play, travel or other experience, may take an increasing toll. Because difficulty at school, unemployment and poor physical fitness may all lead to earlier decline and death, tackling such problems throughout the lifetime through many personal trainer/mentor/coach situations seems most likely to improve health and employment. One wonders how this direction is ideally supported by employers, in pre-schools, schools and the media. Does it depend on the interests of students and parents?

Ideally, only in acute situations should any help be medically driven, as life is not ideally constructed as a medical project and the focus of both the patient and the doctor on diagnosis and medication may often be narrowly misplaced or commercially driven as disability becomes increasingly likely at older ages. The medical doctor's time is also among the most expensive. Why would one ever bring in a psychiatrist? One always wonders what a psychiatrist can do for anybody that a genuine lover or friend could not.

Thomas Szasz wrote that the struggle for self control has historically been conceived as a moral problem with a religious solution but today it is primarily conceived of as a psychiatric problem with a pharmacological solution. He pointed out that one of the most important political-philosophical features of the concept of mental illness is that it removes motivation from action, adds it to illness, and thus destroys the very possibility of distinguishing disease from non-disease. He argues that while giving oneself a controlled substance is a crime, accepting it from a physician is seen as treatment. He

states that coercive psychiatry serves the interests of the coercers and contractual psychiatry serves the interests of the contracting parties, but acknowledging this is taboo intellectually, professionally and politically. That has certainly been my experience.

Only a tiny child should be able to ignore history and the broader commercial and political realities of life. Better reporting is vital. In a recent Fairfax article (AFR 15.6.11) 'Doubt cast over cancer drug', Jill Margo failed to explain the 'waterworks' problems which send men to their GPs and may lead to them being diagnosed with early prostate cancer and drugged or operated on. Why do men consider they are urinating too little or too often? Is it painful? Are they incontinent? As I distrust a lot of medical care for women and for mental problems, I am very glad I do not have a prostate. To the man with only a hammer everything looks like a nail. Some specialists may appear like that.

Australian health care has been a battleground between Australian and US approaches to service provision since the introduction of Medicare in 1983 and the American approach often seems to be winning to the detriment of more intelligent views of risk and related fund investment. I blame drug companies and the related lack of development of a person-controlled electronic personal health record. Without the electronic health record it will be impossible for anybody to take responsibility; connect care; identify and resolve inequities or drive quality performance in relation to health care. Broken Hill is one of six priority locations to fast-track development of National Broadband Network. See the related discussion of Broken Hill as a local and international open laboratory opportunity.

At a recent Sydney University discussion of the use of new media in public health entitled 'Is viral marketing good for you?' The American of the day was Doug Evans, promoting the idea that government should use public money to compete with the private sector for consumers' minds. He pointed out government would have to spend a lot or it would lose the battle. He said behaviours are like products. This was confusing. His view failed to distinguish effectively between product sales and purchaser outcomes. The commercial provider may prefer to sell products rather than services to consumers as this approach fits more easily with the commercial in confidence paradigm where the producer is driven by research and testing before the normal commercial practices begin.

From a perspective focused on service and related outcomes, any confusion of *behaviour*, *product*, *service* or *outcome* categories is highly problematic. For example, after purchase of home gym equipment to hang on one's door, the gym equipment may or may not be used by the purchaser. Either way, this has many potential outcomes. Potent medicines may also have potent unintended consequences in other areas of the body for which the medication was not being considered. If one thinks of provision as related to the product, rather than in the context of the provision of related service to consumers, one may badly limit the range of potential services from broader research and development perspectives.

It appears the US approach to populations and information is ideally to treat them as many competitively force fed geese, with the government health message trying to outspend the opposition. One sees that one outcome of this approach, which makes Americans think they are free, is also that they think they are safer owning guns than not

owning them. The global evidence is that the US has by far the highest murder rate in the OECD. Superficially, these people appear to be encouraging increasingly paranoid nuts. Why would a normal person try to help a crying neighbour, if her man has a gun? US notions of mental and physical health principally appear to be constructed in many related contexts equally distorted by their commercial and related professional interests.

For many years I have gone to the Sydney Uni. gym three times per week for exercise and also greatly appreciate the music and music videos. Long ago I heard in the gym that exercises are ideally aimed at improving bodily strength, flexibility and endurance. It struck me then that strength, flexibility and endurance are also the mental qualities one may need to acquire in life and there are ways to acquire this through broader reflection on education, training, work and related experiences. Reflection ideally becomes increasingly mature, and increasingly broadly and finely critical in its capacity to learn from the actions of the past in an attempt to avoid repeating their mistakes.

Ideally, if anybody at Fairfax wants new work or a quieter life they should state what they would like to learn or offer, with a view to open accreditation for competent production, conducted on the new job. Inclusive approaches to greener development ideally plan the welfare of all locals in a broader context of global and regional interests, especially in centres like Broken Hill where history is ideally also an opportunity for more open and stable change than that driven by mates whose mates also have mates.

The article 'Engineers demand to see a plan' (AFR 8.12.2010, Business 8) states the National Engineering Taskforce seeks implementation of a student demand driven system to alleviate engineering skills shortages. Accordingly, it now appears most necessary to undertake the following steps, in which all student subject choice may be helpfully categorized as being principally related to either Governance or Health or Built and Natural Environments.

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1. Make education managers manage rationally to grow the business to cheapen and improve the quality of education and research for development and jobs
2. Put subject content on-line, or on video, radio, or TV and administer subjects to maximize economies of teaching and administrative scale and/or to customize teaching better to support specified work projects and related training on the job
3. Maximize student and employer choice in regard to subjects undertaken

The work and education process may be led in major resources, infrastructure and service operations, by local councils or anybody else. There is also great scope for improving work, education and research practice through better related communication and record keeping. Entertainment is a naturally related story with more still and moving pictures.

The novel has been called a lie in the service of the truth. The same could be said with much greater effect about many of the great movies, music and videos, which have come from the US in particular, in a never ending stream in the post war period. People my age

have grown up hearing US and English music express our mixed emotions all over the world. As an Australian I nearly always feel extremely happily at home whenever I hear these pop songs in almost any part of the world. They humorously and beautifully express and remind me of the many truths of my emotional life or reveal that of others.

Last year I went to a karaoke bar in Japan with younger people from around Europe and we all knew and loved the same stuff. Since the people of the world were murdering each other just a few years before I was born I found this amazing. Movies, music, dance, acrobatics and other arts often give us the emotional and cultural expression we cannot otherwise give ourselves. People everywhere are ideally encouraged to further these forms of aural, visual, and written communication so we all learn more about them. Take the lead and discuss Fairfax industrial issues in this fairer, broader context where the public interest in greener and more sustainable development is also openly championed.

Yours truly

Carol O'Donnell, St James Court, 10/11 Rosebank St., Glebe, Sydney 2037.

Dear Fairfax Editors, Barry and Others

Those of us who have grown old with the Australian Financial Review were shocked to read of the sudden death of Peter Ruehl, immediately after he had written his usual column. Because he has been such a constant public contributor to the Australian way of life, a standard bearer for American values like those of PJ O'Rourke and has also shared his family life with us for so many years, we have a right to know how he died, especially as we had no idea he was sick. His death was unnerving. Did he die after a long struggle with cancer, or was it a sudden and unexpected heart attack or stroke? Did he kill himself because he was depressed? This is a great topic of public interest. You should tell us.

After Pete had died, on a related topic of public interest, I read in 'Howard's man takes the reins for O'Farrell' (SMH 14.4.2011, p.1) that Peter Shergold is the new chairman of the board of the Public Service Commission. He said 'there are things that you do necessarily that have confidentiality attached to them. And the provision of policy advice and policy options which then becomes part of a cabinet decision is clearly part of that'.

When I worked in the public service for the Greiner government I consulted outside the building and leaked written policy suggestions like a sieve as this is the only way that one can become informed enough to offer policy options towards cabinet which are realistic as distinct from pig ignorant of the concerns of those engaged in business in the real world. Professor Shergold appears to be engaged in dragging us back to the dark ages.

On the basis that you are the supposed champions of the public right to know and also like a good story, I expect to see this letter published and the issues debated further. Related communications program directions are attached.

Yours truly

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