Social Media in Asia

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XVIII.   Australian Social Media Trends

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Abstract

The vast distances Australians must negotiate to connect their small, highly urbanized population both nationally and internationally have long created the incentive for invention, innovation and the early adoption of communication technologies. Important also in any reflection in relation to Australia's socio-technological evolution is this country's location as a modern, developed, predominately western nation perched in the southeast of the Asian landmass. The Australian continent's seven million square kilometers are geographically, and increasingly economically, politically and culturally, part of Asia. Forty percent of Australians were born overseas and almost one third of overseas-born Australians were born in Asia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013). At the end of 2012, Australia's

population was approaching 23 million with about half that number—12.2 million—Internet subscribers. Broadband subscribers accounted for 98% of subscriptions; the split between private and public (business or government) use was 76% and 24% respectively. After exploring some of the central characteristics and tensions of the social media landscape in Australia, the authors illustrate issues and trends in social media usage in Australia and conclude with a discussion of salient policy issues, including challenges around the evolution of digital infrastructure, media law and copyright.

1. Introduction

Increasingly more present in the lives of every Australian, the rise of social media in Australia has been rapid, unrelenting and invigorating. We have, as a nation, been left breathless at the pace, the intensity and the drama that continues to unfold, co-created by many voices across an ever-increasing array of platforms. Take, for example, the case of Australian television presenter Charlotte Dawson, who was admitted to a psychiatric hospital after being attacked by trolls on Twitter (Hornery & Hall, 2012). Another example comes from the much-loved world of cricket; coach Mickey Arthur closed his Twitter account after being abused by fans unhappy with the sacking of four players before the Third Test against India (Badel, 2013). Also from sport, a promising Australian rugby league star, Josh Dugan, lost a lucrative $2 million, three-year contract after an unsavoury social media rant on Instagram (Garry, 2013). Finally and perhaps most notably, former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has the most-followed Twitter account in the country (1.2 million). When Rudd made a third run for the leadership of the country and was rejected, the drama played out across social and traditional media platforms around the nation (Vonow, 2013). Social media in Australia are in their

adolescence, and we are watching their maturation with interest and not a little trepidation.

This chapter describes and explores some of the central characteristics and tensions of the social media landscape in Australia. We begin by outlining key trends in social media usage by individuals, businesses, and institutions. We elaborate some of the more interesting emergent issues using five vignettes and conclude with details of the most salient policy issues, ranging from infrastructure to media law and copyright.

Social media, in the context of the discussion that follows, are online communication platforms with three distinct features: The first feature is that human social networks are technologically manifested through bounded systems in which users (a) construct public, semi-public, or private profiles, (b) accept or articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (c) view and traverse their lists of connections and those made by others (see also boyd and Ellison's (2007) definition of social network sites). Secondly, social media involves some element of user-generated content: multi-media products generated by individual users or by an aggregation of users. Generation of content covers both original content from a user and content posted by a user but from another source. Thirdly, user-generated content is shared, searchable, and can be responded to, across one or many technologically-articulated human social networks.

2. Internet Connectivity in Australia

With Australia's population approaching 23 million, at the end of December 31, 2012 there were 12.2 million Internet subscribers in this nation. Of the 98% who were broadband, 76% were households, and 24% were classified as business and government. As for mobile use, at 31 December 2012, there were 17.4 million subscribers with Internet access connections via a mobile handset in Australia, an increase of 7% over the six month period from 30 June 2012 (ABS, 2012a). Between June 2011 and May 2012, the take-up of smartphones doubled, increasing from 25%

of the adult population at June 2011 to 49% at May 2012 (Australian Communications and Media Authority, 2013).

Age Profiles of Internet Users

Previous research, both in Australia (Sum, Mathews, Hughes & Campbell, 2008) and internationally (Czaja & Lee, 2007), has shown that older people are least likely to be connected to the Internet. As at mid-2012, Sensis reported that 100% of those in the demographic bands 14 to 19, 20 to 29, and 30 to 39 all had access to the Internet; while 99% of those aged 40 to 49 and 50 to 54 had access, and that of those aged 65 and over 93% had access. Thus Internet access in Australia is all but universal. There are data to suggest that urban dwellers have more intense patterns of use, as have younger people, those with higher incomes, and those with higher levels of education (Sensis, 2012, p. 10).

Time and Activity Online

Research by the Roy Morgan organisation conducted in the first half of 2012 found that online messaging and interaction (not including e-mail) accounted for the largest proportion of time spent online, some 13 minutes each day, and three times the amount of time spent on second most frequent activity – search (Roy Morgan Research, 2013).

Category	hours/day
Real estate and renovation	0.14
Sport	0.17
Government	0.18
Banking	0.32
Weather	0.57
Online shopping and auctions	1.04
News and newspapers, excl. weather	1.31
Search	1.46
Online shopping and auctions	1.47
Online communities and messaging	6.06
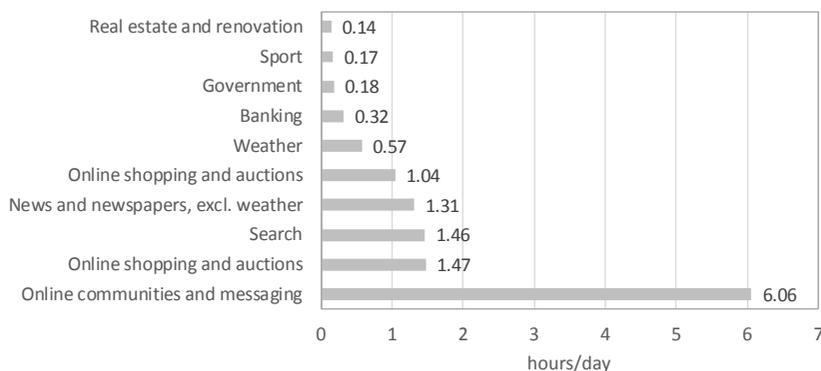
Figure 1: Hours spent online per month by Australians (as of 2012)

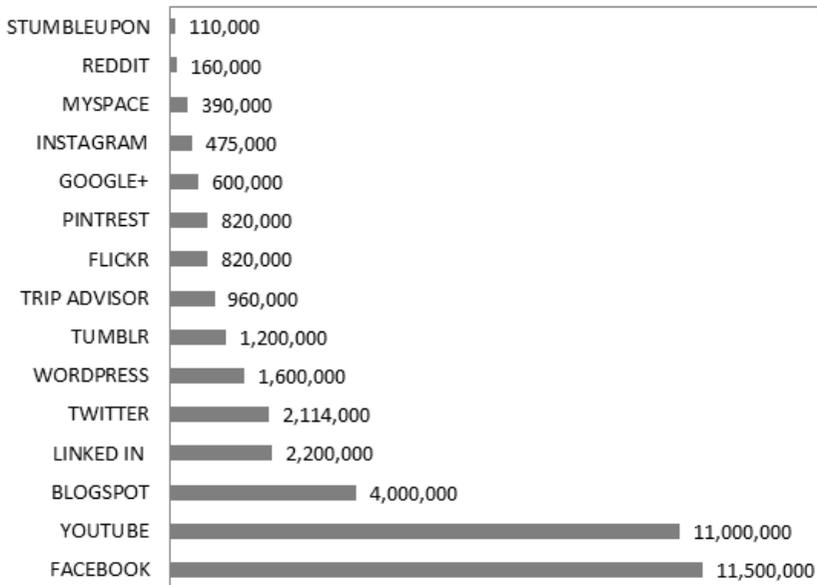|	
STUMBLEUPON	110,000
REDDIT	160,000
MYSPACE	390,000
INSTAGRAM	475,000
GOOGLE+	600,000
PINTREST	820,000
FLICKR	820,000
TRIP ADVISOR	960,000
TUMBLR	1,200,000
WORDPRESS	1,600,000
TWITTER	2,114,000
LINKED IN	2,200,000
BLOGSPOT	4,000,000
YOUTUBE	11,000,000
FACEBOOK	11,500,000

Figure 2: Active users of top 15 social media sites in Australia (as of August 2012)

Significant gender differences have also emerged in the types of activities undertaken online, with news and newspapers ranking at number five for women at number two for men; e-mail at number two for women and number four for men, and online shopping and auctions at number four for women and number six for men (Roy Morgan, 2013). Figure 2 describes the penetration of social media in Australia as at August 2012, from both fixed and mobile accounts, the latest data available from AdCorp (2013).

3. The Social Media Landscape in Australia

The two biggest sites by usage are Facebook, with the number of Facebook accounts equal to 50% of the Australian population, and

YouTube. Facebook has 11.5 million user accounts; YouTube 11 million. More recent data from Social Media News (2013) suggest that in 2013 the number of Facebook accounts fell away slightly in the first quarter of 2013, although growth between 2011 and 2012 was 1 million new accounts. YouTube growth has also plateaued in 2013 after year-on-year growth from 2011 to 2013 of about 1 million accounts.

Facebook

The average Australian accesses Facebook 20 times a week, with men on average 21.6 times and women 19.8 times. There are substantial differences in Facebook usage by age, which reflect lower uptake of social media by older persons, as indicated in Figure 3 (Sensis, 2012, p. 19).
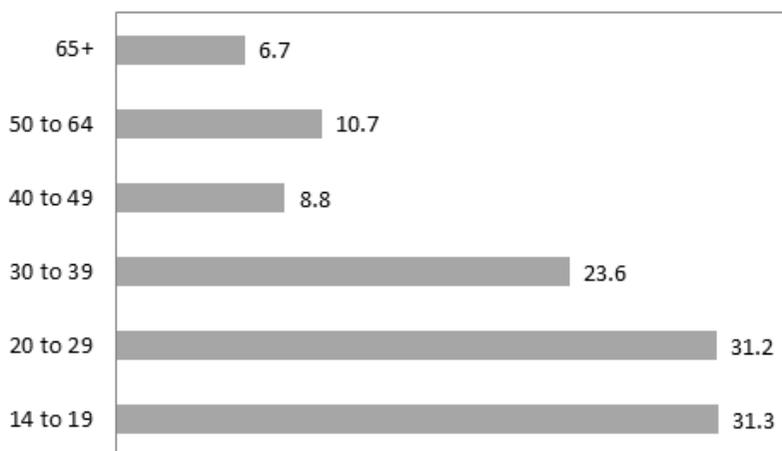
Figure 3: Average weekly use of Australian's use of Facebook in age ranges (as of 2012)

Australian Facebook users reportedly spend an average of 18 minutes each time they access the site (Sensis, 2012, p. 20). Australians use Facebook in many of the same ways as users from all cultures (mostly interacting with friends and family by sharing personal images and statuses), but they seem to be especially keen on sharing image macro-style memes (Rintel, 2013) on Facebook groups. All Australian cities have many pages and groups

devoted to sharing image macros commenting on varied aspects of social life. Three categories are especially common: city pages/groups about the behaviour of residents from certain suburbs; university and school pages/groups about internal or external issues; and public transport pages about bus or train services. While there are often culturally-insensitive posts on such pages/groups, an overtly racist indigenous Facebook meme group received strong public outcry was removed after online petitions (Sykes, 2012).

YouTube

There are several common threads in four of the top five YouTube accounts: they are young; they are comedic; they are metropolitan (from either Sydney or Melbourne), and three of the four are of Asian descent. With the possible exception of Natalie Tran, none have a profile in mainstream media, but their YouTube presence is linked extensively with other popular social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr. The data in Figure 4 come from Social Blade (2013), a social media tracking site.

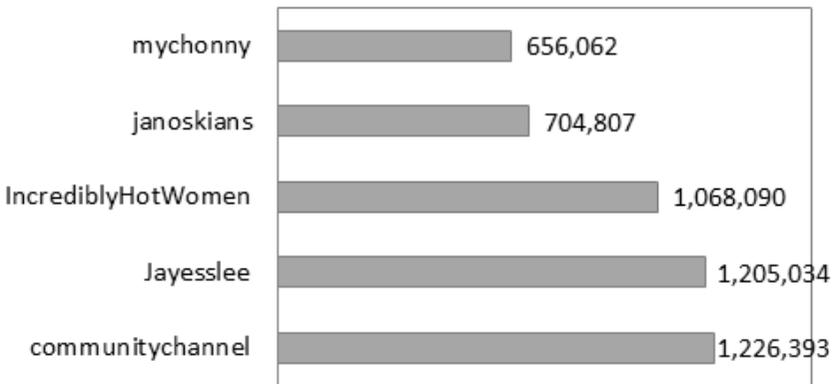|	
mychonny	656,062
janoskians	704,807
IncrediblyHotWomen	1,068,090
Jayesslee	1,205,034
communitychannel	1,226,393

Figure 4; Top five Australian YouTube accounts (as of 2013)

Natalie Tran's video blogs styled Community Channel have made her an Internet celebrity. The daughter of a refugee family from Vietnam, Sydney-

based Tran (born 1986) began posting in 2006, and to date has nearly 300 two to three minute observational and frequently self-deprecating posts. Tran has successfully monetised her site, and has been able to cross over into mainstream media such as the Sydney Morning Herald and The Project on Network 10.

Korean-born Sydney-raised pop duo, Janice and Sonia Lee, popular in Thailand, Singapore, and Hong Kong, and the second most popular You Tube account in Australia, have no mainstream media profile. SBS World News was the only Australian media outlet to run a story about the twins, in the past two years, despite coverage in The Bangkok Post, The Straits Times and The South China Morning Post. The Lees are members of the New Life Community Church in Rydalmere, which they describe as "charismatic Presbyterian", one of some 150 diasporic Korean churches in Sydney (Park, 2012). IncrediblyHotWomen is a YouTube channel which features heavily pixelted excerpts of soft core porn films.

Janoskians—an acronym for Just Another Name Of Silly Kids In Another Nation—are a group of Melbourne-based teenage street comedians. Using social media to showcase their activities—grotesque to some, appealing to others—has propelled them to Internet fame that evolved into real life when the group embarked on a tour of the United Kingdom in early 2013. The visit caused chaos at Heathrow, London's major airport, when the efforts of 1,200 waiting fans to see their idols were thwarted by authorities claiming health and safety concerns (Saunders, 2013). Approximately ten thousand fans were then reported as descending upon London's Hyde Park after the group tweeted their location (Coster, Dennehy, Epstein & Te Koha, 2013). The moral of the tale is that pot of international fame is now waiting at the end of the social media rainbow for those with the talent and the mix of digital savvy, talent and good luck to build a following.

Another social media celebrity in the Australian milieu is John Luc (born 1991), known online as mychonny. A Melbourne-based Australian of Vietnamese-Chinese descent, John Luc joined You Tube in 2008. Luc runs several channels which focus in a comedic fashion on his Asian heritage and his Australian context. Luc has five you tube channels "Mychonny" "Yourchonny" "chonnyday" "Chonnygame" and "KPopchonny" and his website sells games and merchandise.

Blogspot and Wordpress

Google-owned Blogspot, currently the number three social media site in Australia, is facing increased competition from WordPress. Blogspot has dropped from 4.7 million users in 2011 to 3 million in 2013 while WordPress has jumped from 1,600,000 accounts in 2012 to 2.9 million in the first quarter of 2013 (Social Media News, 2013a). On these figures, WordPress would have a 12.5% share of the Australian population, and as the art of blogging becomes more sophisticated, it seems that bloggers are turning to a platform that gives them greater options—WordPress.

LinkedIn

The two sources we have consulted for statistics on the size of social media sites in Australia Social Media News and AdCorp have substantially different data on LinkedIn. In 2012, LinkedIn had 2.2 million accounts, according to Social Media News and AdCorp. In the first quarter of 2013, the number of LinkedIn accounts grew, but the rate of that growth is contested. According to Social Media News, the growth was 500, 000 to 2.75 million. In contrast, AdCorp (2013) puts the figure at 3.7 million accounts. Irrespective of which figure is accurate, LinkedIn is growing quickly in Australia, as concerns about privacy move consumers to distinguish personal social media sites such as Facebook and their professional sites such as LinkedIn. Other factors that may have influenced this growth include a much softer employment market in 2012 that saw many more professionals on the job market.

Twitter

The high public profile of Twitter probably reflects its widespread use in discourse across the public sphere, especially among journalists, politicians and pundits. While Twitter grew from an estimated 1.8 million accounts in 2011 to 2.1 million in 2013, it is a controversial medium. Press gallery veteran Dennis Shanahan of Rupert Murdoch's The Australian newspaper has heavily criticized Twitter's accuracy, self-serving usage

for self-promotion, it's arrogance and predisposition to invite hostility (Shanahan, 2013).

While the social value of Twitter is contended, the fact that Twitter is a self-promoting tool for politicians, celebrities and pundits is uncontested. Four of those in the top ten Twitter list in Australia are musicians, another is an actor, and two are sportsmen. However, the most followed Twitter account in Australia in April 2013 was former Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd (see Figure 5).

Musician David King, the Wollongong-based musician whose group the Contagious (@the_contagious) features 14-year-old singer Annalivia follows Kevin Rudd at number two; actress and model Jasmine Curtis-Smith (@jascurtissmith) is number three. A large gap emerges between the top three, who have more than a million followers, and the rest of the field, which begins with just over half a million followers (see Figure 5). Rugby union player Quade Cooper (@QuadeCooper) and Australian cricket captain Michael Clarke (@MClareke23) are number four and number seven respectively. The digital media strategist for evangelical international aid and development agency World Vision, Alistair Cameron (@alicam), and Mark Ferris, (@suburbview) a first-time buyer who was frustrated as he was unable to locate properties quickly and efficiently on the Internet, and who launched his real estate search engine in 2006, are number five and six respectively.

Melbourne-based band Cut Copy (@cutcopy) formed in 2001 by Dan Whitford, a DJ and graphic designer is number eight; Fawaz Adam Ibrahim, (@itsfuzzwuzz), 19-year-old Australian singer-songwriter is number nine, and Hillsong singer and worship leader Darlene Zscheh (@DarleneZscheh) rounds out the top ten. Hillsong is a Sydney-based Pentecostal mega-church. The dominance of musicians on the Australian top ten list bears out the acuity of Twitter launching its own digital music service in April 2013.
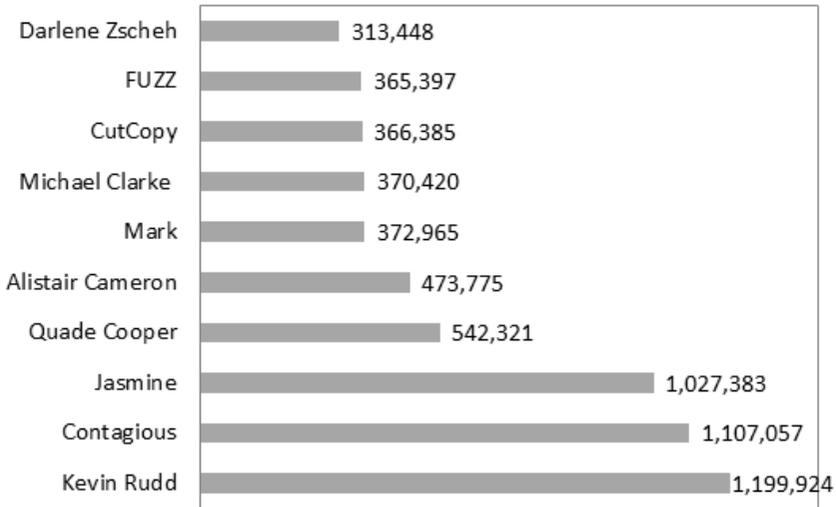
Darlene Zscheh	313,448
FUZZ	365,397
CutCopy	366,385
Michael Clarke	370,420
Mark	372,965
Alistair Cameron	473,775
Quade Cooper	542,321
Jasmine	1,027,383
Contagious	1,107,057
Kevin Rudd	1,199,924

Figure 5: Most followed Australian Twitter accounts (as of April 2013)

Former Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd (@KRuddMP), completely dominates the social media landscape in politics. In contrast, the current Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, has 371,264 followers on Twitter; Opposition Leader Tony Abbott 115,975; the Opposition's shadow minister for the digital economy, Malcolm Turnbull has 159,980 followers. The government Minister for Communications, Broadband and the Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy does not tweet.

Taking a wider view, the rise of Twitter has made it possible for Axel Bruns and colleagues to create the Australian Twitter News Index, which provides weekly snapshots of how mainstream news outlet stories are retweeted and commented upon. Bruns (2012) contends that this index provide a more accurate sense of how Australians are meaningfully engaging with Australian news content than traditional circulation figures.

Tumblr and Pinterest

Tumblr, (founded 2007) probably because of its ease of use, has grown from 1 million users in 2011 to 2.6 million users in 2013. It has a high level of popularity with young people, whereas Pinterest (released in 2011) is popular among women, and related lifestyle interests such as weddings, fashion, cooking and design. Estimates of the number of users of Pinterest vary from 640,000 (Social Media News, 2013), to 1.2 million (AdCorp, 2013).

Instagram and Flickr

The popularity of photo sharing sites Instagram (established 2010) and Flickr (founded 2006) have both shown a decline from 2012 to 2013, and current subscriptions to both are calculated variously. Social Media News (2013) suggests that Instagram declined from 1,283,500 users in 2012 to 1,083,924 in 2013. In contrast, Ad Corp (2012, 2013) suggests the platform only had 425,000 users in 2012 but 834,202 in 2013. Flickr, which celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2014, has either plateaued, or is in decline, with Social Media News (2011, 2013) showing 1.3 million users in 2011, down to 850,000 in 2013. Ad Corp (2013) figures show Flickr users at 924,045 in 2013.

In assessing the currency of social media sites, and the popularity of various users, it needs to be recognised that these data are simply a snapshot in time, and the advent of new devices, new platforms, and new applications can change the landscape quickly. We should not forget the lesson of MySpace, which once dominated social media, but is now down to less than 390,000 users in Australia. In 2007, the application had a reported 3 million users in Australia (Haynes, 2007).

Business and Social Media

As at 30 June 2011 (the latest reliable data available) 91.2% of Australian businesses had Internet access (ABS, 2012b). However, less than half of Australian businesses had any online presence, including a social media page. According to the Department of Broadband, Communications and

the Digital Economy (DBCDE), there is a significant gap between micro and big businesses, with just 33.2 % of micro businesses having a web presence compared to 97.3 % of big businesses (DBCDE, 2012). Those least likely to have an online presence are businesses in agriculture, forestry and fishing (13.0 %), transport, postal and warehousing (21.6 %) and construction (31.9 %) (DBCDE, 2012).

In this environment, Australian business, particularly in the business-to-business category, has been slow to commit to social media. Even the uptake of the "social business" tools has been largely limited to global professional services firms and digital natives. This in spite of the availability of intranet-embedded enterprise social platforms such as Microsoft SharePoint™ which supports Yammer™, which is generally used as an organisation-specific micro blogging tool for employees.

Companies venturing into social media outside of intranets have done so with mixed results. In June 2012 industry research conducted by Sensis, in conjunction with the Australian Interactive Media Industry Association (AIMA) reported that 27% of small business, 34% of medium businesses and 79% of large businesses claim to have a social media presence, with the prevalence of social media in businesses having increased steadily in the past year (Sensis, 2012) Facebook was the dominant form of social media presence for business with Twitter and LinkedIn also playing important parts across business size. Large businesses also are reported to use Google+, Youtube and blogs (Sensis, 2012).

It is important to note that growth is, however, happening quickly. Between 2011 and 2012, the proportion of small to medium enterprises (SMEs) with a social media presence increased from 14% to 27%, with smaller but significant increases also recorded for medium and larger businesses (Sensis, 2012). The investment made by business in social media that is not internally focused and private, generally is positioned as a marketing expense or an investment in stakeholder relationship-building or issues management. The AIMA Sensis report concluded:

> *The most common use of social media across all there business categories is to invite online comments, ratings or reviews. Not far behind, use for two-way communication with clients or contacts is the next most common usage category ahead of providing incentives via social media. Some 34% of small, 27% of medium and 35% of*

> *large businesses who engage in social media offer incentives. Most*
> *commonly these are discounts, giveaways or coupons (Sensis, 2012,*
> *p. 47).*

The AIMA Sensis report drew the following conclusions about social media use by business:

- Average social media spends by business are increasing with small and medium businesses almost doubling the proportion of the marketing budget devoted to social media between 2011 and 2012.
- Large businesses were likely to have social media policies for staff, and the majority had social media training. While small businesses mostly update their social media weekly, large businesses are more likely to be doing it on a daily basis (Sensis, 2012).
- A quarter of small businesses have no strategy to drive traffic to their sites and simply put links on their social media sites to their website. The most popular method across all business sizes was to put links to social media on the business website. A quarter of large businesses reported paying for advertising on other websites to drive traffic to their sites (Sensis, 2012).
- Businesses are "still focused on establishing, maintaining and updating their social media presence rather than driving people to it" (Sensis, 2012).

The conclusion to be drawn from this is that many businesses do not understand that the basic principle of Web 2.0 is "interactivity" (Berners-Lee et al., 2001), or that from a risk perspective, they see little commercial advantage in engagement and many legal and other constraints given the laws and regulations to which public companies must adhere. There is some anecdotal evidence that resources companies—coal and gas companies in particular—whose activities generate controversy on environmental and social issues, see little benefit in, or opportunity for social media engagement. Such Web 1.0 models of behaviour may change for listed companies when regulatory authorities in Australia follow the example of

the Securities and Exchange Commission and deem social media posts as an acceptable form of continuous disclosure (Holzer & Bensinger, 2013).

4. Australian Social Media Stories

The following five vignettes of social media in Australia show the interaction between social media users and the wider public sphere. Exemplified within are the universal issues that have emerged with social media, including online anonymity, cyber-bullying, and the shifting balance of power between traditional, legacy media and online media. Social media have compelled the attention of scholars, regulatory authorities, media, politicians, business, other influencers and an engaged public; while their goals and perspectives vary, the importance of social media is accepted by all.

The Qantas Pyjama Folly of 2011–Think Before You Tweet

Some large Australian corporations have proved less than adept in their use of social media for promotional purposes. One of the nation's most iconic, internationally recognised companies, Qantas, had a particularly high profile social media crisis in 2011, receiving an ignominious #epicfail accolade in November 2011 for asking on Twitter: What is your dream luxury inflight experience? (Be creative!) Answer must include #QantasLuxury. The prize was a pair of Qantas pyjamas, and a "luxury amenity kit".

While unremarkable in consumer campaign circles, Qantas issued the invitation on Twitter in the month following a major industrial dispute with employees. The dispute grounded the airline's entire fleet with little or no notice to passengers, leaving them stranded across the globe. Within 60 minutes of the original tweet, more than 50 tweets a minute were posted. The vast majority were uncomplimentary, and the hashtag began trending on Twitter (Wood, 2011). One of the most instructive tweets said: "Somewhere in Qantas HQ a middle-aged manager is yelling at a Gen Y social media 'expert' to make it stop" (Quoted in Glance, 2011).

Parodies based on the 2004 film Downfall have become an Internet meme and Qantas soon joined the list, with the role of Hitler channelling Qantas Chief Executive Officer, Alan Joyce (see YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTCwPlWzZnQ))

Traditional and non-traditional news media followed the social media disaster story with glee, selecting some tweets for publication in news media reports published on digital and other platforms. Selected notable tweets (quoted in Glance, 2011) were:

> *"Getting from A to B without the plane being grounded or an engine catching fire. #qantasluxury".*

> *"#qantasluxury is chartering a Greyhound bus and arriving at your destination days before your grounded Qantas flight".*

> *"#QantasLuxury is grounding the fleet so I can fly with @ VirginAtlantic instead."*

In the rush to rebuild customer relationships using Twitter, Qantas overlooked the timing and context of the conversations being evoked. While "message testing" isn't part of the culture and conventions of social media, the Qantas misstep provides a rationale for applying some traditional rigour to using a social medium to advance business relationships.

Charlotte Dawson and the Trolls

The 2012 case of Australian television personality, Charlotte Dawson, highlighted some of the darker and more anti-social consequences of social media. At times a moderately controversial television host and fashion commentator, Dawson became the target of a campaign of online abuse—trolling—after she retweeted the offensive comment of one troll (Moses & Hornery, 2012). The Oxford English Dictionary defines a "troll" as "Computing slang…(for) A person who posts deliberately erroneous or antagonistic messages to a newsgroup or similar forum with the intention of eliciting a hostile or corrective response. Also: a message of this type."

Dawson's intention was to discourage trolling by outing the offender in some way. Instead, Dawson's reaction precipitated a barrage of abuse from the trolls—from the mildly offensive to the utterly disgusting—and this drew a counter-reaction from many of Dawson's mostly young, female followers. The intensity and ugliness of that discourse around Dawson attracted widespread mainstream media attention. This attention increased when the embattled and emotionally battered Dawson attempted suicide.

Dawson's suicide attempt and the online campaign of abuse that had preceded, and continued to rage on, has triggered a wider debate in the mainstream media about the nature of trolling and the online culture that fosters bullying, harassment and intimidation. Speculation about how to arrest bad online behavior is countered with arguments around what public figures should and should not expect in terms of privacy. The actions Dawson took to expose the identity of her Twitter abusers seemed to incite a much wider reaction from the trolls, who claimed that, unlike the trolls, Dawson's public persona made her fair game.

The ugly episode was explored by commentators online and offline. Bernard Keane, a journalist with the online news site Crikey, ventured that Charlotte Dawson may have been another arbitrary victim of an ongoing online war between competing online communities (Keane, 2012). He contended that she was selected merely because of her media profile with many participants in the attack having had no idea who she actually was (Keane, 2012). Another widely discussed aspect of the Dawson case was perception of this attack as enthusiastically anti-female (Keane, 2012). At the time of writing Charlotte Dawson was continuing her career and she involved with Community Brave, an anti-cyber bullying initiative.

Destroy the Joint

One of Australia's highest rating broadcasters, Alan Jones, is also one of the country's most divisive and controversial figures (Masters, 2007). Known for his politically and socially conservative views, Jones' role as a popular Sydney breakfast radio host provides him with a national platform to shape and shock public discourse. In September 2012, Jones claimed on-air that women in Australia were "destroying the joint." His rant singled out the female Australian Prime Minister, Julia Gillard—a favourite target— as

well as Sydney's Mayor, Clover Moore and former Victorian Police Chief, Christine Nixon (Farr, 2012). Rather than explode with insults at the broadcaster, women such as Sydney ad and media personality, Jane Caro, and surgeon Jill Tomlinson started the hashtag #destroythejoint, triggering an avalanche of satirical and potent tweets (Tuohy, 2012). The witty Twitter hashtag trended for four days. Jones triggered an outpouring of humour and created another reason for like-minded Australians, women and men, to reshape the discourse around women and leadership. At the time of writing there were over 27,000 likes on the Destroy the Joint community Facebook page.

The community's Facebook page states that: "This page is for people who are sick of the sexism dished out to women in Australia, whether they be our Prime Minister or any other woman…. We're not out to destroy the joint - that was someone else's description. We're rebuilding it with good humour and optimism," (Destroy the Joint, 2012).

Jones' comments had a commercial impact. Pressure on the brands advertising with Jones' show was applied by "Destroy the Joint" participants and sympathisers. The efforts produced results when many withdrew their advertising. The radio station's management then suspended advertising "in a bid to change the narrative in which Jones was being abandoned in a highly visible (well, audible) way by his supporters," (Angyal 2012).

Jill Meagher and the Scales of Justice

When the young, beautiful and married ABC employee, Jill Meagher, disappeared on her very short journey home one evening in Melbourne, one of her distraught husband's first actions was to post a message on Facebook. He asked Jill's friend if she knew what may have become of his wife. There started a short and ultimately tragic search for the brutally murdered young woman which was dramatically supported by the anguished outreach of family and friends who used social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter.In the aftermath, police and Meagher's family applauded the role social media had played in the successful investigation of the circumstances of Jill's death and the identification of her alleged killer (Posetti, 2012).

The next chapter of this story has given rise to an important and unresolved conflict between the Australian legal system and the conventions and culture of social media. The very outpouring of grief over Meagher's death and anger at her alleged killer has, at times, threatened the prosecution of the accused. The principle of sub judice governs publication in the state in which a case is to be prosecuted. Broadcast, print and online media in this country are required by law to restrict publication of any material about a person under arrest that could be prejudicial to a fair trial or facing charges (Posetti, 2012). The laws have long been part of the bounded and organisationally-tethered world of traditional media. The risks of "trial by social media," which have been the subject of discussion among Australian journalists, law and media academics for some time, have been richly illustrated by the Meagher case.

The anger directed at Meagher's accused murderer precipitated his legal team's successful bid to suppress media coverage of the case. Traditional media argue that their silence would be irrelevant given the ubiquity of social media attention to the case. While the social media chatter continued, calls were made by the courts, police, and even Meagher's grieving husband for more restraint in the frenzy of online outrage. One of Australia's foremost media law experts, Mark Polden, reiterated on the news site Crikey, that commentary around the case would have potentially dire consequences for the administration of justice (Knott, 2012). Of social media commentary, Polden said. "Individuals need to ask themselves: does what I'm doing have the potential to interfere with a fair trial? Could my sense of moral outrage lead to someone not being able to get a fair hearing?" (Knott, 2012).

Subsequently, one of Australia's best known outrage specialists, the controversial broadcaster Derryn Hinch, was charged with contempt by breaching a Supreme Court suppression order. Hinch—known in Australia as "the Human Headline—used his blog to post other details of the case (Russell, 2013). In the wake of the Meagher case, the Attorney General in the state of Victoria has set up a working group comprising academics, journalists, lawyers, lawmakers and social media company representatives in an effort to navigate this complex but fascinating territory (Posetti, 2012).

The Rise of the Fifth Estate: Greg Jericho and Grog's Gamut

The traditional rationale for the mass media has been to keep those in power accountable. This is known as the Fourth Estate theory of the press, which draws from Thomas Carlyle's famous aphorism about the reporting of the House of Commons (Carlyle, 1850). In the Australian context, such a role for the media has been championed by academic and current ABC board member, Julieanne Schultz (1998) in her Reviving the fourth estate: democracy, accountability and the media. However, social media do not compete with legacy media, but critique it.

One such critical commentator was Greg Jericho, a Canberra public servant who blogged and tweeted anonymously as Grog's Gamut, until outed by a journalist then at The Australian, James Massola. As Jericho watched both Commonwealth and State politics, especially the 2010 national election, he grew increasingly discontented with the vapid quality of Australian political journalism. He began to use his blog to launch scathing attacks on the mainstream media, including one excoriating post:

> *Here's a note to all the news directors around the country: Do you want to save some money? Well then bring home your journalists following Tony Abbott and Julia Gillard, because they are not doing anything of any worth except having a round-the-country twitter and booze tour.*
>
> *It is a sad thing to say but we could lose 95 percent of the journalists following both leaders and the nation would be none the poorer for it. In fact we would probably be better off because it would leave the 5 percent who have some intelligence and are not there to run their own narrative a chance to ask some decent questions of the leaders. Some questions which might actually reveal who would be the better leader of this country. (Grog's Gamut, 2010).*

Massola (2010) rationalised his outing of Jericho on the grounds that Jericho's posts demonstrated an ostensible bias against the politically conservative Opposition, which was unconscionable, and a breach of the Australian Public Service (APS) Code of Conduct, given his employment as a Commonwealth public servant, even though he blogged anonymously (Massola, 2010). There is a widely held alternative view that Jericho was

outed because of his uncompromising views on contemporary journalism practice and news management, and was even payback by a vexed News Ltd. Jericho subsequently resigned from the APS, and wrote a book about his experience. In broad terms, he makes the case for political blogging, and the 'fifth estate', as he styles it, to be a corrective to the corporatist, and even corrupt, transactional nature of contemporary mainstream journalistic practice. In particular, he argues through the use of case studies from recent Australian federal politics, for the function of Twitter in enabling real time reporting of events (Jericho, 2013). His observations about Australian political blogging being left-leaning and male dominated are astute.

5. Public Policy and Social Media

Infrastructure: The National Broadband Network

   Social media, as part of the digital economy, rely on broadband infrastructure, both terrestrial and wireless. Increasing commercial and consumer demand for faster broadband download speeds is a challenge for governments who have to set the policy parameters, foster the construction of the required infrastructure, regulate both its provision and ultimate content, and also for the commercial service providers. Even more so, given the size of the Australian land mass (7.692 million km2) is almost as large as the land area of the United States (9.83 million km2), and the relatively small population of Australia (23 million) compared with some 315 million people in the United States.
   The incumbent ALP government's solution has been the creation of the National Broadband Network, (NBN) a publicly funded, nation-building project designed to provide future-oriented fast broadband access (100Mbps), principally by way of fibre to the premises (FTTP) at an estimated, but contested, cost of approximately $40 billion (AUD). It is funded through government bonds sold at around 4% but returning 7% on the investment, such that the NBN should pay for itself by 2034 and then be an asset fully-owned by the Australian people (Smith, 2012).

The NBN will be a monopoly provider wholesaling to broadband retailers. Established in 2009, the NBN proposes to reach 93% of Australia's population with FTTP over the decade long roll out, with the remaining remote customer provided with fixed wireless and satellite services. At the time of writing, the NBN is significantly behind its projected target of having nearly one third of a million households connected. The actual number of connections at the time of writing is approximately 200,000 (ABC News Online, 2013).

Until recently, the NBN has been a sharp point of difference between the social democratic ALP government and their conservative Liberal National Party (LNP) coalition opposition, who at the 2010 national election opposed the NBN as proposed by the government, and was properly critical of the failure to provide a transparent cost benefit analysis of the project, and for rejecting a market driven solution, and for budget overreach. In this they were joined in a vociferous campaign by the Rupert Murdoch-owned national Australian newspaper, The Australian. Given the NBN rollout is now underway, the opposition have opted for a cheaper but technologically more limited fibre to the node (FTTN) plan, as opposed to the government's FTTP plan (Le May, 2013). One strong proponent of the government model, and opponent of the opposition plan, is Nick Ross, a technology journalist at the tax-payer funded national broadcaster, the ABC (Ross, 2013). Both the ABC (MediaWatch, 2013) and The Australian (Maddern, 2013) have reported that Ross has been reminded by ABC management of his obligations towards fair and balanced reporting on such issues. In the political blogosphere, however, there are suggestions that this is designed to cap criticism of the opposition's plan, and to foster the interests of Murdoch's pay-tv interests (Cummings 2013a; 2013b). Murdoch's News Ltd owns 50% of Foxtel, Australia's monopoly pay tv provider. The other 50% is owned by Telstra, Australia's dominant telco.

6. Regulation of Social Media

Regulation of electronic media in Australia is the responsibility of the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA). The extent

to which this includes social media, as we have defined it is, at the time of writing, unclear. The regulatory model, styled "co-regulation", involves the various industry groups, working with ACMA to develop codes of practice which are then endorsed and enforced by the regulator. The codes fall into four groups: radio, television, telecommunications, and Internet service providers. While the regulation of telecommunications is principally about customer service standards for telcos, the regulation of ISPs is principally about the regulation of online pornography.

In relation to online content, as distinct from social media, ACMA has the following functions: It investigates complaints about online content, including online gambling services; it encourages the development codes of practice for Internet Service Providers, and online content providers, and it has an advocacy role in relation to Internet safety. So, for example it has consistently commissioned and promoted research on solutions to cyber bullying (ACMA, 2010).

"Serious Bloggers" and the Australian Press Council

The Australian Press Council is the self-regulatory body of the print media and it embodies the public interest versus profit contradiction (2012). It was established in 1976 with two main aims: to help preserve the traditional freedom of the press within Australia and to ensure that the free press acts responsibly and ethically. The Press Council has long been criticised as being ineffective, lacking teeth, and a captive of the publisher members who fund it, "the publisher's poodle" (Hirst & Harrison, 2006, pp. 170–71). The Press Council was re-energised with the appointment of Professor Julian Disney as chair in 2009. Prior to the announcement of the Finkelstein Inquiry, the Press Council was seeking to extend its reach to cover what Julian Disney described as "serious bloggers", and online news sites not affiliated with current publisher members, (Jackson, 2010; Chessell, 2012). In May 2012 Disney announced that four online-only publishers had joined the APC. They were Private Media, the publisher of Crikey, and other online publications, Focal Attractions, publisher of the Mumbrella website, and two other niche online publications one in banking and one in cinema, (APC, 2012).

The Convergence Review (2012)

Recognising that the existing media policy framework, based as it was around the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 as amended, was a victim of what Hirst and Harrison (2006, p. 265ff) describe as the techno-legal time gap, the Australian government in 2010 established a three person enquiry "to review the current policy framework for the production and delivery of media content and communications services" (DBCDE, 2012, p 110). The Convergence Review attempted to establish how to regulate the future standards, conduct, and technical aspects of communication media, with all its differing platforms. In essence, the Convergence Review proposed a single regulator for all media platforms, but the stance on regulation was inconsistent, especially with regard to user-generated content in social media (Rintel, 2012)

The Convergence Review recognised that industry regulation of user-generated content was likely better than government regulation, but also notes the problem of limited accountability. Its report identified that some hosts of user-generated material are "only scrutinised if users complain" meaning they have "limited accountability for their content" (p. 40). The report approvingly cites a 2008 investigation by the UK House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee on Harmful Content on the Internet and in Video Games (House of Commons, 2008, p. 3) which concluded:

> *It is not standard practice for staff employed by social networking sites or video sharing sites to preview content before it can be viewed by consumers. Some firms do not even undertake routine review of material uploaded, claiming that the volumes involved make it impractical. We were not persuaded by this argument, and we recommend that proactive review of content should be standard practice for sites hosting user-generated content.*

To engage in "proactive review" of content would create circumstance akin to those which led to global protests against the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) introduced into the US Congress in late 2011 which proposed active monitoring of copyright violation (Goodman, 2012). In that case a digital blackout by a number of online service providers saw the proposed legislation discontinued.

In the report of the Convergence Review, the nature of a "proactive review of content" was not directly defined, potentially opening the door to very wide monitoring and other requirements. The Review was most concerned about preventing the viewing of inappropriate content, especially by children, and thus strays into tacit approval of schemes to restrict access to material deemed inappropriate, and while it does not recommend revisiting the controversial and failed Cleanfeed ISP filtering system (Falconer, 2012) nor does it argue strongly against it.

Copyright Review 2013

The issues before Convergence Review have also became enmeshed with the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) review of copyright, currently in progress with a final report due late 2013 (ALRC, 2012). The Convergence Review, for its part, treated the positive fair use of images, video, or audio from copyright sources mixed into/mashed-up in user images, videos, or audio (central issues of what convergence actually materially involve) as beyond its scope:

> *The Convergence Review proposes that the issue of retransmission be examined as part of this ALRC review. The Review also proposes that in investigating content-related competition issues, the regulator should have regard to copyright implications and be able to refer any resulting copyright issues to the relevant minister for further consideration by the government," (DBCBE, 2012, p. 33).*

This failure to take a position on the definition of "fair use" is a missed opportunity, and means the Copyright Review will not be able to treat the Convergence Review as a source of alignment between notions of convergence with those of personal fair use.

The Copyright Review Issues Paper appears to have a more sophisticated approach to the issues of user-generated, and user-appropriated, content than the Convergence Review. It poses nuanced questions surrounding "copying for private use" (ALRC, 2012, pp. 28–32), "online use for social, private or domestic purposes" (ALRC, 2012, pp. 33–35), and, most importantly, "transformative use" (ALRC, 2012, pp. 36–40), which acknowledges that "copyright materials being used in transformative and

collaborative ways—for example, in 'sampling', 'remixes' and 'mashups'" (ALRC, 2012, p. 39). These are critical uses of online digital materials, especially given that Australians, in common with people around the world, often use copyright materials in the creation of image macros and other memes in order to comment on current social issues (Rintel, 2013).

However, most troubling in the copyright discussion paper is the failure to refer to various international trade agreements that Australia is in the process of negotiating or signing, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). The Trans Pacific Partnership is essentially a multi-lateral trade agreement between Australia, Canada, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, the USA and Vietnam which builds on an existing trade agreement between Brunei Darussalam, Chile, New Zealand and Singapore. This, along with the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) will harmonise copyright laws across trading regions. The processes surrounding the TPP, in particular, are not transparent (Anderson, 2012) and the issue has received little mainstream media attention in Australia.

The EFF's leaked copy of the US draft TPP chapter on intellectual property (Electronic Frontier Foundation, nd) does not contain the words "fair", "share", or other synonyms that might indicate an interest in the free flow of ideas, let alone concepts such as "transformative use". On the other hand, words such as "trademark", "copyright", "patent", all of which treat ideas as property to be jealously guarded, are very prominent. In short, property rights and infringement provisions are created for corporations and governments, but few to no positive rights are created for individuals or the flow of ideas, with the consequent implications for users of social media.

The Copyright Review's terms of reference require it to account for "Australia's international obligations" (ALRC 201, p. 3), but Professor Jill McKeough, the ALRC Commissioner, made it clear in various briefings about the Review that the Attorney-General (2012) advised that these agreements were not to be dealt with. While this does allow a commendable 'clean slate' approach to the issues, it further obfuscates the effects of trade agreements on social media use in Australia

The Finkelstein Inquiry

While the Convergence Review was under way, The News of the World scandal broke, and in September 2011, at the prompting of their coalition partners, The Greens, the Gillard government and in particular the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy, opted for a short, sharp inquiry into the print media, to be headed by retired Federal Court judge Ray Finkelstein QC (Conroy, 2011). Finkelstein's terms of reference were inter alia to examine:

a. The effectiveness of the current media codes of practice in Australia, particularly in light of technological change that is leading to the migration of print media to digital and online platforms.

b. The impact of this technological change on the business model (of) traditional media organisations… in the changed media environment.

c. Ways of substantially strengthening the independence and effectiveness of the Australian Press Council, including in relation to online publications, and with particular reference to the handling of complaints (Finkelstein, 2012, p. 13).

While ostensibly examining "technological change that is leading to the migration of print media to digital and online platforms", and the regulation of online publications, the Finkelstein Inquiry was, as argued elsewhere (Harrison, 2013, pp. 65–70), an investigation motivated by a political desire to get square with News Ltd, which had been consistently critical of the government. It was deeply flawed in both process and outcomes.

Regulatory Reform Legislation Fails

In March 2013 an abortive attempt was made by the national government to bring coherence to the media regulation framework through an overarching Public Interest Media Advocate. This followed the two reviews of media policy discussed above: a broad review around convergence, and a shorter, sharper and more controversial review of print media, and their online offshoots (Harrison, 2013). The first, Convergence Review was an attempt to rationalise the regulation of legacy media and the so-called "new" media (Harrison, 2013).

The attempt failed because the ruling party was unable to secure crossbench support for the changes on the floor of the Parliament. Vociferous opposition to the changes was led by newspaper publishers, who argued that the proposed new regime represented unprecedented government interference in the freedom of the press.

Projecting forward to the likelihood of a change of government in Australia after September 14, 2013, and the ascension of Malcolm Turnbull as Minister for Communications, Broadband and the Digital Economy, News Ltd commentator Mark Day observed:

> *Conroy's bills paid little heed to the fact that media regulation in Australia is past its use-by date. Most of it dates from 1992 when the Internet was in its infancy, mobile phones were like bricks and had none of the computing and communication power of smartphones, pay television was a lobbyist's territory and the media world was divided neatly into print, radio and TV.*
>
> *Conroy's bills are gone, thankfully, but the problem of outmoded regulation remains. Conroy tackled none of this. Turnbull must. He must also address the recommendations of the Convergence Review, also largely ignored by Conroy, who chose to cherry-pick one part of the CR's recommendations on ownership control provisions (Day, 2013, p. 23).*

Subsequently, ACMA announced that it would look at "what content benchmarks media audiences are looking to safeguard as delivery platforms change," release a discussion paper on Regulatory strategies for a network economy and society, examining digital content identity and reputation; and undertake further research on both privacy protection and financial risk associated with mobile phone applications, cloud computing and new wireless technologies such as Near Field Communications (Chapman, 2013; Bodey, 2013). The net effect of these initiatives is that changes to the regulation of online media, and any flow on effect to social media in particular, will progress by way of regulation rather than legislation.

Underlying much of the public discussion about regulatory reform is the expectation that there will be a change of government after the scheduled national election in September 2013, and the policy framework will be

tempered by the incoming conservative government's commitment not only to the free market, but also to freedom of expression.

7. Social Media, Surveillance and National Security

The rise in volume, and complexity, and the globalised interconnection of social media data represents a huge challenge for national security and law enforcement agencies, which in July 2012 were successful in having the national Parliament's Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security begin an inquiry into telecommunications interception and security reform (House of Representatives, 2012). This was accompanied by a discussion paper from the Attorney-General (2012) which argued there were national security implications around the combination of mobile, distributed, and social network services (pp. 18–19). Social networking and cloud computing were specifically named as two forms of current telecommunication architecture undreamed of in the 'post and POTS (Plain Old Telephone Service)' era of the 1970s, when interception legislation was last overhauled. The inability to legally intercept data moving over such architectures was argued to create "vulnerabilities in the interception regime that are capable of being manipulated by criminals" (p. 27). There were some 236 responses to the proposals, both supportive (law enforcement and intelligence agencies and allied groups) and resistant (primarily civil society privacy associations). Although expected to report in March 2013, the inquiry is still in progress as of the time of writing.

The balance between the need for improved interception and security measures versus proportional safeguards for human rights, privacy, along with minimising impact on business, became a point of contention. One of the most salient points of debate was that regard to a proposal for mandatory data retention.

The AG's Discussion Paper noted the point in the Terms of Reference that interception and security could be improved if Internet Service Providers were required to meet a mandatory two-year data retention of all customers' meta-data (all information about a communication object bar its specific content). However, the details were limited to repeating

the point from the Terms of Reference (p. 10, 13), limited treatment as a reasonable requirement (p. 25), very limited definitions (p. 58), and only a brief reference to balance in terms of being subject to existing privacy laws (p. 55).

Into this proposal, Electronic Frontiers Australia (EFA), a non-profit group advocating digital freedom, access and privacy, rejected projected reforms as "an unprecedented programme of mass surveillance that would invade the privacy of all Australians in the name of catching a tiny minority of serious wrong-doers", (EFA, p. 11). EFA argued:

Central to many of the services that Australians deliberately sign-up for—e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Apple iCloud, etc.—is the concept of sharing across networks. In surveillance of a target's activities in such services, shared friends or media objects connect target and non-target individuals such that following one surveillance target inescapably involves collateral surveillance necessarily breaching the privacy of non-targets… and that the Government should not take advantage of this fact to breach individual privacy in the name of national security. (p. 11).

EFA also pointed out that government agencies did not have a particularly good track record on data security, an issue that would need considerable scrutiny given the 'honeypot' nature of masses of data on Australian citizens.

8. A Final Thought

The rhetoric of 'The Asian Century' has again returned to Australia's political discourse (Camilleri, Martin & Michael, 2013), but the geographic reality remains unchanged. Lying south-east of the Asian landmass, the Australian continent of 7.692 million square kilometers, with a population of over 22 million, is part of Asia. Forty percent of Australians were born overseas, according to the 2011 Census of Population and Housing. Almost one third of those were born in Asia (ABS, 2013). China, Japan, the United States and the Republic of Korea were the nation's top four trading partners in 2011, with over 70 % of Australia's trade with member countries of the

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) group (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2012. p. 5).

Perhaps because of vast distances between Australian cities and between Australia and the rest of the world, Australians have long been early adopters of emerging communication technologies, but as Malcolm Turnbull said in his 2012 Alfred Deakin Lecture, commemorating one of Australia's early prime ministers:

> *While the hardware and software of the Internet are indispensable, the scarcest and most valuable resource has never been technology, but technological imagination (Turnbull, 2012).*

The real challenge for social media in "The Asian Century", then, will be to leverage our technological imagination to foster harmonious social ties in a lingustically and culturally diverse region.

Acknowledgements

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