

Response to ACCC
Digital Platforms Inquiry
from Croakey Health Media

19 February, 2019

CROAKEY HEALTH MEDIA

We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the country where we live, work and travel upon, and to Elders, past, present and future.

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1. Croakey Health Media

Below we provide an overview of Croakey Health Media. This section reinforces observations in the ACCC’s preliminary report that digital disruption enables innovation and removes some cost barriers to the production of journalism, while at the same time undermining the business models that have traditionally sustained public interest journalism. It also underscores the ACCC’s observation that public interest journalism is important for health, while also making the point that many factors beyond individual behaviours contribute to health, including policies in portfolios beyond health.

Croakey Health Media is a non-profit public interest journalism organisation with a vision that: “A vigorous and sustainable public interest journalism sector contributes to the health and wellbeing of people, families, communities, policies, societies and the environment.” Our purpose is to provide a range of social journalism and professional services to help enable communities, policy-makers and practitioners to improve health and wellbeing, with a determined focus on improving health equity. We take a local, regional, national and global focus.

Our activities include:

- Regular publication at **Croakey.org** of news and analysis articles about health matters, with a focus on health equity including Indigenous health, the social determinants of health, health promotion, disease prevention, rural and remote health, primary healthcare, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, and climate change and health. We aim to cover health matters that are under-served by the mainstream media, either because they are often poorly covered or under-covered relative to their importance. Croakey’s articles are freely available online, and there is a paid subscription to a weekly compilation news bulletin. The articles are disseminated via Croakey.org, Twitter, Facebook, AppleNews, LinkedIn, and email. We also publish special series and publications, including: compilations of articles on the implications for Indigenous people globally of the UN Political Declaration on Noncommunicable Diseases ([#IndigenousNCDs](#)); reducing the overincarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a public health priority ([#JustJustice](#)); and tackling the social determinants of health ([#WonkyHealth](#)). These publications can be freely downloaded here: <https://croakey.org/croakey-publications/>

- Croakey Conference News Service provides editorially independent, multimedia news coverage from health and medical conferences likely to be of interest or use to our readers and social media followers. Examples of conference coverage and testimonials from the Lowitja Institute, the Medical Board of Australia and others who have used the service can be seen here: <https://croakey.org/conference-reporting/>
An e-publication with highlights of 2017 conference coverage can be downloaded here: <https://croakey.org/croakey-publications/>
- Three Twitter accounts associated with Croakey are followed by key opinion leaders in the fields of health and social policy, practice and research, especially in Indigenous health. Their Twitter feeds provide a regular stream of curated news (local, national and global) about public health and related matters.
@croakeyblog: 22,400 followers
@CroakeyNews: 5,600 followers
@WePublicHealth: 12,500 followers
@WePublicHealth is a rotated, curated account, meaning it has a different guest tweeter each week covering conferences, events and other health matters. It is modelled on the successful innovation, @IndigenousX. More information is here: <https://croakey.org/wepublichealth/>
- Croakey is also developing innovative new forms of journalism, including walking journalism, which brings people together around a particular health issue to walk and talk and collaboratively produce content (see our #CroakeyGO archive: <https://croakey.org/category/croakeygo/>). We also host an online Twitter festival profiling books and authors (see our #CroakeyREAD archive: <https://croakey.org/category/croakey-news-and-projects/croakeyread/>).
- Separate to our editorially independent journalism activities, Croakey Professional Services is our commercial arm, providing a range of services, such as workshops on writing, social media, communications and research translation. These services are not available to entities that do not align with the Croakey mission (such as gambling, tobacco, junk food, and alcohol companies). Funds raised from Croakey Professional Services help to support public interest journalism activities.

Social journalism – developing the theory and practice

Croakey has been at the forefront of developing the emerging field of social journalism, a form of public interest journalism that extends the concept of journalism beyond content-production to also include other ways that journalism skills can provide a service to individuals and communities; for example, through community organising and education.

Attached are two papers published in the *Australian Journalism Review* that outline our innovative model of social journalism and its contribution to the health and wellbeing of populations, in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and that also identify opportunities for policy innovation.

Public interest journalism

“Creating a sustainable environment for public interest journalism” is listed as a strategic priority in our strategic plan for 2019-2022, where we state:

“Croakey Health Media is part of a news ecosystem. To thrive, we need to also support and contribute to the development of a more sustainable environment for public interest journalism generally. This is also in line with our mission, given the importance of public interest journalism as a determinant of health.”

As we submitted to the Senate inquiry into the future of public interest journalism:

“We note the importance of public interest journalism to ensuring there is an informed citizenry, public debate and policy development regarding health matters, something that is of fundamental concern to citizens and governments, as well as the significant number of people employed in the health sector. Public interest journalism has played a critical role in many public health advances, from the introduction of effective tobacco control measures to the establishment of numerous inquiries on health-related concerns, such as asbestos and child sexual abuse.

It also has a vital accountability role given the prominence of powerful professional and commercial interests in the health sector and other sectors affecting health. These include the Australian Medical Association, the Pharmacy Guild, private health insurance funds and pharmaceutical companies. These groups have the resources to dedicate to lobbying and media activities, which give them a disproportionate influence over government policy and funding decisions.

Often the issues involved are complex and technical and mainstream journalists do not have the time to dedicate to look beyond the press releases put out by interest groups. In Australia there is no independent consumer organisation with as much power or influence as these other organisations. This means that public interest journalism, such as appears in Croakey, is often the only voice questioning health policy and funding decisions by governments and pointing out where they may not be in the best interests of consumers or populations.

We also note the emergence of new media forms, such as the IndigenousX media project, in providing transformative coverage of matters affecting the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is vital that policy innovation supports the ongoing development and sustainability of such initiatives, given the immense public service they provide.”

Croakey is currently publishing an extended series of articles encouraging the health sector to engage with debates around the future of public interest journalism as a critical determinant of health. The articles can be read here:

<https://croakey.org/category/public-health-and-population-health/public-interest-journalism/>

Our presentation on public interest journalism as an important determinant of health to the 2018 Public Health Association of Australia conference can be read here:

<https://croakey.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/PIJPresentation-1.pdf>

History

Croakey Health Media was incorporated in 2018 as a public interest journalism organisation, in order for our social enterprise to become more sustainable, to develop our governance, and to increase our impact and reach. Before then, Croakey existed in various iterations, publishing health journalism since 2007 through an informal network of contributors and journalists.

The forerunner of Croakey, the Crikey Health and Medical Panel, was established in mid 2007 in collaboration with the independent media company, Crikey; from then until the end of October 2009, Crikey paid Melissa Sweet for coordinating the activities of the panel – health and medical experts who contributed articles to the Crikey bulletin and Croakey blog. Although the Croakey blog was hosted by the Crikey website, Melissa Sweet ran its editorial operations independently of Crikey.

When Crikey stopped funding Croakey in 2009, the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) organised a consortium of organisations to help fund the Croakey project (initially \$24,000 pa and then \$30,000 pa), with an agreement safeguarding editorial independence. In 2015, the Croakey project left Crikey and established its own platform after receiving a Walkley Foundation innovation grant. Until 2018, Croakey was run through the ABN of Melissa Sweet, and the funding pool was distributed between a group of professional journalists and editors. For more information on the history, see attached 2009 article from *The Medical Journal of Australia*.

Funding

Croakey Health Media has a variety of funding streams, including sponsorships, donations, and grants. Crowdfunding has also supported a number of projects. Twenty percent of the fees for journalistic and professional services go towards Croakey's operational costs and supporting public interest journalism.

The funding arrangements are declared publicly here, including details of sponsors, clients and donors: <https://croakey.org/funding/>

Croakey does not have staff, instead operating as a network whose members provide both paid and unpaid services. The funds raised are used to pay professional journalists, editors and others as contractors. About a dozen journalists, editors and freelancers currently receive semi-regular income via Croakey Health Media. Contributors writing for Croakey.org are not paid if they are writing in the context of their employment (for example, as academics or NGO staff).

Analytics

We are deliberately not driven by analytics as this would not align with our mission of covering under-served issues and communities. The use of analytics can undermine the integrity of public interest journalism, pushing editorial decision making towards “click-bait” rather than a concern for what matters for the wider public interest.

In 2018, articles published by Croakey.org had 307,650 unique views and 410,244 total views (including website and Apple News views). These figures do not include Facebook and Twitter analytics.

As the testimonials in the Appendix attest, Croakey's work is considered influential and is valued by many stakeholders in the health sector and wider community.

Membership and governance

Croakey Health Media membership comprises some of the people involved in the social journalism team, including journalists, editors, academics and health practitioners. A board elected by the members provides governance oversight. Details on the directors and members will be available on the website from 1 March 2019.

2. General response to the inquiry

Croakey Health Media welcomes the inquiry, recognising the importance of the issues raised for the health of the wider community. While many aspects of the inquiry are relevant for public and population health (notably the market power of Google and Facebook), we confine our responses to the aspects directly relevant to public interest journalism. We understand that others, including the Public Health Association of Australia, will directly address some of the wider public health issues raised by the inquiry and related recommendations.

We welcome the ACCC's focus on the importance of public interest journalism as a public good that is currently under-provided. We agree that this is a particular concern in specialist beats, such as health.

However, we are concerned that the ACCC's preliminary report has omitted any significant consideration of the potential for supporting the development of non-profit journalism models. Our experience with Croakey Health Media is that the current policy environment is not supportive of such models, despite their potential to contribute significantly to the public interest and to compensate for market failure in the provision of public interest journalism services. We encourage the inquiry to engage with the literature around non-profit journalism and how it is supported in other countries. See, for example, Dr Bill Birnbauer's recent book, *The rise of nonprofit investigative journalism in the United States* (<https://www.routledge.com/The-Rise-of-NonProfit-Investigative-Journalism-in-the-United-States/Birnbauer/p/book/9781138484474>).

Clearly defined, low-cost pathways are needed to enable the development of innovative non-profit models for journalism in Australia, supported by measures such as enabling access to Deductible Gift Recipient status, and providing incentives for philanthropists, communities and others to support non-profit models of public interest journalism and to engage with the development of new models of public interest journalism.

3. Responses to specific recommendations and proposed areas for further analysis and assessment

3.1. Preliminary Recommendation 5—news and digital platform regulatory oversight

We support the recommendation that a regulatory authority be established to monitor, investigate and report on the ranking of news and journalistic content by digital platforms and the provision of referral services to news media businesses.

Croakey Health Media currently does not have access to information about the implications of Google and Facebook algorithms for the distribution of our content.

3.2. Preliminary Recommendation 6—review of media regulatory frameworks

We support the ACCC’s plan to suggest the Government conduct a separate, independent review to design a regulatory framework that is able to effectively and consistently regulate the conduct of all entities which perform comparable functions in the production and delivery of content in Australia, including news and journalistic content, whether they are publishers, broadcasters, other media businesses, or digital platforms.

However, we urge that such a framework should accommodate the needs and aspirations of independent media organisations. Also, it should be driven by public interest considerations rather than corporate media interests, which too often have shaped media policy to the detriment of the community.

In relation to the nine proposed areas for further analysis and assessment identified by the ACCC, Croakey Health Media provides feedback on the following.

3.3. Measures to improve news literacy online

The ACCC is considering measures aimed at increasing news literacy and is considering recommending that ACMA work with the leading digital platforms to develop a broad campaign targeted at all Australians, to improve their understanding of how news and journalism is curated and displayed on social media and other digital platforms.

Croakey Health Media suggests that the ACCC broaden its approach around this campaign, so that the campaign includes a specific focus on public interest journalism and why it matters. Many Australians are not aware of the crisis in public interest journalism and its implications for democracy and the wellbeing of communities. This lack of public awareness has contributed to a lack of political willingness to engage with media policy reform that centres the public interest.

3.4 Improving the ability of news media businesses to fund the production of news and journalism

The ACCC has raised concerns about the under-provision of public interest journalism and is considering mechanisms to maintain the incentives on print/online news media businesses to invest in news and journalism. The ACCC has asked for feedback on three options:

- a. A review of the impacts of the measures comprising the Regional and Small Publishers' Jobs and Innovation Package in 2018-19 to determine whether the Package should be continued beyond its current three year funding profile (and potentially modified or expanded)
- b. Tax offsets for the costs incurred by news media organisations to produce particular types of journalism that have high public benefits and are at risk of under-production.
- c. Making personal subscriptions for publications by media businesses that are signatories to a registered ACMA code of practice, as set out in the potential proposal described above, tax deductible to encourage production and consumption of news and journalism.

The ACCC also seeks feedback on the potential for Government grants, to maintain the incentives on news media businesses to invest in news and journalism, particularly those types of news and journalism which may be at risk of being under-produced.

Croakey Health Media welcomes the ACCC's interest in developing incentives to support public interest journalism but respectfully suggests that a more wide-ranging approach be taken. These suggested measures appear to centre traditional media businesses rather than supporting innovation in public interest journalism. Digital disruption has enabled journalism to disintermediate from traditional media companies. This is enabling innovation and the development of new models of journalism that potentially can be more responsive to the needs of communities. It would be helpful if the ACCC could explicitly consider incentives to enable innovation in public interest journalism to meet the needs of under-served communities and issues.

In relation to the specific measures:

- Croakey has been critical of the Regional and Small Publishers' Jobs and Innovation Package (see: <https://croakey.org/where-now-for-health-journalism-at-such-a-challenging-time-join-us-in-building-croakey-futures/>) and is aware of anecdotal reports suggesting this package has not provided good value. An independent evaluation of this package should be made publicly available.
- We support tax deductibility for subscriptions to public interest journalism publications, and also for donations and crowdfunding contributions for public interest journalism.
- We support a Government grants process for public interest journalism so long as it is independent, transparent and accountable.

In conclusion, we would like to see policy reform that supports public interest journalism, especially that which is provided by social enterprises, community-based organisations, non-profit organisations, and start-ups. It is important that policy reform does not inadvertently discourage innovation or disadvantage or exclude small independent media.

We believe that Croakey Health Media's history shows that innovative, small organisations can make an important public contribution, and merit wider support. On that note, we respectfully ask that the ACCC includes Croakey Health Media in its Table 6.1: *Digital native publishers in Australia*.

And finally, we encourage the ACCC to recommend the Government revisit the recommendations from the Senate inquiry into the future of public interest journalism, including those highlighting the need for defamation law reform.

Thank you for considering our submission.

Croakey Health Media directors and members

Dated: 19 February 2019

Appendix

Selected testimonials

Croakey not only gives me up to date information on contemporary health issues, but allows me to send my health information across Australia in an instant. It is also the perfect vehicle for starting peoples' movements, engaging with Indigenous peoples and our issues, and building a community that has at its basis a desire to make positive change happen. It is polite and political, informative and inspiring. Active engagement is what Croakey does – and I like it!

Professor Kerry Arabena, Chair of Indigenous Health, The University of Melbourne

Croakey is an important part of the health landscape providing progressive, current and incisive commentary.

Professor Fran Baum, Professor of Public Health, Flinders University

Croakey is terrific. Thought provoking, well researched information....and easy to read. A great combination.

Professor Kate Conigrave, Professor of Addiction Medicine, The University of Sydney

Croakey! AHPA loves you for your independence, timeliness and collaboration across a range of issues with individuals and groups from population health and beyond. You are a launching pad for ideas, debate and innovation without fear or favour. Continue to bring it on.

Gemma Crawford, Australian Health Promotion Association

The future of health care is too important to leave to the mainstream media. Croakey provides a platform for robust, respectful and inclusive debate on the health issues that really matter.

Jennifer Doggett, Croakey editor and health policy analyst

Croakey has been a platform which has encouraged Aboriginal voice and actively sought it out. I started out as a reader, then followed on Twitter, was a guest tweeter on @WePublic health, and have become a contributor and a contributing editor. The more I got involved, the more I realised what a unique platform Croakey is, because of the way it challenges mainstream media.

Summer May Finlay, Yorta Yorta woman, public health practitioner, PhD candidate, Croakey contributing editor

Croakey is now well established as compulsory reading for influencers and observers in health and medicine in Australia and internationally – and rightly so. As a blog, it gives voice to people who support or oppose government health and social policy. It allows people to express their views and opinions openly, passionately, and freely – from all perspectives. More importantly, Croakey provides a forum for new ideas and new thinking – based on experiences at the frontline of health service delivery – which we can only hope find their way into future health policy to provide better health services to the Australian community.

John Flannery, Public Affairs Director, Australian Medical Association August 19, 2015

At the Walkleys we celebrate and support great Australian journalism. Through our Walkley Grants for Innovation in Journalism we encourage projects that combine quality reporting with an entrepreneurial approach. We're proud to support projects like Croakey that are an innovative platform driven by independent, ethical journalism for the public benefit.

Clare Fletcher, The Walkley Foundation

Croakey is a must read for anyone who craves the public health stories that no one else reports. A truly independent and critical voice that both exposes health injustices and champions smart solutions to health inequalities.

Dr Becky Freeman, Sydney School of Public Health, University of Sydney August 27, 2015

With a health system that is facing unprecedented challenges we need all the courage and all the insight we can get our hands on. Croakey is a space that invites us to challenge and interrogate our practice and our policy. Croakey's journalism and activism inspires me to remain optimistic.

Mary Freer, Change Day Australia

Croakey is the platform where health issues are dissected from every angle - from the complex impact on health arising from social, economic and environmental policies, to the influence of vested interests on public health, and insightful analysis of health care policies. It is a place where I can read the viewpoints of those who don't often get heard in the mainstream media alongside prominent experts, learn about the lived experiences of diverse Australians, and see opportunities and fresh approaches to tackle our most challenging health issues.

Marita Hefler, Researcher, News Editor, BMJ Tobacco Control

It's always a delight to see the diversity of issues on Croakey, particularly in health policy and social justice, that you just don't see anywhere else. It's also great to see the diversity of voices on Croakey, particularly Indigenous Australians and those coming in via social media.

Fron Jackson-Webb, Health Editor, The Conversation August 28, 2015

Croakey is a valuable voice in the health space, providing a respected and wide ranging platform for health experts and professionals to debate this crucial area of public policy.

Catherine King, Shadow Minister for Health

Croakey has served splendidly as an independent voice in the health policy arena. It provided a forum for people with ideas and passion about health, especially from a social perspective and policy position, but always with humane concern can find a home.

Emeritus Professor Stephen Leeder, The University of Sydney

Croakey has pioneered an unprecedented role in providing an open forum for the revelation and exchange of thinking on health in Australia. Thanks to the indefatigable Croakey team, we have a place where players from all corners of health can share ideas, news and commentary.

Mark Metherell, health journalist, Consumers Health Forum of Australia

If you work in the health area – and especially if you are a policy wonk, a political nerd, or a news fiend – then Croakey is an essential component of your life. Croakey articles and tweets keep me informed about a wide range of health issues – the impact of budget cuts, new policy announcements and publications, expert opinions and commentary, and what’s being talked about at the conferences I’m unable to attend. I appreciate the timeliness, the broad scope of issues covered, and the breadth of expertise involved. And I particularly appreciate the strong commitment to social justice and tackling Indigenous disadvantage.

Lesley Russell, Adj Assoc Professor at Menzies Centre for Health Policy, University of Sydney, Visiting Fellow, Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute, Australian National University

Croakey has, over some years, provided a platform for debate about health policy, planning, funding and services. There aren’t enough places for these debates, and important issues affecting the health of our community risk going unexplored. Croakey helps to fill this hole. Viva Croakey!

Sebastian Rosenberg, Senior Lecturer, Brain and Mind Centre, Sydney Medical School, University of Sydney

We love Croakey! The team here at the ircohe.net use Croakey to show our students what great public health contribution expert media effort can make to the world. True, we contribute stories, but more importantly, we love the difference Croakey makes to the health conversation in Australia.

Professors Marc Tennant, Estie Kruger and Kate Dyson International Research Collaborative, Oral Health and Equity, The University of Western Australia.

Croakey is a must for anybody looking to stay on the cutting edge of health news.

Alison Verhoeven, Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association

If you care about a public health issue, or want others to care, get it online and get it on Croakey.

Professor Tarun Weeramanthri, Chief Health Officer, Assistant Director General, Public Health, WA Department of Health

Croakey provides a national stage where all players in the health arena can have their voices heard. It has enabled consumers more easily to make their perspective and opinion known. Croakey has also taken a leadership role in developing a strong presence in social media, an important development for primary care in stimulating community-based approaches to health.

Leanne Wells, CEO of the Consumers Health Forum of Australia

Croakey gives me the best independent and most relevant public health news and views.

Dr Mark Wenitong, Public Health Medical Advisor, Apunipima Cape York Health Council, Associate Professor (Adjunct) School of Public Health, Tropical Medicine and Rehabilitation Sciences James Cook University, Cairns.

Read more here: <https://croakey.org/testimonials/>

Outlining a model of social journalism for health

Melissa Sweet, Lynore Geia, Pat Dudgeon, Kerry McCallum, Summer May Finlay, Megan Williams, Marie McInerney, Ruth Armstrong, Jennifer Doggett, Amy Coopes, Mitchell J. Ward, Tim Senior and Matthew Ricketson

Abstract

Social journalism is an emerging field of practice that seeks to reframe journalism as an action-oriented service built on relationships and collaborations, rather than as primarily content or a product. It offers opportunities for innovation that re-centre the public interest roles of journalism at a time when public interest journalism is in crisis. This article outlines a 10-point model for social journalism, drawing on case studies in health journalism connected to the online platform Croakey.org. These case studies show how using decolonising and participatory action frameworks can transform journalism research and practice, with potential benefits for the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. They also illustrate a dynamic process of knowledge exchange between journalism research and practice. Elements of the proposed model for social journalism practice include: standpoint; transdisciplinary practice; connectivity; relationships; responsive listening; reflexivity; immersion; transparency and trust; creativity and innovation; and an ethic of service and outcomes. It is a model in which transformative health journalism facilitates and enables transformation in spheres beyond journalism. This article also considers the constraints and challenges facing social journalism initiatives and practitioners, and makes recommendations for policy.

Introduction

Digital disruption has created a crisis in public interest journalism, as well as opportunities for renewal and transformation (Public Interest Journalism Foundation, 2017; Simons, 2016). The collapse of the business model that has traditionally underpinned public interest journalism has serious implications for the health and wellbeing of populations, given the diminishing capacity of journalists and media organisations to fulfil their accountability and even routine reporting roles (Civic Impact of Journalism Project, 2017; Thompson, 2016). A strong public interest journalism sector is important “for enabling healthy people, communities, societies and democracies” (Baum, 2017). Digital disruption also brings the potential for transformation in an era character-

ised by interactive, interconnective, participatory, mobile and “profoundly personalised” media ecosystems (Beckett & Deuze, 2016, p. 1). For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and others who have not been well served by mainstream media, digital disruption is bringing new opportunities (Latimore et al., 2017; Waller et al., 2015). However, the scarcity of funding and lack of wider structural support is a serious impediment to public interest journalism’s capacity to capitalise on opportunities for innovation (Public Interest Journalism Foundation, 2017). This article explores how the emerging field of social journalism offers opportunities for innovation in public interest journalism that contribute to the health and wellbeing of populations, in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It also identifies opportunities for policy innovation.

Locating authors

This article’s authors have multiple professional roles and identities. We note the suggestion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholars that researchers acknowledge, unpack and reveal their human identities, standpoints and subjectivities (Martin, 2008, p. 93; Sherwood, 2010, p. 141) in order to understand the limitations and biases of their world-views (Larkin, 2011, p. 4; Moreton-Robinson, 2013, pp. 334, 337). Our author list includes: four Indigenous scholars in health-related fields – psychology, nursing and midwifery, and public health (PD, LG, SMF, MW), two of whom are contributing editors at the social journalism for health project, Croakey (SMF, MW); five non-Indigenous journalism practitioners and/or editors (MS, MM, AC, JD, RA); a non-Indigenous health policy analyst (JD); two non-Indigenous medical practitioners and one medical student (TS, RA; AC); a medical educator who is a contributing editor at Croakey (TS); three non-Indigenous communication and media studies and journalism researchers and/or educators (MS, KMc, MR) and a non-Indigenous internet designer (MJW). Most of us contribute regularly to Croakey. Ten of our 13 authors are women. We live and work upon the country of many different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups (Dudgeon, Milroy & Walker, 2014). Our diversity is significant because transdisciplinary collaborations can enable transformation in theory and practice. We note that an investigation of the attributes of transformational thinking describes a boundary as “the site of a connection, not a point of division” (Brown & Harris, 2014, p. 193).

Defining health journalism

Health journalism is usually focused on health-related research findings, events (such as disease outbreaks), behaviours, services and policy. We recognise that wider policies and determinants of health have a greater bearing on population health than health services (Braveman & Gottlieb, 2014). We also centre investigation and analysis of power dynamics in society as central to the work of health journalism. As Sir Michael Marmot, an international authority on the social determinants of health, states: “If you want to understand why health is distributed the way it is, then you have to understand society” (Local Government Association, 2016, pp. 2-3). This broad conceptualisation provides a foundation for innovation to address some of the longstanding health-related critiques of journalism (Sweet, 2013, pp. 243-245). These include that media coverage often overhypes the benefits of medical interventions and underplays their costs and harms, and amplifies poor quality research while neglecting the broader determinants of health, including racism and colonisation (Gasher et al., 2007; Moynihan et al., 2000; Raphael, 2011; Schwitzer, 2014; Selvaraj et al., 2014; Cullen, 2013, pp. 232-238; Sweet, 2011, pp. 187-193; McCallum & Waller, 2017).

Media and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have long raised concerns about the impact of mainstream media coverage on their health and wellbeing, which encompasses “not just the

physical well-being of an individual but refers to the social, emotional and cultural well-being of the whole Community in which each individual is able to achieve their full potential as a human being thereby bringing about the total wellbeing of their Community” (National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party, 1989). While mainstream media are not a monolithic entity, their collective impact has contributed to the silencing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s voices through representing whiteness as the norm and contributing to negative and generalised stereotyping, exclusion and racist discourse (Brown, 2016; Dudgeon & Ugle, 2014, p. 259; Due & Riggs, 2011; Geia, 2012; Heiss, 2012; McCallum, 2011; McCallum et al., 2012; 2013; 2017; Mackinlay, 2012, p. 67; Meadows, 2013; Stewart, 2013; Stoneham, 2014). Media practices and discourses also contribute to the undermining of self-determination of identity (Heiss, 2012), an important determinant of health (Fredericks, 2013, p. 5). They have portrayed Aboriginal presence as dangerous (Behrendt, 2016, pp. 169-170), a frame associated with a narrowing of public discourse towards often punitive neoliberal policy solutions (McCallum & Waller, 2017). Journalism and the wider media industry often reflect and perpetuate the “culture of forgetting”, which is deeply embedded in Australian society in relation to the intergenerational traumas that colonisation has caused and continues to cause Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (McKenna, 2003). However, it is also important to acknowledge diversity within media practice, including the long traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander journalism and media (Burrrows, 2010; Meadows et al., 2007; Meadows & Molnar, 2002; Waller et al., 2015).

Positioning social journalism

Social journalism may help to address some of the concerns identified above because of its transformative potential for practice, governance, outcomes and professional ideology. In this article, we expand on a definition for social journalism proposed by the City University of New York’s Jeff Jarvis (2014), which reframes journalism as a service built on relationships and collaborations, rather than primarily as content or a product. Jarvis holds that social journalism must listen to a community in order to work out how it can contribute to meeting its needs, and that this work can go beyond the traditional roles of journalism and encompass collaborative activities such as community organising. In outlining a model for social journalism, we acknowledge that many of its elements are found in other fields of journalism practice, such as community, citizens’, alternative and radical media (Forde, 2011). It is the interrelatedness of these elements that distinguishes this model. Other distinguishing features are the centrality of connectivity and that the field, by its very definition, is fluid and constantly evolving.

Methodology

This paper arises from research that developed a decolonising framework for journalism research and practice from the standpoint of a non-Indigenous practitioner (Sweet, 2017, pp. 119-150). The framework privileged the work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholars across diverse fields (including Rigney, 1999; Martin, 2003; Sherwood, 2010; Wright, 2011; Fredericks & Adams, 2011; Geia, 2012; Muller, 2014; Dudgeon & Walker, 2015), while also drawing on seminal work by global Indigenous scholars (including Smith, 1999; Kovach, 2009). The framework acknowledges that efforts to decolonise journalism can learn from similar efforts in other disciplines and fields (Sweet et al., 2014). It proposes decolonising as a complex, iterative process that seeks to create transformative change across multiple domains and that is grounded in respect for country, which is understood by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a complex, multi-dimensional entity (Sherwood, 2010; Muller, 2014). The framework proposes reflexive, collaborative, trauma-informed practice that includes multiple interrelated elements, including the privileging of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and knowledges, respect for diversity and self-determination, deconstructing of whiteness, strengths-based approaches, relation-

ships, knowing history, reciprocity, respect, proper process, deep listening, immersion, cultural safety, naming, storytelling and self-care. Efforts to decolonise arise out of an understanding that the strategies and impacts of colonisation are entrenched and continue to manifest in the everyday practices of governments, systems, organisations and individuals, with harmful consequences for the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Dudgeon, Milroy & Walker, 2014). Australian and global Indigenous health leaders have called for decolonising of “everyone’s thinking and of attitudes in order to reset the relationship between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous people” (Lowitja Conference Statement, 2016). Participatory action frameworks, which seek to equalise relationships and power dynamics between participants and researchers (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000), are also recommended for inquiries related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s health and wellbeing (Dudgeon, Kelly & Walker, 2010; Wright, 2011) and have been used in research aiming to improve media coverage of issues related to Noongar people (Thomson et al., 2015).

This paper describes how implementation of these frameworks into journalism practice associated with Croakey led to significant innovation and development. The five case studies outlined below arose as the result of a circular feedback loop between journalism practice and research, as is explored elsewhere in relation to the #JustJustice project (Williams et al., 2017).

Case studies

Croakey.org

The origins and evolution of Croakey as an intervention into public debate are well documented (Sweet et al., 2009; Jericho, 2012, p. 54; Sweet, 2013b). This case study explores developments since 2015, when a \$5000 Walkley Foundation grant for innovation in journalism enabled the project’s re-launch with a new website, a related app, a subscription-based weekly news digest, an Apple News channel and new collaborators. It also proved an important opportunity to reconceptualise the work of Croakey as a social journalism project powered by connective networks (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). This led to additional revenue streams, in addition to core funding of \$30,000 per annum from a consortium of organisations and individuals, including from conference reporting, occasional philanthropic donations, crowd-funding and weekly digest subscriptions. Croakey provides a very modest income, enabling some of us to continue practising as independent journalists. The development of Croakey as an independent and continually evolving project has been very important for developing social, political and cultural capital (Swartz, 1997), powered by connective networks, with a view to challenging and rewriting dominant narratives around Indigenous health and other areas (Senior, 2015). Members of the Croakey Connective share a commitment to social justice and independent, evidence-informed debate, as well as to collegial, collaborative and respectful relationships. We also have an ethic of transparency: funding arrangements and conflicts of interest are declared. From our diverse positions, we each contribute to standpoint journalism as a reflexive, purposeful model of practice that interrogates power dynamics in society as well as within journalistic practices and structures (Durham, 1998), and that is “explicitly counter-hegemonic” (Maras, 2013, p. 114). In an example of the platform’s ability to connect diverse fields and networks and to engage in advocacy on health concerns (such as racism), Croakey organised and published an open letter from more than 200 people working in the media, communications and related fields condemning *The Australian* newspaper’s publication of a cartoon attacking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Sweet, 2016).

The Croakey Conference News Service

In January 2013, a service was established to provide in-depth multimedia coverage of conferences and other events with public interest merit. By July 2017, it had funded 11 journalists to

cover 49 conferences, including many about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. It is significant that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reporters have covered some of these, given the importance of self-representation and self-determination for health (Dudgeon, Milroy & Walker, 2014). The service is generally funded by conference organisers, but editorial control rests with Croakey and each article is clearly badged with a logo and funding declaration. This service combines traditional journalism functions with participatory citizen journalism, as it supports community members, public health and other health practitioners in contributing to the roles of journalism. It thus provides in-depth coverage of events that journalists otherwise are usually unable to attend (due to resource-constrained newsrooms), as well as contributing to community development. The service supports Croakey's mission to cover important public health concerns often neglected by dominant media.

@WePublicHealth

In August 2013, a rotated, curated Twitter account modelled on the successful @IndigenousX account was launched (Sweet et al., 2013). Billed as “public health meets citizen journalism”, @WePublicHealth provides news, information and community development, with a different guest tweeter each week. By July 2017, the account had more than 11,000 followers, providing a platform for participatory journalism practice, with a focus on amplifying those voices and concerns often under-represented in mainstream media coverage. A selection of each guest's tweets is archived to document the issues covered and there is a significant focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' health (Sweet et al., 2017). Guest tweeters often cover important local, national and global health conferences, and the account provides a platform for solutions-focused, evidence-informed discussions and diversity of voices. The work of @WePublicHealth, including by guest tweeters and the curator (Sweet), is not remunerated. However, the account's accumulation of social, political and cultural capital contributes to the profile and influence of Croakey (Chapman & Freeman, 2015). @WePublic health, @croakeyblog and @CroakeyNews have more than 33,000 followers – more than some major newspapers such as the *Newcastle Herald*.

#IHMAYDay

#IHMAYDay (Indigenous Health May Day) is a day-long program on Twitter where the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are privileged. Participants have included Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander politicians, health professionals, researchers, organisations and community members. Non-Indigenous participants are asked to engage by listening and retweeting. The first event, initiated by Geia with support from Sweet and McInerney, was held in May 2014 and hosted by Croakey.org. It generated widespread engagement (Geia & Sweet, 2014; Sweet, Geia, Dudgeon & McCallum, 2015), and in 2015, with support from Finlay, became an ongoing project. It has since been co-hosted by James Cook University, the University of Wollongong and the University of Canberra, supported by Croakey. Each year, the event has trended nationally on Twitter, and has resulted in a detailed news report at Croakey.org. It is evolving as an emancipatory platform for promoting and enabling decolonising agendas within universities and in other spheres, including the media and policy making. It also contributes to relationship-building and community development.

#CroakeyGO

#CroakeyGO launched in August 2016 as a platform for profiling healthy, sustainable holidays and other cultural pursuits. The initial goals were to provide another layer to Croakey's offerings for readers and contributors, and to encourage our readership to consider the wellbeing of the planet in their lives outside work. #CroakeyGO is evolving to have a broader remit, to include

acts of “walking journalism” as a platform for generating discussion and debate about topics such as health and climate, connection to country and cultural-related issues, and place-based matters. Related journalism occurs by Twitter, internet broadcasts and written articles (CroakeyGO, 2017). This initiative harnesses the connective capital (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012) we have developed as a tool for creating impact and supporting community-based story-telling. It thus provides editorial content as well as contributing to community development and networks.

Findings

Strong themes emerge from these case studies, identifying characteristics of the emerging field of social journalism, which builds on public journalism as “a theory and a practice that recognizes the overriding importance of improving public life” (Rosen, 1993, p. 53) and promotes journalists working more closely with the community in solving civic problems (Maras, 2013, p.166). It also aligns with standpoint journalism (Durham, 1998) and with emerging views of reciprocal and participatory journalism (Hujanen, 2016, p. 872; Konieczna et al., 2017; Lewis, 2015; Lewis et al., 2014). It shares many of the characteristics of contextual and solutions-focused journalism (McIntyre et al., 2016), citizen-centred journalism (Konieczna et al., 2017) and co-operative rather than entrepreneurial journalism (Siapera & Papadopoulou, 2016).

However, social journalism also represents a transformational approach in which journalism is understood and practised as a transdisciplinary, purposeful initiative that is driven by connectivity, collaboration and innovation (Bevan & Fairman, 2014, p. 17). The elements of the model outlined below are interconnected; each can represent a process and an outcome of social journalism. While many of these are not exclusive to the field of social journalism, what distinguishes this model is the interrelatedness of the elements. It is important to acknowledge that this model, envisaged as applicable across diverse fields of journalism, arose out of non-Indigenous people working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues and engaging with Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being, and as a result of explicit, proactive engagement with decolonising processes (Sweet, 2017).

A model for social journalism

1. Standpoint

Social journalism recognises that journalism’s much-critiqued “neutral” objectivity (Eshelman, 2014; Maras, 2015; McIntyre et al., 2016, p. 3) perpetuates power imbalances (Plaut, 2017, pp. 3-4). Developing a standpoint begins with understanding one’s own location as an individual/practitioner/organisation/system and requires a commitment to emancipatory practice (Freire, 1994), including valuing diversity and privileging the voices of those who experience structural and other forms of disadvantage, discrimination and oppression. Social journalism acknowledges there are diverse forms of evidence and world views, and seeks to be responsive to shifting evidence and contexts. It can involve advocacy but is not a form of propaganda (Beckett & Deuze, 2016, p. 3). It requires reflexive, transparent practices, an ethic of integrity and social justice and accepting responsibility to contribute towards the public benefit, ahead of professional or corporate imperatives.

2. Transdisciplinary practice

Social journalism acknowledges that journalists do not have a monopoly on the roles, practices and outcomes of journalism. Many other people have expertise, experience and skills that can usefully contribute. Social journalism does not regard these people as “amateurs”, as they are sometimes described (Beckett & Deuze, 2016, p. 4; Mercea & Iannell, 2016, p. 3), but as

colleagues. This element challenges traditional power hierarchies and can result in creative processes and outcomes that transcend the conventional boundaries of journalism.

3. Connectivity

Social journalism enacts the theory of connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012), using deep online engagement as a strategy for listening, developing relationships, collaborations, creativity, innovation, social change and accountability. Connectivity represents a commitment to challenging power dynamics in both journalism and wider society by developing relationships and collaborations with partners beyond, for example, “Australia’s largely white-bread, middle-class reporting cohort” (Simons, 2016, p. 16). This element thus extends the more usual journalistic conceptualisations of social media as a “public space” for appropriating, aggregating and amplifying voices (Simons, 2016, p. 16) or as a distribution channel. This element also entails reflexivity about the risks inherent in connectivity, including racism, white supremacy and other oppressive practices (boyd, 2015; Rodriguez, Ferron & Shamas, 2014), and the challenges to its democratising potential (Cadwalladr, 2017; Pavlik, 2013; Treré, 2016).

4. Relationships

Social journalism involves working beyond the traditional framing of journalistic relationships with sources, audiences and participants (Ricketson, 2014). It recognises the centrality and fluidity of relationships at individual, professional and organisational levels to practices, innovations and outcomes. Building effective networks and relationships expands social capital, increasing the potential impact and influence of social journalism. Relationship-based practice takes time, commitment and energy, and requires considerable responsiveness and reflexivity as well as a commitment to reciprocity and proper, respectful processes.

5. Responsive listening

The ability to create an ethic, space and structures to enable individual, collective and connective listening is integral to developing productive relationships (Galperin, 2016). Immersion and a commitment to solutions-focused action and reciprocity can also help. Prioritising listening can shift some of the focus and responsibility for change from marginalised voices to the conventions, institutions and privileges that shape who and what can be heard in the media (Dreher, 2009, p. 447; Waller et al., 2015). In this context, social journalism is not only about ensuring journalists listen responsively to their communities, it also means working to ensure responsive listening by the holders, structures and processes of power, as well as enabling understanding across the wider community. Responsive listening is thus also understood as a strategy for social change and social justice.

6. Reflexivity

Reflexivity links acting and thinking, practice and theory in a continuous process of self-examination and self-transformation that examines and questions how knowledge is generated and how relations of power influence that knowledge generation (D’Cruz et al., 2007). It is foundational for social journalism. This element also acknowledges the reality of challenges facing journalists in resource-constrained and often unsupportive environments (Beckett & Deuze, 2016, p. 5). While working in fluid, connective networks can enable innovation, flexibility and productivity, it can also mean operating without the protection of a large organisation. Beckett and Deuze conclude that self-care is an important aspect of reflexive practice for networked journalists (2016, p. 5).

7. Immersion

Immersion, whether in a topic, community or project, is a social journalism strategy that enables listening and the development of relationships, reciprocity and outcomes. Social journalism therefore requires a long-term commitment, to a topic, to a community or to a project, that extends beyond so-called “smash and grab” journalism (Ricketson, 2000, p. 52). It can be a demanding process.

8. Transparency and trust

Social journalism shares challenges facing the wider journalism field of building trust (Stearns, 2016) amid current concerns about “echo chambers” and “fake news” (World Economic Forum, 2017, pp. 24-25). It also faces specific issues as it rejects the traditional journalistic ideologies of independence and objectivity. Social journalism can build trust through relationships, immersion, reciprocity and consistency, as well as a commitment to authenticity, values-based practice and to working for social benefit rather than private profit (Siapera & Papadopoulou, 2016, pp. 190-191). Transparency is vital to managing the conflicts of interests and tensions that inevitably arise in immersive, relationships-based practice and new funding models (Porlezza & Splendore, 2016).

9. Creativity and innovation

Social journalism is a creative, fluid and responsive dynamic in which innovation is understood as a process emerging from connection and collaboration for social benefit (Siapera & Papadopoulou, 2016, p. 192). Innovation in journalism has been conceptualised as having four dimensions: creating, delivering and presenting quality news content; engaging the public in an interactive news discourse; employing new methods of reporting optimised for the networked age of the internet; and developing new management and organisational strategies for a networked and mobile environment (Pavlik, 2013, p. 183). In a social journalism context, innovation also refers to a re-imagining of the potential processes and outcomes of journalism beyond a focus on content.

10. An ethic of service and outcomes

Social journalism is driven by an ethic of public service. Outcomes may be tangible, such as a diversity of content, or intangible, such as relationships or connective networks that contribute to change and accountability. In seeking to challenge power hierarchies, reciprocal social journalism also contributes to capacity building or “the conditions through which communities can identify and/or address their needs” (Galperin, 2016; Lewis et al., 2014). This element also recognises the need for the structures and processes of social journalism to be representative of its communities.

Discussion

This model of social journalism moves beyond debate about the imperatives for or against maintaining and policing professional boundaries (Harrington, 2012). Instead it seeks to create fluid and porous boundaries that enable journalism to become embedded in something larger than itself, in which the processes are as critical as the outcomes. These are transformed beyond those of traditional journalism to include an explicit focus on working with community members to address their identified concerns. It is significant that these case studies developed outside of the constraints of traditional media organisations and conventional journalism practice. They reinforce findings that innovation in journalism is associated with a “pro-internet culture” and an autonomy that enables responsiveness and experimentation (Küng, 2015). Through working in

genuine partnerships with others from different disciplines and spheres, social journalism represents a transdisciplinary re-invention of journalism.

Such work requires deep commitment to reflexivity, reciprocity and multi-layered accountability, as outlined in the case studies. It means respecting and working with other forms of expertise, worldviews and skills. It also means relinquishing some of the power traditionally invested in journalists and media organisations in defining “the story” and how it should be told (Hujanen, 2016, p. 879), as well as respect for other world views (Ricketson, 2014, pp. 149-150). These case studies suggest the possibility of reconceptualising “editorial standards” to include wide-ranging outcomes that are co-determined and valued by identified communities. Future research into these case studies could develop metrics for assessing the effects and outcomes of social journalism.

Addressing uncertain futures

These case studies and the associated model for social journalism do not solve the financial challenges facing journalism (West, 2017; Zion et al., 2016). Given that they have operated on relatively small amounts of funding and in some cases with no funding at all, they highlight the significance of current debates about the “sharing economy” (Karatzogianni, 2016) and “digital sweat labour” (Codagnone et al., 2016). It is also worth noting that the social journalism practitioners associated with Croakey are relatively senior, and that we have little capacity for training future practitioners. This highlights an opportunity for research, education and training organisations to engage with projects like Croakey. It also underscores the importance of policy innovation, law reform, taxation and other financial incentives to support public interest journalism, including new and emerging forms (Public Interest Journalism Foundation, 2017; Croakey, 2017).

Conclusion

This article has described the transformative effect of decolonising and participatory action frameworks on journalism practice. It has identified 10 elements of a model of social journalism: standpoint; transdisciplinary practice; connectivity; relationships; responsive listening; reflexivity; immersion; transparency and trust; creativity and innovation; and an ethic of service and outcomes. A distinguishing feature of this model is the inter-relatedness of the elements and its flexible boundaries. While this model represents a timely innovation in journalism theory and practice, it does not resolve the funding crisis facing public benefit journalism. It is important that policy makers and the wider community explore and support innovation in policy to sustain public benefit journalism into the future. This article offers significant insights to inform journalism practice, education and research as well as the wider policy landscape.

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#JustJustice: rewriting the roles of journalism in Indigenous health

*Megan Williams, Summer May Finlay,
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Abstract

#JustJustice was developed as a crowd-funded, cross-disciplinary social journalism project to engage critically and respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about solutions to the public health crisis of rising incarceration rates. The project was led by Aboriginal public health professionals and non-Indigenous health journalists and designers, and was informed by a decolonising methodology that privileged the perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and people. This paper presents #JustJustice as a case study, with analysis using an Aboriginal methodology, the Ngaa-bi-nya evaluation framework. It highlights how professional and personal roles can be transformed through sharing journalism practices with community members and public health professionals, providing unique insights for journalism education, research and practice.

Introduction

This article describes the processes, outcomes and impacts of #JustJustice, a collaborative, cross-disciplinary social journalism project developed to provide a sustained focus on the public health crisis of over-incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In the past decade, rates of incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have more than doubled. They now make up 27 per cent of the Australian prison population (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2017a) despite being 3 per cent of the general population (ABS, 2017b). #JustJustice was crowd-funded and led by Aboriginal public health professionals in partnership with journalism and creative production practitioners. #JustJustice sought to shift from the usual deficit reporting on over-incarceration to investigating and providing a platform for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' recommendations for reducing incarceration rates. This article analyses #JustJustice as a case study, following qualitative guidelines by Patton (2015) and an Aboriginal evaluation framework, Ngaa-bi-nya (a Wiradjuri verb, pronounced naa-bi-nya) (Williams, 2016a). The case study shows how social journalism and a decolonising methodology (Nakata, 2004; Rigney, 1999) can shift the dynamic of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being interpreted as "unhealthy", to having solutions which may improve health, reduce incarceration and contribute to the development of journalism.

Background

Media stereotypes and Indigenous justice issues

#JustJustice was motivated by a commitment to transformative journalism practices, to counter negative reporting about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communicate the experiences and strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and develop the practice of social journalism in a public health context. Underlying these motivations was a long-standing concern over ill-informed and inflammatory reporting by mainstream Australian media about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and criminal justice issues, as well as systemic failure to report on recommendations and solutions proposed by scholars, practitioners, community organisations and Indigenous leaders (Stoneham, Goodman & Daube, 2014). As a source of information and news, the mainstream media in Australia is biased toward a dominant Anglo audience (Due, 2008), with a workforce reflecting that demographic. In overlooking the long, rich history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, the media has instead promulgated negative stereotypes, blame and a deficit paradigm (McCallum & Holland, 2010). Where coverage is positive, it can appear contrived or condescending, including “rags to riches” stories or a focus on sporting rather than scientific or academic achievements (Evans, Wilson, Dalton & Georgakis, 2015). These polarised framings have narrowed the range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait people who are given a voice in mainstream media (McCallum & Reid, 2012).

Media influence on criminal justice

Negative media portrayal of prisoners has also been reported (McCallum & Reid, 2012); its victim-blaming, individualistic framing obscures the historic and ongoing role of incarceration as a strategy and an outcome of colonisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with dire consequences for health and wellbeing. In a 24/7 news cycle not conducive to informed consideration of complex issues, media coverage tends to reinforce populist positions rather than providing an evidence-informed approach to “what works”. Politicians have become increasingly prone to “tough on crime” policies, rejecting crime prevention and rehabilitation alternatives, in reaction to headlines, talk-back radio and social media interjections (McCallum & Waller, 2013). The Northern Territory Emergency Response has been described as the ultimate example of media-driven policy making (McCallum & Waller, 2013), with harmful consequences including concerns it contravenes human rights law (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, 2007). Media reporting often overlooks evidence-based solutions to health problems (McCallum, 2011), such as Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services which deliver greater gains and returns on investment than mainstream care (Alford, 2014).

Disruption/the need for change

It is little wonder then that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people often have an inherent distrust in the media, reflecting a “widespread inability of journalists to engage with communities other than those that appear to be very much the same as themselves” (Meadows, 2014, p. 117). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are using blogs, citizen journalism and social media to disrupt and challenge traditional media practices (Latimore, Nolan, Simons & Khan, 2017). This includes strengthening community participation in innovative media projects to promote health and wellbeing (Forde, Foxwell & Meadows, 2009; Meadows & Foxwell, 2011; Ramirez, 2007). At the same time, digital disruption is undermining the capacity of mainstream media organisations to provide informed coverage, particularly around complex and unpopular topics such as how engagement in the criminal justice system negatively impacts health, and how some health issues such as psychosis and drug addiction contribute to risks for incarceration. These are not easy topics for increasingly resource-constrained journalists to cover, and are also unlikely to align with the corporate imperatives of news managers to meet readership metrics in a highly

competitive digital environment. In this environment, there is opportunity and need for journalistic innovation.

The #JustJustice project sought to engage Aboriginal leadership in social journalism and highlight the transformative potential of a decolonising framework for journalism practice. Decolonising frameworks have been increasingly well-described in health, social work and research domains, but only more recently in relation to journalism (Sweet, 2017). Decolonising frameworks for journalism are vital for both preventing and addressing the actions of journalists and journalism (Sweet, 2017) that reinforce generalised Anglo-centric norms, exclude Aboriginal people’s experiences and direct representation of these, and perpetuate stereotypes and racism (Fredericks, 2007; Rigney, 1999; Smith, 1999). These colonising actions (Fanon, 1967) result in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feeling “uncomfortable, mak[ing] them despair, get[ting] them angry, render[ing] them silent” (Nakata, 2004, p. 2).

Faced with the reality of small numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander journalists in Australia, as Nakata (2004) also noted in the tertiary education sector, there is the need for decolonising journalism practice to avoid perpetuating difficulties of the past, to identify a meaningful role for non-Indigenous journalists of the future and to generate opportunities for Indigenous practitioners and workforce development. With the relevant literature and context for a decolonising framework explored in another article in this *AJR* edition (Sweet et al., 2017), the experience of #JustJustice described here provides insights into social journalism and a decolonising framework in practice, including through cross-disciplinary action; challenging assumptions; reciprocity between journalists, researchers and community members; and privileging content and key messages about reducing over-incarceration from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.

Method

A case study method was used to examine the #JustJustice project, combining guidelines by Patton (2015) with the Ngaa-bi-nya evaluation framework (Williams, 2016a). Patton’s guidelines informed the purpose of the case study, its scope, research questions and sources of data. The Ngaa-bi-nya framework provided an analysis and reporting structure and opportunity to identify critical success factors relevant to the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Ngaa-bi-nya clusters Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander critical success factors into four domains, and has an overarching prompt question for each (see Box 1). It also has a list of sub-questions to stimulate further data collection and analysis within each of the domains: the full list of sub-questions is too lengthy to include here (see Williams, 2016a).

Box 1: Ngaa-bi-nya Aboriginal evaluation framework domains

(1) Landscape domain
<i>What are the broad “landscape” factors that influence programs such as history and policy including the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in program development?</i>
(2) Ways of working
<i>To what extent do processes of the program represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ values, priorities, needs and practices?</i>
(3) Resources
<i>What were the range of financial, human and material resources drawn on, including informal supports and in-kind contributions?</i>
(4) Learnings
<i>What outcomes and impacts were notable, as well as critical insights and progress achieved towards goals?</i>

Given that much could be explored in a case study about #JustJustice, research questions were limited to (1) recording the general scope and activities of the project; (2) understanding #JustJustice's contributions to the development of social journalism for health; and also (3) decolonising journalism practice; and (4) identifying key messages from the many #JustJustice articles about incarceration and its impacts on health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Data for the case study included records of online activities and engagements, articles contributed and published online, feedback provided to #JustJustice and written critical reflections by each team member. Ngaa-bi-nya questions were considered initially by author MW, with ongoing dialogue occurring between team members.

The case study

The broad 'landscape' of #JustJustice

Social journalism

In using the Ngaa-bi-nya framework and thinking about the broad contextual landscape within which #JustJustice is located, this project makes a unique contribution, being one of the few social journalism projects with Aboriginal leadership and conveying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences and strengths. As an emerging field of practice, social journalism involves working closely with identified communities, and broadening understandings of journalism to include activities other than the production of content (Jarvis, 2014). This aligns well with a decolonising methodology, which takes a systematic approach in seeking to address the ongoing impacts of colonisation, through such strategies as privileging the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, strengths-based approaches, deconstructing white privilege and developing respectful, reciprocal relationships in working together (Sweet, 2017). Social journalists, journalism academics and those in independent media have an important role to “enable Indigenous people to deliberate together, to develop their own counter-discourses, and to interpret their own identities and experiences which can then interact with the wider public sphere” (Waller, 2010, p. 21). Additionally, journalists outside mainstream media organisations “are especially well placed to collaborate with Indigenous people to develop new ways of conducting research and telling stories that privilege their perspectives” (Waller, 2010, p. 19). As well as uncovering, documenting and sharing stories on issues of importance, social journalism can “enable resistance, cultivate participation and collaboration and develop and encourage a wide variety of public conversations” (Adams, 2016, p. 110). Much needed in the process of social journalism are “peripheral voices [that] work to inform the larger ideology of a field, from within and from without” journalism (Kenix, 2016, p. 20).

Locating #JustJustice

The #JustJustice project developed from listening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people during interviews being undertaken as part of a research project about the ongoing impacts of colonisation, where policing and justice issues were repeatedly identified as critical health and wellbeing concerns (Sweet, 2017). The #JustJustice project was then further developed by Croakey.org, an independent, in-depth social journalism for health project that operates as a connective network (Sweet et al., 2017). This was done in consultation with Professor Tom Calma, Kungarakan Elder and member of the Iwaidja peoples and Chancellor of the University of Canberra, and Ms Summer May Finlay, a Yorta Yorta woman, health researcher and consultant, and co-convenor of the Public Health of Australia Association's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Special Interest Group. This led to meetings with the then Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Mr Mick Gooda, and others to develop the project concept further before a crowd-funding campaign launched in April 2015. In early 2016, Dr Megan Wil-

liams joined the #JustJustice team at Croakey, reflecting the linkages with her research (Williams, 2015), as well as the project's fluidity and responsiveness.

Ways of working

Generating content for #JustJustice

The intention of #JustJustice was to share perspectives on “what works” to reduce over-incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through collaborative, cross-disciplinary efforts using Croakey.org and other media platforms and by privileging diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices. Across an 18-month period, the #JustJustice team published over 90 articles at Croakey.org from more than 70 contributors. These were also republished elsewhere, as outlined below. Articles were written by the #JustJustice team, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, service providers and researchers. Others came from community-controlled health organisation perspectives and mainstream health and community service providers, policymakers and advocates. #JustJustice team members collectively reviewed each article before publication.

Some articles describe and critique initiatives considered successful in reducing incarceration rates or identify political and policy barriers. Others provide rare insights from lived experiences of criminal justice system engagement. #JustJustice also sought to provide timely insights on key events, such as reporting coronial findings about Ms Dhu, a Yamatji woman who died of pneumonia and septicaemia in police custody in Western Australia, with police and hospital staff determining she was faking her symptoms (Wahlquist, 2016). #JustJustice also reported on the torture of young people in the Don Dale juvenile detention centre in the Northern Territory and establishment of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory.

#JustJustice was multimedia. As well as text articles, podcasts and online broadcasts, video interviews and clips were made, featuring interviews with senior politicians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, service providers and community members. Infographics, internet memes and photographs provided visual appeal and representation. Wider engagement and advocacy efforts also contributed to the development of content, including interviews with other media outlets by #JustJustice team members (Finlay, Williams, Sweet, McInerney & Ward, 2016).

Use of social media

Social media platforms, particularly Twitter and Facebook, were used to increase the reach of the online material, contribute to discussions, build relationships and assist the development and connection of a community of concerned people. The #JustJustice hashtag was also used to promote related news items, reports, campaigns and press releases about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice issues. As well as each team member's personal Twitter accounts, a number of professional accounts were used, including @CroakeyNews, and two rotated, curated Twitter accounts, @IndigenousX and @WePublicHealth (Sweet, Pearson & Dudgeon, 2013). On Facebook, the team used their own accounts to promote #JustJustice, as well as Croakey's and a dedicated #JustJustice handle.

Publishing for impact

The initial crowd-funding commitment to make #JustJustice content accessible as a freely available e-book was later expanded to publishing a hard-copy book, to maximise the potential for impact (Finlay et al., 2016). The cover featured the work of Aboriginal artist Paul Dutton, and there was an introductory statement from Aboriginal woman Karen Wyld, an independent editor, and a foreword from Professor Calma. The #JustJustice book was launched by Professor Calma in November 2016 at independent retailer GleeBooks in Sydney. The book launch provided an

additional opportunity for advocacy and engagement as well as further coverage, including a panel discussion with Aboriginal people experienced in healthcare and research in the criminal justice system and an article reporting on this. All 50 printed copies of the book sold at the launch. Western Sydney University then provided a grant to print 100 copies of a second edition, and a print-on-demand version was also created. Book sales have contributed to costs associated with further #JustJustice activities, including articles and conference presentations. By October 5, 2017, 5510 copies of the free e-book had been downloaded, demonstrating a strong demand for such a publication.

Resources used in #JustJustice

The #JustJustice project drew on a range of social, financial, material and cultural resources. The crowd-funding was an immersive and demanding exercise, but contributed far more than the dollars raised. It helped to generate wide engagement with the campaign and related issues, including by those who participated by donating or sharing links on social media. The crowd-funding campaign also drew upon and contributed to the connective capital of team members, who all were active on Twitter and had developed significant social networks. This connective engagement also contributed to the development of relationships within the #JustJustice team and community, and more widely. The development of relationships was both an important process and outcome of the project, with some of these extending beyond the terms of the project and informing further journalism work. The decolonising methodology, which emphasised the importance of respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, strengths and knowledges, resulted in the project being enriched by the sharing of cultural expertise. The methodology also served to highlight the depth and breadth of social and cultural capital among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, something that is not often acknowledged (Brough et al., 2006).

'Learnings' in the form of outcomes and connections made

Over 18 months, almost 5000 participants engaged with #JustJustice on Twitter, creating more than 118.5 million Twitter impressions (Finlay et al., 2016). Participants included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations and institutions, and non-Indigenous people from areas such as politics, research, health, advocacy, journalism, criminal justice and social justice. Politicians and senior policy makers across jurisdictions engaged throughout the project, including by donating to the campaign and sharing links on social media. Publication of the book facilitated an interview with the Federal Minister for Indigenous Health and Minister for Aged Care, Ken Wyatt, on the day he was sworn into Parliament in January 2017. Two articles from that interview were widely shared, including by the Minister himself. #JustJustice was presented at conferences on Aboriginal health and wellbeing, medicine, rural health, justice and social media. #JustJustice also worked to extend the reach of other campaigns addressing justice issues, including "Change the Record" and "Just Reinvest NSW".

Also, in line with the project's collaborative ethos, the project worked with other media, recognising the importance of widespread dissemination to influence policy, practice and wider public discourse, as well as to encourage wider engagement by the influential health sector in related advocacy. *Guardian Australia* re-published four #JustJustice articles as part of its "Breaking the Cycle" series (Williams, 2017a; 2017b; 2017c; McInerney, 2017) and the Council to Homeless People in Victoria re-published two in a special justice edition of its journal *Parity* (Williams, 2017d). The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) re-published two articles (Williams, 2016b; 2016c) in its newsletter inserted into the *Koori Mail*, a national newspaper with wide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community readership. All of these were further promoted by the #JustJustice team and followers across multiple platforms.

While focused on strategies to reduce over-incarceration, the #JustJustice articles and other materials were themselves diverse. A process of identifying key themes among the articles occurred at several points throughout #JustJustice, including to identify gaps and opportunities for inviting more participants, in clustering material into chapters for the book, for conference presentations and in answering the case study questions. The key themes emerging are presented in Box 2. They do not reflect social journalism, but provide concise directives by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for reducing over-incarceration. Box 2 also signifies, however, the important role of social journalism: enabling broad coverage of issues through community inclusion, generating deeper understandings of justice issues at individual, family, community and policy levels, conveying messages widely and honouring lived experience, strengths and leadership of contributors.

Box 2: Key #JustJustice messages for reducing over-incarceration

- Re-frame the over-incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a “public health catastrophe” (Gooda, 2015) requiring urgent policy action.
- Promote coordinated action across government, recognising the role of health in reducing risks for recidivism, especially to address drug and alcohol issues and healing from trauma.
- Include justice targets in the *Closing the Gap* initiative.
- Support communities to address minor crimes, and a focus on prevention through strengthening communities and families via measures such as justice reinvestment.
- Develop a better evidence base about “what works” from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s perspectives.
- Address racism and the lack of cultural safety in policing, justice and media systems.
- Implement the recommendations of the *Redfern Statement*, the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*, and the *Bringing Them Home* report.
- Provide healing centres and culturally-based residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation services.

Discussion

Building on the thematic analysis of material generated through #JustJustice, and through using the Ngaa-bi-nya framework to understand the contextual landscape, ways of working, resources and learnings of #JustJustice, several insights into reducing over-incarceration have been synthesised, as well as about social journalism and decolonising journalism practice. The sections below focus on the latter two issues, which are themselves related, and in essence demonstrate how #JustJustice progressed with the support of cross-disciplinary connections, reciprocity and commitment to direct representation of issues, strengths and solutions by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Contribution to social journalism

#JustJustice demonstrated the impact of an innovative social journalism project of considerable size, scope and reach. It was led by a team of trained, experienced journalists, researchers, service providers and advocates, two out of five of whom identified as Aboriginal. #JustJustice represented a range of voices in both governance and outcomes, connected a wide range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, and created a rare opportunity to hear about personal and professional experiences of the criminal justice system. Alongside the content, a sustained social media presence developed fluid connective networks to build influence and momentum (Hermida, 2015).

Given that this campaign evolved organically without formal structures and processes, inevitably a number of gaps and lessons were identified along the way. Issues for future projects to consider include the time-consuming nature of the process from even before the crowd-funding;

the need for immersion in order to deeply engage with and understand issues and solutions; time required for immersion, reflection, planning and addressing cross-disciplinary differences; and the need to develop networks and create opportunities to take account of the cultural, social and geographical diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. #JustJustice lacked risk management strategies, largely due to Croakey.org's limited financial resources and related constraints and the general lack of additional funding opportunities.

Cross-disciplinary action

Working across the disciplines of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, public health, criminal justice and journalism brought opportunities for developing cross-sectoral relationships and shared learnings. Information about strategies for reducing over-incarceration were able to be conveyed further than any one discipline might usually achieve. For example, #JustJustice became an important mechanism for public health professionals to translate research findings into real-world messages, producing timely, focused articles in an accessible online format to expand their reach and potentially influence their uptake into practice, policy and an ongoing research agenda.

While #JustJustice drew on Croakey.org's existing networks and capacity, it also built the capacities of all involved. Working with other disciplines strengthened the team, providing opportunities to learn from other forms of expertise and world-views as part of collaborative, collegial, respectful and reflexive processes. The non-Indigenous journalists encouraged and supported other disciplines to convey messages clearly to promote understanding and to provide evidence, rationales and examples. In turn, the journalists were challenged to reflect upon their world-views, whiteness and professional ideologies and practices, and how these might be disrupted. In this way, #JustJustice incorporated a sense of reciprocity within the team, as well as with participants (Crowe, 2015). These reciprocal, collaborative elements of social journalism challenge normative practices of journalism.

Decolonising practice

The #JustJustice project demonstrated that a decolonising framework for journalism practice, supported by values and attitudes aligned with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways and self-determining strategies and partnerships, could be implemented within a social journalism project, while acknowledging that decolonising is an ongoing and iterative process. Informed by the theorising and experience of Indigenous scholars Nakata (2004), Rigney (1999), Smith (1999) and Fredericks (2007), #JustJustice was led by and included direct representation by Aboriginal people about Aboriginal people's knowledge and experiences, privileging the issues they/we prioritised. Dialogue and interaction between the team occurred about each potential contribution and draft article and action; through dialogue we clarified intentions and meanings, challenged assumptions and deepened our understanding about the impacts of invasion and incarceration as a strategy of colonisation.

Further, #JustJustice sought to confront stereotypes, consciously taking a strengths-based approach highlighting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural values and knowledges about health, and emotional, cultural and spiritual wellbeing. It demonstrated the roles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as connectors – connecting people to information, resources, practical and instrumental support, follow-up care and to each other. Connection is both a value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Williams, 2015) and a recognised feature of a decolonising methodology in journalism (Sweet, 2017). Articles explored the formal and less visible informal supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people provide, which are beneficial to assist all people and which challenge usual service delivery practices in the criminal justice system.

Reciprocity is another key element of decolonising (Sweet, 2017) and, as already indicated above, was enacted by the #JustJustice team in multiple ways, including through advocacy, skills development and capacity building. Most #JustJustice funds were distributed to pay experts in the field, who were a range of community members, service providers and writers. While this challenges traditional journalism, where the payment of sources is discouraged (Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, 1999), payments are routinely made in other sectors to participants who contribute to program planning or contribute their perspectives in research (Richards, Snow & Schroter, 2016).

An important decolonising strategy is to actively create space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with lived experience of the issues at hand to convey their realities and recommendations. Ultimately the extent to which this truth-telling can happen is based on trust (Bulman & Hayes, 2011). The process of trust building is common across any decolonising methodology or practice, whether in public health, research or criminology. It is also important to all forms of authentic journalism. It relies on developing strong relationships with mutual respect. This is premised on adequacy in critical self-reflection, including of privilege, discipline-based bias, the multiple roles and relationships a person might have to an issue, and the influence of past experiences. Reflexivity does not mean these are resolved, but that the individual understands their influence and has strategies to acknowledge and balance them (Allan, Briskman & Pease, 2009).

Conclusion

Since the #JustJustice book was launched, rates of incarcerated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have risen (ABS, 2017a). So too have deaths in custody (Productivity Commission, 2016; 2017). Initiatives such as #JustJustice generate significant opportunities to collect and convey in-depth and diverse perspectives, including among individuals and communities who are often voiceless and disenfranchised in the mainstream. However, in the context of worsening rates of incarceration, far greater action is required. The opportunity and need for journalistic innovation is also obvious, particularly from disruptions to traditional media practices by digital technologies and greater community participation in blogs, citizen journalism and social media. The #JustJustice case study described here, guided by an Indigenous methodology, the Ngaa-bi-nya evaluation framework, provided specific insights into opportunities afforded by social journalism and decolonising practices. Working collaboratively across journalism, Aboriginal public health and criminal justice, critical success factors of #JustJustice included developing broad connections and strong relationships of reciprocity and mutual respect, including diverse professional and community voices, extending the work of others and reflecting critically. In addressing an issue as multi-layered as over-incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, #JustJustice worked across multiple communication platforms and produced a timely, sustained project, promoting individual, community, service delivery and policy-level solutions from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. As the #JustJustice project has demonstrated, these strategies offer opportunities for transformations in journalism practice, as well as education and theory.

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CHAMP: a novel collaboration between public health and the media

Melissa A Sweet, Simon Chapman, Ray N Moynihan and Jonathan H Green

Crikey, an electronic news bulletin sent to subscribers each weekday, was established in 2000, and explores and develops innovative methods of news gathering (<http://www.crikey.com.au/>). Although the readership (around 30 000) is small compared with mainstream media, it is increasing. The readership is also influential, and includes journalists, bureaucrats and political staffers.

In April 2007, three of us (SC, MAS and RNM) approached Crikey, proposing to establish the Crikey Health and Medical Panel (CHAMP), whose members would be encouraged to contribute articles and tips to Crikey. Our goals included: developing a mechanism for encouraging greater breadth and depth of public debate about health issues; encouraging and facilitating public health advocates to engage in public debate; and influencing media reporting of health issues. Crikey's independent critique of the media industry matches our interest in critiquing media coverage of health. CHAMP fits with Crikey's view of how the media might operate as a direct conduit between news source and reader, bypassing the intervention of a journalistic intermediary.

How CHAMP works

CHAMP now has over 120 members, including public health advocates, clinicians, academics, bureaucrats, consumers, and media and public relations professionals. Members have diverse expertise and experience, but generally have two things in common: a commitment to public good and a belief in the value of open, frank and informed public debate. Crikey is committed to vigorous, pluralistic debate, and articles by CHAMP members have, at times, been critical of other members or articles.^{1,2}

The project coordinator (MAS) regularly emails members, asking for articles and tips for articles. If necessary (eg, due to time

ABSTRACT

- Crikey is a daily electronic bulletin aimed at providing independent news. It was established in 2000.
- In 2007, journalists and public health advocates collaborated with Crikey to initiate an innovative health reporting project, the Crikey Health and Medical Panel (CHAMP).
- CHAMP members contribute articles and news tips to Crikey, broadening Crikey's scope of public health coverage.
- CHAMP continues to evolve, and has expanded to include a freely accessible online health forum, Croakey.
- CHAMP was established to enhance public debate about health, to encourage public health advocates to engage in debate, and to help the media to identify public health advocates and issues as sources for articles.

MJA 2009; 190: 206–207

pressures), we provide help with writing or editing. Journalists associated with Crikey (RNM or MAS) often email CHAMP members for comment when researching a particular topic.

To extend the opportunity for debate about issues raised in Crikey health articles, an online health forum, Croakey (<http://www.crikey.com.au/blogs/croakey.html>), was established in April 2008. Shortened versions of Crikey health articles are posted on Croakey, often ending with questions to prompt feedback or discussion. One of us (MAS) usually emails CHAMP members and others who may be interested in a particular article, asking them to comment on the Croakey posting. This stimulates debate and ensures key health industry contacts are aware of relevant articles.

Croakey produces wide-ranging debates on topical issues, such as policy suggestions for the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission and the Australia 2020 Summit, analysis of the Northern Territory intervention, and media coverage of alcohol policy. Croakey is freely accessible and allows people to comment without declaring their full name or position, enabling contributions from people such as bureaucrats and others with organisational barriers that normally inhibit public comment. However, it also means that their interests are not always declared.

In November 2008, Croakey was relaunched as a group blog (web log) to broaden its scope and focus (<http://blogs.crikey.com.au/croakey/>). CHAMP members are invited to publish and comment on blog postings.

The role of CHAMP is evolving. Initially, the Panel was established as a source for articles, but it is also becoming a vehicle for their dissemination. Members receive a monthly compilation of Crikey health articles and a summary of debates at Croakey.

Impact of CHAMP

CHAMP has been productive, generating 234 articles on a range of topics (Box 1). Many of the articles relate to topics often under-reported by the general news media, such as Indigenous health, and many were of significant newsworthiness.^{3–6} From April 2008 to September 2008, 72 articles were posted on Croakey.

1 Topics covered by the Crikey Health and Medical Panel (CHAMP), 9 May 2007 to 23 September 2008

Fifty-seven CHAMP members generated 234 articles (38 articles were contributed by non-CHAMP members). Topics covered were:

- Health policy and health workforce issues (73)
- Pharmaceutical and industry marketing (33)
- Indigenous health and the Northern Territory intervention (29)
- Alcohol (16), illicit drugs (16), and tobacco (6)
- Obesity, food, physical activity (16)
- Media coverage of health (9)
- Rural and remote health (8)
- Mental health (8)
- Health and medical research (6)
- Cancer (5)
- Clinical issues (3)
- Abortion (2)
- Safety and quality of health care (2)
- Gun control (1)
- Asylum seekers (1)

2 Feedback from Crikey Health and Medical Panel (CHAMP) members

Dr Catriona Bonfiglioli, Lecturer, Media Studies, University of Technology, Sydney: "Crikey creates a conversation among people who may otherwise not network, and that has the potential to spur involvement in public policy and debate."

Professor Simon Chapman, Professor of Public Health, University of Sydney: "I was particularly interested in the responses that came in on the Howard Indigenous health 'blitz' in the [Northern Territory]. It seemed that Crikey was the main voice putting alternative views on the wisdom of what was happening. As a result of contributing Crikey articles, I have been threatened with a writ; done numerous media interviews; received many emails; and received both positive and negative feedback the next day via Crikey. I was told that one of my articles was used as reading material for a University course."

Professor Wayne Hall, Professor of Public Health Policy, University of Queensland: "I have followed the various pieces about health funding and health system reorganisation, some of which will probably find its way into my [Masters of Public Health] teaching on the Australian health system. Crikey has provided another way of accessing an educated public."

Mr Michael Johnston, Health Policy Officer, *Choice*: "The stories give me an understanding of what issues are important to different people and groups and what their views are on the issues of the day. I think Crikey is particularly useful for this because it publishes a much wider range of people than conventional media."

Professor Guy Maddern, Professor of Surgery, University of Adelaide: "The one article I contributed to Crikey ... had ... considerable feedback from a range of sources, including the state Minister for Health, colleagues I have not heard from in decades, and my local butcher! Indeed, the article led to a number of radio interviews and, I believe, gained useful and productive exposure to the issues that were

highlighted in it ... I have certainly believed that talking to the media and trying to inform the public of the issues and the complexities of problems of acute health care, particularly surgery, is an important role for surgeons to engage in. The advantage of the Crikey approach has been that one has been able to say precisely what one wishes to say without editorial interference. The only drawback, of course, is that one has to take complete responsibility for what one says ... As a university academic, there are fortunately no employment barriers to me talking to the media ... I would have to agree that [Crikey] has been valuable in providing a forum for health debate. Whether it influences policy I think remains to be seen."

Dr Sue Page, GP: "What I particularly liked was the way Crikey could respond rapidly, and also tolerate diversity of opinion."

Dr Jan Savage, Public Health Consultant, Victoria: "Anything that stimulates debate, reflection, analysis and questions is very important in Australia."

Mr Terry Slevin, Cancer Council of Australia: "Crikey has been important in tackling some of the more complex and challenging health stories in a more direct and at times confrontational manner than the mainstream, while also offering more critical analysis."

Mr Robert Wells, Co-Director, Menzies Centre for Health Policy; Executive Director, College of Medicine and Health Sciences, Australian National University: "I receive lots of general feedback from my former colleagues along the lines of 'keep up the good work; keep saying the sorts of things we would like to but cannot'. A lot of Canberra bureaucrats and government people read Crikey religiously."

Dr Alex Wodak, Director, Alcohol and Drug Service, St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney: "The media [have] more impact on health than all the stethoscopes in the world." ♦

Informal feedback from CHAMP members has been largely positive (Box 2). Members appreciate the opportunity to contribute to debate, and the access to an alternative media source. Many members who wrote articles have been contacted or interviewed by other media outlets. Some had feedback from colleagues, policymakers and the community. Time constraints remain a major barrier to more active engagement for many members.

The demise of traditional forms of news media has been widely predicted.⁷ Whether or not those predictions are realised, it is clear that traditional media will have fewer resources for investigating and covering important public health issues. New forms of media create opportunities for the development of alternative forums for debate about health issues and policy. CHAMP is one example of how the health sector can work with media professionals to develop a vehicle for discussion and debate.

In the "pond" of public debate, media coverage of health, and policy making, CHAMP is a small "pebble". But even the smallest pebble can create ripples.

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Dr Mark Ragg was involved in discussions leading to CHAMP's formation.

Competing interests

Melissa Sweet is paid for writing articles for Crikey and for coordinating CHAMP and Croakey. She holds honorary appointments at the School of Public Health, University of Sydney and at the School of Medicine, Notre Dame University (Sydney campus). Ray Moynihan is a regular contributor to Crikey.

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