

## Fox/Sky Merger Investigation

### Issues Statement Submissions form

1. Thank you for taking the time to make a submission in response to the Statement of Issues for the CMA's Fox/Sky merger investigation on media plurality and broadcasting standards, published on our [website](#) on Tuesday 10 October 2017.
2. This form is designed to help with your submission (although it is not compulsory to use). It sets out the key issues where we are seeking views and evidence, based on the Issues Statement. However, you may find additional useful information in the issues statement.
3. Please note:
  - You can choose which questions to respond to, but we ask all respondents to provide a small amount of background information at the start of this form. The boxes will 'expand' to accommodate long responses if required.
  - Please provide evidence in support of your submission – this can be attached to the email/enclosed with your response.
  - We may publish all or some of your submission to our Statement of Issues, or a summary of it. Please indicate any confidential material included in your submission (including whether you wish to be anonymous) and provide a non-confidential (redacted) version of your submission giving reasons for your requests for confidentiality.
  - The CMA may use the information you provide for the purposes of facilitating the exercise of any of its statutory functions. This may include the publication or disclosure of the information. Prior to publication or disclosure, in accordance with its statutory duties under Part 9 of the Enterprise Act 2002, the CMA will have regard to (among other considerations) the need to exclude, so far as is practicable, any information relating to the private affairs of an individual or any commercial information relating to a business which, if disclosed, would or might, in our opinion, significantly harm the individual's interests or, as the case may be, the legitimate business interests of that business (confidential information).
4. If you have any questions please visit the [Fox/Sky merger investigation page](#).
5. Please download and save this form before completing it. Please submit your response by **5pm on Tuesday 24 October 2017**, either by:
  - Email to: [FoxSky.Submissions@cma.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:FoxSky.Submissions@cma.gsi.gov.uk).
  - Or by post to: Project Manager

Fox/Sky merger inquiry  
Competition and Markets Authority  
Victoria House  
Southampton Row  
London WC1B 4AD

**Your details**

*(Fields marked \* are required)*

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<b>What is your role / profession*</b>	Editor
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<b>Are you representing yourself or an organisation?*</b>	An organisation <i>(please delete as appropriate)</i>
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<b>If you are representing yourself rather than an organisation would you be content for us to include your name if we publish your response?*</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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**If you are representing an organisation:**

<b>(a) What is the organisation's name?*</b>	Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom
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**(b) Please could you briefly explain the role of your organisation, including the sectors in which it operates or has most interest?\***

Grouping founded in 1980 to campaign for democratic and accountable media, including the rights of citizens to reply to bad reporting and media staff to participate in the industry.

## Public interest consideration – media plurality in the UK

With respect to media plurality the CMA is assessing whether there will be a sufficient plurality of persons with control of the media enterprises serving audiences in the UK following the Transaction. We are therefore looking for views and evidence on the current level of media plurality in the UK, whether and the extent to which the Transaction reduces that level of media plurality, and whether the remaining level of plurality of persons with control of media enterprises would be sufficient. We will consider these issues in the context of Ofcom’s definition of media plurality: ensuring diversity of viewpoints that are available and consumed; and preventing any one media owner or voice having too much influence over public opinion and the political agenda.

We welcome views and evidence which address the questions set out below.

<b>1. Whether and how the ability of the Murdoch Family Trust (MFT) to control or influence editorial and commercial decisions at Sky News will change as a result of Fox’s share ownership of Sky increasing from approximately 39% to 100%, and whether that change is material in nature?</b>
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THE CPBF IS RESPONDING ON THIS OCCASION ONLY TO THE SECTION ON COMMITMENT TO BROADCASTING STANDARDS, QUESTIONS 9 TO 14.
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<b>2. Whether and how the range of viewpoints available from news and current affairs sources in the UK is evolving in general and would change in particular as a result of the Transaction?</b>
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<b>3. How do people consume news and current affairs and to what extent do they rely on multiple sources? How is this likely to change in future?</b>
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**4. What is the impact and importance of different news and current affairs sources, including online and through social media, for media plurality? And, in turn, what are the implications of the impact of online and social media on the use of traditional (ie broadcast and print) news and current affairs sources by consumers?**

**5. Whether and how the ability of the MFT to influence the political agenda would change as a result of the Transaction?**

**6. What is the level of media plurality in the UK that should be considered sufficient?**

**7. Whether and how the Transaction would result in an insufficient level of media plurality in the UK, taking into account the increase in the level of control held by the MFT over Sky following the Transaction and its existing control over Fox and News Corporation (News Corp)?**

**8. Are there any existing factors which might help to prevent or reduce any potential negative effects of the Transaction on media plurality? What are these and why?**

## Public interest consideration – a genuine commitment to broadcasting standards

With respect to broadcasting standards the CMA is looking for views and evidence on whether the merged entity post-Transaction will have a genuine commitment to broadcasting standards objectives. In assessing this, we will consider the record of the Parties' compliance with broadcasting and other applicable regulations, and their broader attitude to compliance in general.

We welcome views and evidence which address the questions set out below.

### 9. What is the current approach of Fox, Sky, the MFT and News Corp to compliance with broadcasting standards?

The concept of requiring broadcasters to adhere to standards set by a regulator is alien to the philosophy of the MFT and the corporations it controls.

This has been explicitly expressed by Rupert and James Murdoch on numerous occasions. Both have indeed delivered public lectures on the subject, from the most prestigious platform in the industry: the MacTaggart lectures at the Edinburgh International Television Festival; also in media interviews. These have been well reported, including in the CPBF's submission to Ofcom in March, but one sentence each from the MacTaggarts can bear repetition: Rupert Murdoch said: "British television has operated on the assumption that the people could not be trusted to watch what they wanted to watch, so it had to be controlled by like-minded people who knew what was good for us... a service run for the benefit of the people who provide it"; and James that the regulation of advertising and broadcasting standards was "an impingement on freedom of speech and on the right of people to choose what kind of news to watch ...the right word is authoritarianism and it has always been part of our system."

In practice: in broadcasting Fox News in the USA operates without constraint, since the FCC's Fairness Doctrine was abolished, after lobbying from News Corporation, in 1987. Fox News's approach is openly partisan and displays an openly cavalier attitude to fairness, balance and impartiality. Sky News Australia is subject to ACMA requirements for subscription channels, which according to reports it generally adheres to in its news bulletins but is increasingly veering away from in its current affairs talkshow programming. *Also covered in separate submission.*

Fox News broadcasting in the UK has been the subject of a disproportionate number of complaints to Ofcom, which found numerous breaches of its Broadcasting Code. 21CF has now withdrawn the service from all UK platforms. In its consideration of the Secretary of State's EIN in March, Ofcom had drawn attention to the fact that Fox News had no compliance procedures in place to broadcast in Britain. She wrote that this failure called into question the existence of an "internal culture that takes compliance issues seriously" and was "**potentially indicative of an approach under which compliance issues are addressed only after having been identified externally.**"

"The representations raise concerns that the various actual and alleged failings might have been a product of **a corporate culture that does not prioritise the need for regulatory compliance.**" See replies to questions 10 and 12.

**10. What is the approach of Fox, Sky, the MFT and News Corp to effective corporate governance and other applicable regulations, including regulations relating to the treatment of employees, in the UK and overseas?**

MFT controlled corporations have a poor reputation for governance. Ofcom in its investigation into 21CF's status as a fit and proper proprietor in the summer highlighted the "significant corporate failure", due to the "extremely serious and disturbing" allegations of harassment at Fox News. Five years ago in its consideration of the previous buyout attempt Ofcom said of the chairman of Sky, James Murdoch that his "conduct in relation to events at News Group Newspapers repeatedly fell short of the conduct to be expected of him as a chief executive officer and chairman."

Ofcom nonetheless concluded on both occasions that this would not "provide a reasonable basis to conclude that .... Fox ... would not be fit and proper to hold broadcast licences." But this conclusion was effectively overruled by the Secretary of State, by adding the commitment to broadcasting standards to the grounds for the Phase 2 reference against Ofcom's advice, and by specifically indicating that corporate governance questions were germane to your considerations. This was a significant change to the process and a lead that should be followed.

The history of governance of the former subsidiary News International's London newspapers is well-known but we must draw attention to one aspect of the company's conduct. In the aftermath of the phone-hacking and bribery scandals the company had real fears of the trial and conviction of its top executives and a corporate prosecution against itself and possibly against News Corp in the USA. It was also concerned that its initial bid to buy up the whole of Sky would be imperilled. Until then it had obstructed all police and regulatory enquiries for four years, since the first phone-hacking trial in 2007, when it was common knowledge that the practice was widespread. It subverted the regulation system run then by the Press Complaints Commission by using its muscle within the PCC to block enquiries and persistently to lie about what had taken place.

But now (from late 2011) it set about a dual strategy of destroying evidence that might incriminate senior executives or the company itself, knowingly while police were investigating, and of handing over to police all the evidence it could find that might incriminate the rest of the staff and the contacts and sources they dealt with in the course of their journalistic activities. This has not been widely publicised outside the industry but has been testified to by parties involved and is expected to be raised in the upcoming trials of a series of civil cases against the Sun.

It was however consistent with the approach of MFT-controlled companies to employee relations. No such company in the UK recognises trade unions, nor will have any dealings with them or allow them to represent staff.

**11. What is the degree to which compliance with other applicable regulations, and effective corporate governance more generally should be considered in assessing a company's commitment to broadcasting standards? Please include whether and which particular regulations may be considered more relevant to this assessment.**

The senior managers who directed the operations in 2011-12 to shop their staff and save their own skins, notably James Murdoch and Rebekah Brooks, are back in place, even after being forced to quit in 2011, and others are in senior positions elsewhere in the group. Management that can behave so irresponsibly, unethically and so dangerously to its own staff and their collaborators cannot attain the standards of judgements and responsibility required to run a media corporation.

The refusal to tolerate trade unions is not just a matter of employees' pay and conditions; it relates to how broadcasting is conducted. News is a process in which low-ranked employees have constantly to take instant decisions, to do which well they should be consulted and involved. At the BBC, ITV and Channel 4 there are strong unions that play a constructive role. They have a commitment to broadcasting standards that are self-evidently higher than in other media.

But it has been a mission of Rupert Murdoch to eliminate employee participation in the running of his companies and the effect on editorial standards has been plain to see. Bullying is rampant in newsrooms and there have been successful tribunal cases over it. It is widely accepted in the industry that the illegal and unethical practices at News International papers would not have happened if the journalists been able to express concerns through a union. Lord Justice Leveson's inquiry accepted this point when it was made in evidence.

As another example: UK television has been largely spared the sexual assault and harassment cases that have so embarrassed Fox News in the USA. This is because of a difference in broadcasting culture. UK women are not dolled up with big hair and cosmetic surgery to present the news. They are not promoted and regarded as sex objects, but this could not be guaranteed should Fox gain control of Sky.

In the wake of the harassment-related top-level sackings earlier this year, Fox News appointed [Suzanne Scott](#) as new president of programming. The appointment of a woman was welcomed until it was reported in the Daily Beast (*July 6 this year*) that she had been responsible for enforcing the policy that women must wear miniskirts around the office; and that she had been cited in lawsuits by women alleging harassment as one of the executives who had ignored or covered up their complaints.

**12. What constitutes a genuine commitment to broadcasting standards?**

The Secretary of State wrote to 21CF on September 12 that "a company must have an internal culture that takes compliance issues seriously, i.e. a commitment to attaining broadcasting standards objectives."

The regulations are more than bureaucratic strictures; they are not rules to be sailed close to, obeyed for fear of penalty. They are integral with the principles of public service broadcasting (PSB): for nearly 100 years a central element of British cultural production. Their aims have traditionally been summarised as to inform, educate and entertain, and to do so with honesty and fairness. They must also maintain the balance between popular and serious programming, and, most importantly: to ensure that all broadcasts embrace in

terms of output, audience and production staff, every section of UK society, by class, gender, race, nation and region.

Broadcasters must maintain not just a formal compliance with the letter of the Ofcom broadcasting codes but genuine respect for these principles.

There must be a workplace culture and specific mechanisms that ensure that such principles are embedded in every aspect of production.

The CPBF finds it hard to believe that any senior person in 21CF could hold to such values.

**13. Whether and if so, how, the Transaction might lead to the merged entity lacking a genuine commitment to broadcasting standards?**

Sky has a good record in compliance with Ofcom regulations, comparable with the other UK PSB operators. That it has been able to do so while strongly influenced by a powerful minority shareholder like 21CF indicates the value of the present balanced ownership. The formula settled 25 years ago has worked out well.

If Sky had all its directors and executives put in place by 21CF it would have to veer towards Fox production style and culture, meaning a lowering of broadcasting Standards. It is clear how this would be done, as stated by Rupert Murdoch and put into practice by Fox in the USA and Sky news Australia: by the introduction of forceful current affairs talk shows to give platforms to aggressive right-wing commentators, whose assertions, true or false, would then be inserted into the Sky news agenda and thereby into the mainstream. This is what "Foxification" means and it would poison the whole national news culture.

**14. Are there any existing factors which might help to prevent or reduce potential negative effects of the Transaction on the merged entity's commitment to broadcasting standards?**

Not as far as the CPBF can see. Indeed, we would see dangers in any temptation to employ the obvious factor -- Sky News's autonomous status and reasonable current record in terms of compliance with regulations -- to hive it off with separate undertakings. Sky News may not be viable as a stand-alone operation in the long run, and the UK needs a second 24-hour news operation to balance the BBC's. But to tolerate a temporary arrangement -- as was proposed five years ago in discussions over the earlier buy-out bid -- would leave vulnerable to Foxification once a pro-tem arrangement had expired.

**Other comments and further contact**

**Do you have any other comments you would like to add?**

The CPBF is also submitting a paper on 2 particular topics:  
A concise summary of the case on Foxification from the previous CPBF submissions  
A study of Foxification in practice in Australia, where a similar takeover has already taken place, with News Corp buying up 100% of Sky news Australia.  
This will be emailed separately.  
There is also an individual response from the CPBF National Secretary Jonathan Hardy, not representing the organisation, also sent separately.

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<b>Would you be willing for us to contact you to discuss your response?*</b>
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Yes
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**Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.**

**Please email it to: [FoxSky.submissions@cma.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:FoxSky.submissions@cma.gsi.gov.uk).**

**Or post it to:**

**Fox/Sky merger inquiry  
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7th floor  
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To the Competition and Markets Authority

From the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom

Submission to the Fox/Sky merger investigation

October 24 2017

# THE SPECTRE OF FOXIFICATION

## Commitment to broadcasting standards in the merged entity

There is a threat to the ecology of British broadcasting if 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fox succeeds in gaining full control of Sky. The distinction between the factual reporting of news and the freedom of political comment, which is central to the regulated system of public service broadcasting, stands to be eroded by a style of programming precisely designed for the purpose.

This is the conservative political talkshow, the means by which Fox News in the USA has already corrupted broadcasting standards, if not the whole political ecosystem. It facilitated the rise of a series of belligerent conservative political movements: the Tea Party, the Alt-Right and Donald Trump's electoral bandwagon. It fostered the "fake news" phenomenon and undermined the credibility of "mainstream" TV news and current affairs around the world.

The CPBF makes no judgement on US politics or the groups concerned; our point is that this function is not within the proper remit of a licensed public broadcaster in the UK such as Sky.

Fox News is not a news channel, in the sense that licensed UK channels are, but a TV version of commercial talk radio; its origins lay in the "shock jock" phenomenon of the 1990s. It abandons the notion of a professional, impartial news service in favour of one explicitly shaped to be a strident mouthpiece for its owner's political agenda.

It has two operating slogans: "Fair and balanced", and "We report, you decide". These have been widely mocked, but they do have meaning: "balanced" to conservatives Americans means a counterweight to the perceived liberal bias of the other big corporate networks and the press; "you decide" means viewers can form opinions different from those set by the "liberal" networks.

Every evening Fox News broadcasts four hours of strident politically-charged talkshows, each with a strongly opinionated host and a panel of like-minded experts or activists, sometimes with a solitary opponent for balance. They are currently anchored by Tucker Carlson, Eric Bolling and Sean Hannity, though there have been major changes this year since the former top two, Bill O'Reilly and Megyn Kelly, left: O'Reilly after accusations of sexual harassment and assault that saw six women paid off with sums running into millions; Kelly after herself accusing colleagues of such treatment.

These shows set the political agenda. False allegations and stories can originate with right-wing bloggers, radio hosts or other conservative outlets, which Fox's commentators loudly proclaim, while berating the "liberal" media for ignoring them. The stories thus get onto the news agenda and

cannot be stopped. Frequently they are proved untrue and Fox can even formally disown them, but this has little effect since they are by now circulating on social media and out of control. In effect, Fox may not originate “fake news” but does legitimise it.

It is a wilful confusion between news and comment, which are carefully separated in the UK; a means of imposing political partisanship onto a news channel without apparently breaching regulations requiring accuracy and impartiality in news. This is what is meant by “Foxification”.

Two such recent stories concerned the UK. In March this year commentator Andrew Napolitano, described as Fox’s “senior legal analyst”, said that the UK intelligence agency GCHQ had wiretapped Donald Trump on behalf of President Obama during last year’s election campaign. He said:

*Three intelligence sources have informed Fox News that President Obama went outside the chain of command. He used GCHQ .... That’s the initials for the British spying agency.*

Trump’s press secretary Sean Spicer repeated the claim from the White House podium. GCHQ said the allegations were “nonsense. They are utterly ridiculous and should be ignored.” Fox News then disowned Napolitano’s remarks. Anchor Shepard Smith said on-air:

*Fox News cannot confirm Judge Napolitano’s commentary. Fox News knows of no evidence of any kind that the now-president of the United States was surveilled at any time, any way. Full stop.*

Donald Trump said only: “All we did was quote a certain very talented legal mind.”

The other was an assertion about Muslims in Britain in 2015. Commentator Steve Emerson, described as “an internationally recognised expert on terrorism”, said on air:

*In Britain, it's not just no-go zones, there are actual cities like Birmingham that are totally Muslim where non-Muslims just simply don't go in ... Muslim density is very intense, where the police don't go in, and where it's basically a separate country almost, a country within a country ... Parts of London, there are actually Muslim religious police that actually beat and actually wound seriously anyone who doesn't dress according to Muslim, religious Muslim attire.*

This was hotly contested, obviously, in Britain, and was again formally corrected and Fox apologised for it. Yet it persists; Trump repeated it during the election campaign and still makes unfounded allegations about the prevalence of Muslim terrorism -- earlier this year about Sweden, and just two weeks ago about the UK crime statistics – that emanate from Fox news.

Polls in America still show substantial numbers of people convinced that Barack Obama is a Muslim (despite being a practising Christian) and was not born in the USA (though the records are clear). Both stories were promoted by Fox News and used by Donald Trump.

Fox News was broadcast in the UK on the Sky platform until August, when 21CF withdrew it. There had been a number of complaints and Ofcom had seven times found breaches of the code since 2013. The cases comprised the inadvertent live coverage of a suicide; two cases of product promotion in consumer programmes; a breach of electoral law in its referendum coverage; a heavily biased pro-Trump report on last year’s presidential election; and two “fake news” stories: a sickening anti-abortion item by Andrew Napolitano, accusing Planned Parenthood doctors of trading in the body parts of aborted fetuses; plus the story about Muslims in Birmingham.

That an MFT-controlled Sky News should introduce programming of this kind has been stated by Rupert Murdoch several times. In 2007 he told a House of Lords Committee that Sky News would be more popular if it were more like Fox. The minutes of the session read:

*He believed that Sky News would be more popular if it were more like the Fox News Channel. Then it would be "a proper alternative to the BBC". One of the reasons that it is not a proper alternative to the BBC is that no broadcaster or journalist in the UK knows any different. Mr Murdoch stated that Sky News could become more like Fox without a change to the impartiality rules in the UK. For example Sky had not yet made the presentational progress that Fox News had. He stated that the only reason that Sky News was not more like Fox news was that "nobody at Sky listens to me" (a).*

This often-quoted remark may have been tongue-in-cheek but the word "presentational" is significant. It means presenting current affairs, not in conventional bulletins, but in the talkshows.

Asked by the New York Times back in 2003 whether Sky would imitate Fox if he owned it outright, Murdoch replied:

*I wish. I think that Sky News is very popular and they are doing very well, but they don't have the entertaining talk shows - it is just a rolling half-hour of hard news all the time .... It is 'BBC lite' .... with a 'liberal bias'. (b)*

In fact Sky News has tried it; twice, from 1994-95 and 2003-04 and both times a flop. The presenter both times was journalist Richard Littlejohn, formerly of the Evening Standard, LBC Radio and the Sun, now with the Daily Mail, an aggressive right-wing controversialist. He was hired by former Sun editor Kelvin MacKenzie, who ploughs the same field and whom Murdoch made managing director of Sky in an attempt to make it more aggressively right-wing. The show, called Richard Littlejohn, was pulled after a year.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the failure was put down to regulation. Littlejohn said:

*We'd never been able to make the programme we intended. If Sky News could emulate its US sister Fox News, which has wiped the floor with CNN with opinion-driven 'fair and balanced' coverage, ratings would soon shoot past the Astra satellite [Sky's Luxembourg-registered transmitter]. But the regulators won't allow it. (c)*

In early 2003 he returned to present a revived show, called Littlejohn, four nights a week. The programme was dropped in July 2004 and again replaced with regular rolling news.

The risk, however, remains real. There was strong anecdotal evidence of the Murdochs' intentions from the BBC's former political editor Nick Robinson, in his 2012 book *Live From Downing Street: The Inside Story of Politics, Power and the Media*. He wrote that before the 2010 election Rupert Murdoch had lobbied the Conservatives hard to get rid of Ofcom, and added:

*A senior Tory minister has told me that had the party secured a majority it was his expectation that the regulator would have been weakened, the Murdoch company News Corp would have taken full control of BSkyB and James Murdoch would have got his way and turned Sky News into a channel to challenge what he saw as the BBC's innate liberal bias. (d)*

# SKY NEWS IN AUSTRALIA

In a similar process to the current attempted buy-up of Sky in Europe, an MFT-controlled company took control of Sky News Australia, likewise previously jointly-owned with other media owners, on December 1 last year. The Murdoch entity in this case is News Corp rather than 21FC but the service is evidently following the “Foxification” formula that is feared for the future of Sky in London. Sky News Australia is a cable channel broadcast on the Foxtel cable network, which is 50 per cent owned by News Corp.

Its daytime schedule retains a rolling news format and is well regarded for its accuracy and professionalism, like Sky in the UK. But the night-time schedule is very different: like Fox in the US, a series of opinion-led programmes, unlike any other TV station in Australia, much of it is on the extreme right. The programmes are heavily populated with columnists from News Corp newspapers, sometimes interviewing each other.

The strategy of converting news to comment has been acknowledged by CEO Angelos Frangopoulos, who has said: “The era of ‘autocue’ newsreaders is over. We need people who can ‘host’ a show and handle events as they unfold without relying on words on a screen.” Regulated news is of course very much “autocued”; carefully scripted to allow newsreaders no scope for biased comment.

The Australian presenters dominate the screen like their American counterparts. They include Andrew Bolt, a far-right columnist on News Corp’s Herald Sun, Australia’s biggest-selling tabloid daily; and Paul Murray, a former radio “shock jock” with an aggressive right-wing style. A number of commentators, including some with Murdoch connections, have written about their effect on Australian broadcasting.

On the Conversation website, influential media commentator Denis Muller wrote:

*Sky has a kind of split personality. During the day, it runs a professional, no-frills TV news service. But when darkness falls, it becomes a different beast altogether. The Bolt Report is a nightly piece of right-wing punditry in which Andrew Bolt does his more-in-sadness-than-in-anger routine.*

*Yet he looks a model of reason by comparison with Paul Murray, a crass vulgarian who swaggers about the set unburdening himself of a string of grotesqueries ... its stable of commentators and panel chairs is skewed to the right .... It is too glib to say that Sky is just an Australian version of Fox News, but the Murdoch connection is a critical factor. (e)*

The media page of his Australian national newspaper, the Australian, is sometimes regarded as a defender of his interests, yet in March this year columnist Mark Day, a respected and pro-Murdoch former newspaper editor, wrote:

*Sky’s shift to full prime-time opinion programming — or ‘engaging conversation’ as insiders characterise it — broadly follows the highly successful Fox News format in the US, frequently criticised for its strong conservative leanings. Our Sky presenters generally lean towards conservative — sometimes disconcertingly so. Increasingly I have felt that opinion programming may have gone a step too far. Would it not be better to pull back to the core function of providing more news, at least part of the time? (f)*

Another former Murdoch luminary who has come out against the company is John Menadue. He was general manager of News Ltd, Murdoch's Australian newspaper company, from 1967-74, as well as Australian ambassador to Japan, government minister, a Prime Minister's private secretary and head of civil service departments. Menadue told ABC in June that News Corp was

*... not just rogue individuals, it's a rogue organisation and the Australian government should resist any attempt to expand the media power of the News organisation. In recent decades [Rupert Murdoch's] organisation has become a disgrace. It's trampled on democracy in three continents, it's damaged the media enormously in three countries. (g)*

Paul Barry, host of the Media Watch programme on ABC, the public broadcaster, wrote:

*There's long been talk of the Foxification of Sky News. Since News Corp took full ownership in December it's been looking and sounding more and more like its famous American counterpart, especially in the evenings, when its conservative commentators are often in furious agreement. (h)*

The Australian BuzzFeed News website conducted an investigation, speaking to current and former Sky News presenters and reporters on the condition of anonymity. One long-term Sky News presenter told them:

*It's like Frankenstein's monster comes out after 7pm - it's big and ugly enough that you can tell the difference to what's going on during the day. (i)*

Two of the five hours are hosted by Paul Murray, the most aggressive of the presenters. A Sky News presenter told BuzzFeed:

*It's pretty clear what Murray is doing, he's aping Sean Hannity ... He's closely watched the Hannity and (former Fox News host) Glenn Beck style and now he's putting it on Australian TV.*

Paul Murray Live, the highest rated show, opens with a monologue by Murray reportedly littered with crude taunts and attacks against perceived "lefties". In a six-minute rant on June 26 Murray called coalition government minister Christopher Pyne "an arsehole" and "a wanker". This attack on was seen as part of a Sky campaign to undermine the coalition government of Malcolm Turnbull and promote its right-wing critics. The channel interviews former Prime Minister Tony Abbott, the leader of this faction, several times a week, employing his close adviser Peta Credlin as a regular commentator. It also entertains the leader of Australia's far-right One Nation party, Pauline Hanson, introduced by Murray as the "queen of the revolution". At the same time the channel is promoting the Australian Conservatives party, a right-wing breakaway from Turnbull's Liberal Party led by a disgruntled Senator, Cory Bernardi. Murray has called on viewers to leave the Liberals and join Bernardi. (j)

Sky News also features right-leaning Australian Labour Party figures, including former party leader Mark Latham, who was sacked in March after a series on intemperate ad hominem attacks on air. His targets included a fellow Sky pundit, former Labour leader Kristina Keneally, who was Prime Minister of New South Wales between 2009 and 2011; a Sydney schoolboy who appeared in an

International Women's Day video on feminism; and the well-known writer and journalist Wendy Harmer, who is a radio host at ABC. Latham said she was

*a proven commercial failure, so naturally she got a job at ABC Radio at the sheltered workshop there for all the lefties.*

Ms Harmer has lodged a formal complaint and is [demanding an apology](#). (k)

A final sign of the Murdochs' disdain for regulated news was revealed in August when Guardian Australia site reported that News Corp's newspapers in the country had deleted ABC's news channel from their TV listings. ABC staff who noticed the omission contacted the outsource contractors that produce the listings to be told that they had been so instructed by News Corp. (l)

## NOTES

- (a) [www.theguardian.com/media/2007/nov/24/bskyb.television](http://www.theguardian.com/media/2007/nov/24/bskyb.television)
- (b) [www.nytimes.com/2003/04/07/business/media-mr-murdoch-s-war.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2003/04/07/business/media-mr-murdoch-s-war.html)
- (c) British Journalism Review, Vol. 13, No. 3, 20
- (d) Nick Robinson, Live From Downing Street: The Inside Story of Politics, Power and the Media, Bantam Books, 2012
- (e) Muller, Denis. [Sky News is not yet Fox News, but it has the good, the bad and the uglies](#). *The Conversation*, February 15 2017
- (f) The Australian, March 27, 2017
- (g) ABC Melbourne, Mornings, June 23 2017
- (h) ABC Media Watch July 3 2017
- (i) BuzzFeed, Australia's News Channel And What It Learned From Fox News, July 9 2017
- (j) Sky news, Paul Murray Live, June 26 2017
- (k) The New Daily, March 29 2017
- (l) Guardian Australia August 24 2017



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