

# **Reporting Diversity**

## **Television News 2007**

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## **Executive summary**

This is the second study funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship examining the way in which Australia's television news represents people from different ethnic backgrounds. The first study in 2005 was a three-city analysis (Perth, Sydney, Shepparton) which itself built on an original pilot analysis of the Perth television news services in 2001). This 2007 study, now including a fourth centre Townsville, is therefore the third part of what has evolved into a longitudinal study examining the trends in television news between 2001 and 2007.

The 2007 study provides the opportunity to observe if and how things have progressed since the last snapshot, and allows more confident conclusions that can hopefully be the basis for recommendations to improve future practice.

Where the 2005 study suggested that EM news could be categorised as 'sad, bad, mad and/or other', in 2007 we learn that it is far more like to be 'sad, bad, mad, or **non-existent**'. Where the Australian news agenda is not dominated by hysterical panic over terrorists and Muslim extremists, the country's non-Anglo communities fundamentally become even more invisible – except when they make news as villains or victims.

Note: We have applied an established academic label (Ethnic Minority, EM) to describe the people from Non-Anglo backgrounds whose presence we are tracking in Australia's television news. This is because it appeared the most inclusive and least contentious of available terms to cover this widely diverse demographic.

The main conclusions are:

### 1. Total EM content

Compared to 2005, where EM content was inflated by domestic terror scares, total EM content in Australia's television has dropped (from 7.3% to 4.6%), with the exception of SBS where levels are up (from 40% to 45%).

## 2. International and Domestic EM content

Compared to 2005 where EM content was concentrated in domestic news (International 38%, Domestic 62%), in 2007 EM content was concentrated in international news (International 52%, Domestic 48%).

## 3. Top EM content Category

In 2005 EM stories were concentrated in the Crime category (41% of all EM news, compared to 9% of non-EM news).

The top category for Non-EM stories was Courts and Justice (13%), but note that 25% of EM stories were in this category.

In 2007 the EM stories were concentrated in the Military and Diplomatic category (24%), reflecting international rather than domestic content. The top category for Non-EM News was Politics (20%), compared to EM where at 19% it was second highest category.

## 4. Story type

In 2005, the top story type was Courts/Crime/Disaster which represented 72% of all EM news, compared to 29% of all non-EM news.

In 2007, the top category for both EM and Non-EM is Power and Policy (EM 47%; Non-EM 27%). Second category for both is Courts/Crime/Disasters (EM 30%; Non-EM 25%)

## 5. Story Tone

In 2005, 70% of EM news was in the Negative category. In 2007, a comparison was made between EM and Non-EM. While Negative levels were down, EM news was still more negative than Non-EM news (53% compared to 29%). There was also less Neutral news (EM 21%, Non-EM 34%) and less positive EM news (EM 26%, Non-EM 37%).

6. The main conclusions of the 2005 survey were that EM communities were portrayed as 'bad', 'sad', 'mad' or 'other'; they were depicted either as passive victims or aggressive threats to society; they were distinguished as 'alien' through behaviour or clothing; and they were explicitly or implicitly identified as 'other'. In 2007 there appeared to be a return to a more 'normal' news agenda, with lower levels of EM content, but this only made these characteristics stand out more starkly. EM communities continue to be featured as 'mad' 'bad', or 'sad'. EM talent was rarely featured in the role of expert, or in crowd scenes or vox pops.

7. There are ways news practice can be adjusted to ensure the nightly bulletins reflect a more accurate picture of the Australian community by

- selecting for diversity in crowd shots, vox pops and expert talent.
- Allowing EM communities to speak for themselves rather than being spoken about or spoken for.
- By taking care with subtitles to avoid the creation of artificial distance between EM talent and the general public
- Expanding the reporter base to include more reporters from EM backgrounds

## 1. Introduction

This is the second study funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship examining the way in which Australia's television news represents people from different ethnic backgrounds. The first study in 2005 was a three-city analysis (Perth, Sydney, Shepparton) which itself built on an original pilot analysis of the Perth television news services in 2001 (see Phillips and Tapsall 2007a). This 2007 study, now including a fourth centre Townsville, is therefore the third part of what has evolved into a longitudinal study examining the trends in television news between 2001 and 2007.

The 2007 study provides the opportunity to observe if and how things have progressed since the last snapshot, and allows more confident conclusions that can hopefully be the basis for recommendations to improve future practice.

Note: As is explained in the paper we have applied an established academic label (Ethnic Minority, EM) to describe the people from Non-Anglo backgrounds whose presence we are tracking in Australia's television news. This is because it appeared the most inclusive and least contentious of available terms to cover this demographic.

## 2. Method & Design

The survey looked at the flagship prime-time nightly news bulletin of the 3 commercial networks (Seven, Nine and Ten) and the two public broadcasting services (the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the Special Broadcasting Service).

The period surveyed was two weeks (14 sequential days) from 30 April to 13 May 2007. As with the previous survey the time period was randomly selected with the aim of capturing a news period unlikely to be impacted upon by unusual events. As it happened the 2005 survey coincided with the introduction of the new counter-terrorism laws by the Howard government and the counter-terrorism raids in Sydney and Melbourne. In 2007 the news agenda was more anodyne and in line with what might be considered 'normal' in the domestic context. The question was: would this show a return to the story selection and reporting patterns observed in the original 2001 survey of the pre-9/11 era (see Phillips and Tapsall 2007a)?

Because of the format and content changes at weekends, the analysis in this paper isolates the weekday bulletins in both weeks and focuses on the main news content. The Sports bulletins are not dealt with here, though Sports stories are included when they have been integrated into the main bulletin.

The study used the same multi-method approach employed in the previous two surveys combining both quantitative and qualitative analysis. A specially devised database allowed the researchers to capture quantitative data (duration and percentages of stories from different categories) and qualitative data relating to the nature of the reportage. Both the 2005 and 2007 studies were done in partnership with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship as part of its Living in Harmony initiative. The Department was particularly interested in assessing whether news coverage differed depending on the ethnic composition of the local population. Hence the 2005 study covered Sydney as a major metropolitan city, Perth as a smaller capital city, and the Victorian regional centre of Shepparton, which the Department had identified as having a particularly diverse mix. According to the 2001 census – the latest data available for 2005 - 10.8% of its

population was born overseas with the main countries of origin being Italy, England, New Zealand, Iraq and Turkey (ABS 2001). In 2005 it also welcomed 10 African refugee families as the inaugural site for the Federal Government's Regional Humanitarian Settlement Pilot project. By the time of the 2007 study the number of people in Shepparton born overseas had risen to 11.4% with Albania now added to the mix (ABS 2006a). The 2007 study was further expanded to include a fourth centre – Townsville in Queensland - also identified by the Department as having a diverse ethnic mix. According to the 2006 census 11.6% of the population was born overseas with the main countries of origin England, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and South Africa (ABS 2006b).

The news bulletins were coded by a four-person team working under the supervision of the research assistant who had overseen the previous coding exercises and had helped refine the coding methodology which was now captured in a formal coding manual. Intercoder agreement was assisted by the training of coders which included participating in communal coding sessions under the research assistant's supervision. These allowed for further clarification as the coding progressed. After this training period the coders and the researchers had regular meetings to discuss other issues as they emerged. In order to do the analysis the chief researcher had to examine both the recorded material and the coding database very closely herself, which added another layer of scrutiny which could rectify any inconsistencies.

As in the previous study stories were identified according to origin (local, national, international) and analysed according to both the topic and the storytelling convention used. There were 20 content categories which were subsequently grouped together into six story types that gave a better sense of the kind of news treatment they received:

**Courts, Crime and Disasters:** Emergencies/Disasters; Courts/Justice; Crime.

**Clever Country:** Education/Schools; Technology/Science.

**Fun and Games:** Arts/Culture; Leisure/Tourism; Personalities/Entertainment; Sports News.

**Money and Work:** Business/Finance; Work/Industry

**Power and Policy:** Politics; Military/Diplomatic; Media/ Communications; Transport Issues

**Social Matters:** Social Issues; Environment; Health/Medicine; Consumer Affairs; Religion/Faith.

The quantitative data gave an idea of relative proportions of news content within and between news services identifying:

- total bulletin times, and duration and percentages of stories from different categories (to be compared with the 2005 three-city data, and the baseline Perth data from 2001 where possible)
- duration and percentages of stories with a potential multicultural impact (compared with the 2001 study where possibly significant changes are noted)

The data from the other studies was recalibrated to reflect the same weekday-only content as for the 2007 survey.

The qualitative analysis focused on the detail of the reportage itself: the type of talent used, the way the talent was used (for example, speaking or silent), the way the talent was presented (for example, in formal or informal settings). Additionally story tone was coded against a 9-point scale (adapted from Media Monitor's Tone Ratings system) ranging from Extremely Negative to Highly Positive to get a sense of the impression left on the viewer by the way a story was reported.

The coders were required to note which stories featured people from ethnic minority (EM) groups. Following van Dijk (2000) the researchers used this terminology to distinguish the diverse range of ethnic groups from the '(white) elites' (39) which define mainstream Australia. While this sort of identification is highly subjective, on the basis that the coders were viewers like anyone else they were asked to note where the people featured could be assumed by the audience to be identified as non-Anglo, whether through appearance, dress, accent, name or title. Using this group of stories it would then be possible to examine:



- What sort of stories ethnic minorities appeared in;
- What types of issues these stories were associated with;
- The ways in which people from non-Anglo backgrounds were portrayed;
- The types of talent used;
- The tone adopted in the presentation;
- The role of pictures and graphics on the overall impact of the story.

The talent was identified in this way for both domestic and international stories.

Reflecting the focus of the DIAC Living in Harmony program stories were also rated on the basis of the possible impact on community harmony to the extent that they might have a negative, neutral or positive impact, or reinforce a stereotype.

### **3. Content Analysis**

#### **The news environment 30 April – 13 May 2007**

On the international front protests erupted in Turkey amidst public concern over the threat that the upcoming election might lead to increased Islamisation. The French election campaign was well underway, elections were also being held in East Timor, while in Israel there were calls for the Prime Minister to resign. The so-called War on Terror continued to dominate the headlines with news of Australian troops coming under fire in Iraq, a 40% rise in the global death toll from terrorism, the death of an al Qaeda leader, and a summit meeting between the US and Iran on Iraq. The UK experienced a domestic terror threat and Prime Minister Tony Blair announced his resignation. Prince Harry was posted to Iraq as part of his military training while his grandmother the Queen made a state visit to the US. Also in the US a prominent Washington 'Madame' was threatening to name names amongst her illustrious clientele. Disasters included a yacht capsizing near South Africa as a result of which an Australian lost his life, while the US experienced a violent tornado

On the national front terror was in the news with the arrest of two Melbourne men charged with fundraising for the Tamil Tigers. The Federal and State budgets were brought down. Prime Minister John Howard bowed to public and political pressure and softened the Work Choices laws. Meanwhile Opposition leader Kevin Rudd was trying to put his stamp on the Labor Party leadership by making his stance clear on both industrial relations and climate change. Liberal Senator Bill Heffernan attracted opprobrium for describing Deputy Opposition leader Julia Gillard as 'barren'. ACTU secretary Greg Combet announced his decision to run for federal parliament. Qantas was fighting off a takeover bid, and in Sydney the inquest on the deaths of the Balibo Five was in full swing. There was controversy over whether the proposed cricket tour of Zimbabwe should be abandoned in protest over the government of Prime Minister

Robert Mugabe, Ben Cousins apologised for his drug-taking and Tony Bullimore set sail on yet another solo circumnavigation attempt.

## Bulletin overview

The news services vary in length and time of broadcast. Channels Seven and Nine have a half hour bulletin at 1800 produced in the state capitals (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth in this case). Townsville precedes the half-hour 1800 metropolitan Brisbane-based service with a half-hour local regional bulletin. In Shepparton and Townsville Nine's news occupies a one hour slot which incorporates a half hour WIN News regional bulletin followed by Melbourne's 1800 news. Channel Ten has a one hour local bulletin from 1700 to 1800 tailored to each state. The ABC has a half hour local evening bulletin at 1900 broadcast from each state capital. SBS's evening news has been expanded to one hour from 1830-1930 and this service is the only one networked from Sydney without alteration around the nation.

## Quantitative Data

The following tables pull together data from all three surveys to allow a comparison across the full six-year period. The data has been adjusted to cover a standard two-week period for each, excluding weekends. The data relates to content as percentages of total bulletin time which accommodates the variations in bulletin length across the stations.

Tables 1a-1c show levels of content by location (local/national/international) per service for each city. What stands out is the formulaic nature of the bulletin composition; this is especially pronounced with the ABC. Looking at Perth on its own (the only centre where we have data for three years) it is clear that the ABC is least affected by the news agenda in the proportion of news included from local/national and international sources. It demonstrates, as has been noted elsewhere (Phillips and Tapsall 2007a:11), a preference for the national over the local and the international. Again predictably, international news continues to dominate the agenda for SBS, though proportions in 2007 are back to

the 2001 levels compared to 2005 where the domestic terror threat resulted in a comparatively higher proportion of domestic news.

The commercial broadcasters are the services that devote most time to local news, with the least amount of time provided for international stories. The appended half hours of WIN regional news inflate these figures even further for Nine in the regional centres of Townsville and Shepparton. Hence in 2005 Shepparton's Nine service leads the pack in local content (70.33% of total news) and has the network's highest concentration of local news (compared to Sydney Nine 57.09% and Perth Nine 45.04%). It is interesting to compare Nine and Seven in each market, where, with the exception of Nine in Shepparton, local competition appears to keep their levels roughly the same. In the 2007 survey Townsville Seven (which, like Nine, has an appended regional half hour news) has the highest local content levels on that network, slightly ahead even of Townsville Nine. In all surveys Ten appears to provide much less local content in Perth compared to its service to other centres and compared to the other commercial networks.

**Table 1a: 2001 Location content percentages of Station News.**

Network	Local	National	International
Perth ABC	37.70%	40.80%	21.50%
Perth Nine	50.30%	26.80%	22.80%
Perth Seven	50.80%	28.40%	20.70%
Perth Ten	35.40%	40.60%	24.00%
SBS		26.20%	73.80%

**Table 1b: 2005 Location content percentages of Station News**

Network	Local	National	International
Perth ABC	34.41%	44.82%	20.77%
Perth Nine	45.04%	40.15%	14.81%
Perth Seven	48.42%	38.31%	13.27%
Perth Ten	37.75%	42.09%	20.16%
SBS		35.84%	64.16%
Shepparton ABC	30.21%	46.39%	23.40%
Shepparton Nine	70.33%	21.15%	8.52%
Shepparton Seven	59.34%	28.18%	12.48%
Shepparton Ten	45.29%	35.46%	19.25%
Sydney ABC	41.08%	35.40%	23.52%
Sydney Nine	57.09%	21.28%	21.63%
Sydney Seven	65.23%	19.41%	15.36%
Sydney Ten	55.31%	27.36%	17.33%

**Table 1c: 2007 Location content percentages of Station News**

Network	Local	National	International
Perth ABC	35.28%	43.25%	21.47%
Perth Nine	51.25%	34.35%	14.40%
Perth Seven	52.88%	31.48%	15.64%
Perth Ten	40.86%	36.10%	23.05%
SBS		29.76%	70.24%
Shepparton ABC	24.73%	47.46%	27.81%
Shepparton Nine	72.71%	20.32%	6.97%
Shepparton Seven	60.38%	25.70%	13.92%
Shepparton Ten	48.66%	30.16%	21.18%
Sydney ABC	30.33%	41.37%	28.31%
Sydney Nine	56.85%	34.03%	9.12%
Sydney Seven	55.73%	27.99%	16.28%
Sydney Ten	47.47%	32.61%	19.92%
Townsville ABC	21.88%	52.64%	25.48%
Townsville Nine	68.69%	24.73%	6.58%
Townsville Seven	70.66%	21.71%	7.62%
Townsville Ten	48.59%	32.33%	19.08%

The Top Ten of international news stories (Tables 2a, 2b,2c) appears to have reverted to the patterns noted in the original 2001 Perth survey with the US and the UK far and away the most dominant sources for international news. This contrasts with the composition of the 2005 Top Ten at the height of domestic hysteria over home grown terrorism threats. In addition to stories resulting from the US involvement in world politics and specifically the 'War on Terror', the US is a popular source for lighter stories which traditionally pad

out the Australian bulletins (Phillips and Tapsall 2007a:13). Thus in this survey we heard about a melting bridge and a killer tornado, in addition to a state visit by the Queen. The prominence of the UK in the Top Ten this time can be explained by the coverage in the second week of the survey of the announcement by Prime Minister Tony Blair of his intention to resign and to pass the baton to his deputy Gordon Brown. East Timor is in third place in 2007 because it was in the throes of a tumultuous election campaign climaxing in the election itself in the second week of the survey. The involvement of Australian troops may account for the entry of Afghanistan into the Top Ten for the first time. By the same token Australia's involvement in Iraq and the fact that Australian troops were involved in an incident there during this period may account for that country now occupying fourth place, even though total coverage has increased only slightly from 4.39% in 2005 to 4.77% in 2007. France's election campaign was in full throttle while the position of Israel's Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was under threat explaining their inclusion in the Top Ten. The data shows remarkably little variation from past studies of international news trends in the Australian media (see Putnis et al 1996, 2000) which revealed a skew towards Europe and the US rather than the sort of engagement with the South-East Asian region that one would expect from an antipodean news service.

**Table 2a: Top Ten Countries 2001 (Perth)**

Location	Percentage of International News
USA	25.12%
United Kingdom	13.74%
Israel/Palestine	8.17%
Nepal	6.24%
Indonesia	5.14%
Macedonia	3.15%
Philippines	2.86%
Sweden	2.41%
Japan	2.31%
France	1.91%

**Table 2b: Top Ten Countries 2005 (Perth, Shepparton, Sydney)**

Location	Percentage of International News
Indonesia	21.16%
USA	15.06%
Jordan	10.33%
France	9.67%
South Korea	7.44%
United Kingdom	6.50%
Iraq	4.39%
Singapore	2.46%
Japan	2.14%
Middle East	1.64%

**Table 2c: Top Ten Countries 2007 (Perth, Shepparton, Sydney, Townsville)**

Location	Percentage of International News
USA	30.37%
United Kingdom	18.34%
East Timor	7.03%
Iraq	4.77%
France	3.79%
Israel	3.72%
International	3.37%
Afghanistan	2.77%
South Africa	2.44%
Spain	2.00%

## Total EM content

Looking specifically at the amount of EM content in the bulletins, a comparison of the two surveys in Tables 3a and 3b shows that total levels of EM content are lower in 2007 than in 2005, and SBS's proportion of that total has more than doubled (up to 26.69% from 11.64%) and is now more than three times as high as its nearest rival, Sydney Ten with 7.07%. The more evenly balanced levels across all stations in the earlier study probably resulted from the distorting effect of the focus on the counter-terror raids in Australia's domestic news which inflated the EM content across all services. Without that focus, the 2007 levels may well reflect a more 'normal' news agenda. The ABC stations share consistent figures in the 6% range which is indicative of the way in which the same material is distributed amongst them and used in the same way.

When we look at the levels of EM news in each station's service in 2005 the local nature of the anti-terror raids in Sydney and Melbourne is reflected in a greater concentration of EM news in the eastern states services compared to Perth (Table 3a). It is also interesting that Seven and Nine tended to maintain similar levels in the Perth and Sydney markets, indicative of the close competition between them on the ground. In Shepparton Seven and Ten had roughly even levels of EM news (around 25%) with Nine trailing with 18%, despite its being the leader in local content in this market (see Tables 1b and 1c above).

In 2007 (Table 3) SBS now clearly dominates with 45.43% of its total content fitting into the EM category. The ABC EM levels are consistent at around the 18% mark. When we compare the commercial services more differences emerge between the metropolitan and regional centres. Shepparton's Seven service has 15.24% EM content and Townsville 12.12%, compared to Sydney 11.63% and Perth 9.02%. This would appear to suggest that more is happening than simply the same content being distributed around the network, and that some local effort is contributing to higher levels of EM content. In contrast Nine's levels are lower than Seven's in each market (Sydney 8.40%; Perth 9.69%; Shepparton 9.19%) and dip to 5.70% in Townsville, despite its local WIN news which appears to contribute little to levels of EM content.



**Table 3: EM content – 2005 and 2007**

Network	Percentage of Total Multicultural News Across All Services		Multicultural News as Percentage of Each Stations News	
	2005	2007	2005	2007
SBS	11.64%	26.69%	39.60%	45.43%
Sydney Ten	7.07%	7.07%	27.61%	16.04%
Sydney ABC	9.62%	6.70%	30.87%	18.09%
Perth ABC	7.22%	6.48%	25.60%	19.12%
Townsville ABC		6.34%		18.30%
Shepparton ABC	9.22%	6.29%	31.01%	18.92%
Townsville Seven		5.49%		12.12%
Townsville Ten		5.23%		12.45%
Shepparton Ten	9.34%	4.97%	24.17%	12.79%
Perth Ten	6.77%	4.48%	19.51%	11.75%
Shepparton Nine	8.21%	4.40%	18.81%	9.19%
Shepparton Seven	5.70%	3.78%	25.37%	15.24%
Sydney Seven	6.52%	2.91%	42.03%	11.63%
Townsville Nine		2.56%		5.70%
Perth Nine	5.81%	2.39%	24.72%	9.69%
Sydney Nine	7.50%	2.13%	41.38%	8.40%
Perth Seven	5.39%	2.10%	25.83%	9.02%

## Content Categories EM/Non-EM

The 2005 survey coincided with several momentous events such as the counter-terror raids in Sydney and Melbourne, the execution of Vietnamese-Australian Van Nguyen in Singapore, and, on the international front, the death of one of Indonesia's most wanted terrorist suspects, bombings in Jordan and Iraq, and riots on the streets of Paris by disaffected migrant youths. This showed up in the statistics for content categories where Crime and Courts and Justice topped the list of categories featuring EM stories (Table 4a) and these stories represented an overwhelming proportion of EM news (66.25%) compared to 22.27% non-multicultural news (Table 4b).

**Table 4a: 2005 Top 5 content categories for EM stories**

Category	Percentage of All News	Percentage of Multicultural News
Crime	11.33%	40.98%
Courts and Justice	6.99%	25.27%
Military and Diplomatic	2.40%	8.69%
Politics	2.08%	7.53%
Emergencies and Disasters	1.73%	6.24%

**Table 4b: 2005 Top 5 content categories for non-EM stores**

Category	Percentage of All News	Percentage of Non-Multicultural News
Courts and Justice	9.56%	13.22%
Politics	7.76%	10.73%
Sports News	6.75%	9.34%
Crime	6.54%	9.05%
Work and Industry	5.96%	8.24%

In 2007 the news focus was more on politicians rather than terrorists so the categories of Military and Diplomatic and Politics top the list, followed by Courts and Justice and Crime (Table 5a). However when compared to the figures for non-EM stories (Table 5b) it is still the case that about 50% more EM news is concerned with crime-related issues compared to non-EM stories (27.37% compared to 18.64%).

**Table 5a: 2007 Top 5 content categories for EM stories**

Category	Percentage of All News	Percentage of Multicultural News
Military and Diplomatic	3.93%	24.42%
Politics	3.06%	19.02%
Courts and Justice	2.73%	16.95%
Crime	1.68%	10.42%
Health and Medicine	0.67%	4.18%

**Table 5b : 2007 Top 5 content categories for non-EM stores**

Category	Percentage of All News	Percentage of Non-Multicultural News
Politics	17.13%	20.41%
Business and Finance	9.36%	11.16%
Courts and Justice	8.59%	10.24%
Crime	7.05%	8.40%
Health and Medicine	6.25%	7.45%

## Story topic, type and tone

As in the 2005 study, news content was analysed according to content and type – in other words the topic and the storytelling convention used – to compare treatment of EM and non-EM content. A total of 20 content categories were identified and these were aggregated into six broad story types that gave a better sense of the flavour of the news content. These were:

**Courts, Crime and Disasters:** Emergencies/Disasters, Courts & Justice and Crime.

**Clever Country:** Education & Schools and Technology & Science.

**Fun and Games:** Arts & Culture, Leisure & Tourism, Personalities & Entertainment and Sports News.

**Money and Work:** Business & Finance and Work & Industry

**Power and Policy:** Politics, Military & Diplomatic, Media & Communications and Transport Issues

**Social Matters:** Social Issues, Environment, Health & Medicine, Consumer Affairs and Religion & Faith.

In both 2005 and 2007 Courts, Crime and Disasters and Power and Policy are the top categories, though the more benign news agenda in the later survey reverses their positions on the league table. However the differences between EM and non-EM content noted in 2005 persist in 2007. Tables 6a and 6b show how the domestic panic caused by the anti-terror raids was reflected in high levels of EM news in the Courts, Crime and Disasters category as a percentage of all news (20.05% compared to 4.81% of non-multicultural news) and as a percentage of EM news (72.49% compared to 28.89% of non-multicultural news).

**Table 6a: 2005 EM stories by story type**

Story Type	Percentage of All News	Percentage of Multicultural News
Courts, Crime and Disasters	20.05%	72.49%
Power and Policy	4.49%	16.22%
Social Issues	1.73%	6.26%

Story Type	Percentage of All News	Percentage of Multicultural News
Fun and Games	1.16%	4.18%
Money and Work	0.24%	0.85%

**Table 6b: 2005 non- EM stories by story type**

Story Type	Percentage of All News	Percentage of Non-Multicultural News
Courts, Crime and Disasters	20.90%	28.89%
Power and Policy	14.87%	20.56%
Fun and Games	12.84%	17.75%
Money and Work	11.46%	15.84%
Social Issues	11.39%	15.75%
Clever Country	0.87%	1.21%

Tables 7a and 7b show that in 2007 there was much less coverage of EM news in both categories, but still a much higher proportion of EM news fitting into these categories than non-EM news (Power and Policy: 46.59% compared to 26.71%; Courts, Crime and disasters: 29.93% compared to 25.25%). Compared to non-EM news, the stories are more concentrated in the more serious categories compared to, for example, Fun and Games and Clever Country.

**Table 7a: 2007 EM stories by story type**

Story Type	Percentage of All News	Percentage of Multicultural News
Power and Policy	7.49%	46.59%
Courts, Crime and Disasters	4.81%	29.93%
Social Issues	1.99%	12.38%
Fun and Games	1.23%	7.64%
Money and Work	0.38%	2.37%
Clever Country	0.18%	1.10%

**Table 7b: 2007 non- EM stories by story type**

Story Type	Percentage of All News	Percentage of Non-Multicultural News
Power and Policy	22.42%	26.71%
Courts, Crime and Disasters	21.19%	25.25%
Social Issues	15.78%	18.81%
Fun and Games	11.24%	13.39%
Money and Work	11.01%	13.12%
Clever Country	2.28%	2.72%

## Tone

The assessment of the stories against the nine-point tone scale revealed that, whereas in 2005 70.74% of the EM stories were in the Extremely Negative to Somewhat Negative range (Table 8a), in 2007 this had reduced somewhat to 53.03 (Table 8b).

**Table 8a: 2005 EM stories by tone**

Tone	Percentage of All News	Percentage of Multicultural News
9 Highly Positive	0.06%	0.23%
8 Very Positive	0.32%	1.17%
7 Positive	1.59%	5.86%
6 Balanced to Positive	3.18%	11.69%
5 Neutral	2.88%	10.61%
4 Somewhat Negative	5.02%	18.48%
3 Negative	7.22%	26.54%
2 Very Negative	5.52%	20.31%
1 Extremely Negative	1.39%	5.12%

**Table 8b: 2007 EM stories by tone**

Tone	Percentage of All News	Percentage of Multicultural News
9 Highly Positive	0.04%	0.25%
8 Very Positive	0.90%	5.60%
7 Positive	0.90%	5.60%
6 Balanced to Positive	2.38%	14.82%
5 Neutral	3.33%	20.70%
4 Somewhat Negative	4.85%	30.14%
3 Negative	3.10%	19.30%
2 Very Negative	0.50%	3.08%
1 Extremely Negative	0.08%	0.51%

In 2007, non-EM content was also assessed for Tone for a comparison to be made and as Table 8c shows, the proportion of negative content is much lower: 29.05% with the bulk of news content falling into the Neutral category.

**Table 8c: 2007 Non-EM stories by tone**

Tone	Percentage of All News	Percentage of Non-Multicultural News
10 Extremely Positive	0.32%	0.38%
9 Highly Positive	1.22%	1.45%
8 Very Positive	4.23%	5.04%
7 Positive	11.24%	13.40%
6 Balanced to Positive	14.29%	17.03%
5 Neutral	28.23%	33.63%
4 Somewhat Negative	15.14%	18.04%
3 Negative	7.14%	8.50%
2 Very Negative	1.51%	1.80%
1 Extremely Negative	0.51%	0.61%
0 Destructive	0.09%	0.10%

When the content was compared across stations some interesting differences emerged. In 2005, despite the negative skew imposed by the terror-dominated news agenda, the SBS and Sydney ABC presented a majority of balanced coverage (Table 9a). Perth Nine and Seven and Shepparton Seven had the largest amount of negative coverage. In contrast Shepparton Nine had the largest amount of positive coverage of all stations thanks to its

regional news which more than anyone else focused on local stories that presented an image of community harmony.

**Table 9a: 2005 EM Grouped Tone- station comparison**

Network	Positive	Balanced	Negative
SBS	6.06%	49.80%	44.13%
Perth ABC		46.44%	53.56%
Perth Nine	1.28%	32.58%	66.14%
Perth Seven		33.17%	66.83%
Perth Ten	3.98%	44.64%	51.38%
Shepparton ABC	13.44%	33.72%	52.83%
Shepparton Nine	20.39%	27.86%	51.75%
Shepparton Seven	4.61%	20.03%	75.36%
Shepparton Ten	7.78%	36.35%	55.87%
Sydney ABC	2.74%	56.31%	40.95%
Sydney Nine	17.55%	51.84%	30.62%
Sydney Seven	11.94%	31.65%	56.42%
Sydney Ten		50.55%	49.45%

This continues in 2007 where both Shepparton and Townsville, with their WIN local news, provide the largest proportion of positive stories (Table 9b). In the absence of the terror scare the other services are skewed more towards balanced coverage than in 2005, though when compared with non-EM stories (Table 9c) it is still the case that stories with EM content are more negative than stories with non-EM content.

**Table 9b: 2007 EM Grouped Tone- station comparison**

Network	Positive	Balanced	Negative
Perth ABC	9.55%	70.84%	19.61%
Perth Nine		84.57%	15.43%
Perth Seven	9.93%	62.78%	27.30%
Perth Ten	7.37%	66.13%	26.51%
SBS	15.64%	63.75%	20.61%
Shepparton ABC	6.45%	72.93%	20.62%
Shepparton Nine	20.19%	60.33%	19.48%
Shepparton Seven	13.49%	49.14%	37.37%
Shepparton Ten	6.27%	70.52%	23.21%
Sydney ABC	10.68%	75.54%	13.78%
Sydney Nine		63.34%	36.66%
Sydney Seven	16.61%	32.23%	51.16%
Sydney Ten	12.50%	58.04%	29.46%
Townsville ABC	4.84%	81.12%	14.03%
Townsville Nine	25.64%	55.54%	18.82%
Townsville Seven	16.75%	69.43%	13.82%
Townsville Ten	0.90%	63.43%	35.67%

**Table 9c: 2007 Non-EM Grouped Tone- station comparison**

Network	Positive	Balanced	Negative
Perth ABC	7.77%	86.96%	5.27%
Perth Nine	18.54%	70.06%	11.40%
Perth Seven	14.89%	65.19%	19.92%
Perth Ten	21.77%	71.67%	6.56%
SBS	15.22%	78.67%	6.11%
Shepparton ABC	28.90%	61.75%	9.35%
Shepparton Nine	32.24%	52.00%	15.76%
Shepparton Seven	26.56%	56.48%	16.96%
Shepparton Ten	34.08%	55.03%	10.89%
Sydney ABC	17.92%	77.84%	4.24%
Sydney Nine	14.98%	62.78%	22.23%
Sydney Seven	20.67%	62.66%	16.67%
Sydney Ten	20.12%	67.57%	12.31%
Townsville ABC	13.46%	82.79%	3.75%
Townsville Nine	14.93%	77.55%	7.52%
Townsville Seven	20.51%	66.06%	13.44%
Townsville Ten	16.35%	72.22%	11.43%



Tables 10a and 10b disaggregate international and domestic content for 2005 and 2007 respectively. Once again with less of a local focus on terror in the later survey the coverage of domestic EM news is less negative than the international coverage. Whereas in 2005, 40.40% of domestic EM news was negative compared to 30.05% of international, in 2007 the figures are 24.55 (domestic) and 28.40 (international).

**Table 10a: 2005 – Percentage of All EM Stories**

Tone	International	Domestic
9 Highly Positive		0.23%
8 Very Positive	0.42%	0.75%
7 Positive	0.50%	5.36%
6 Balanced to Positive	4.12%	7.56%
5 Neutral	2.62%	7.99%
4 Somewhat Negative	8.13%	10.35%
3 Negative	14.47%	12.07%
2 Very Negative	6.14%	14.17%
1 Extremely Negative	1.31%	3.81%

**Table 10b: 2007 – Percentage of All EM Stories**

Tone	International	Domestic
9 Highly Positive		0.25%
8 Very Positive	2.58%	3.02%
7 Positive	2.59%	3.02%
6 Balanced to Positive	6.94%	7.87%
5 Neutral	11.80%	8.90%
4 Somewhat Negative	15.34%	14.80%
3 Negative	11.03%	8.27%
2 Very Negative	1.60%	1.48%
1 Extremely Negative	0.51%	

The next analysis concerns the amount of coverage of individual ethnic communities. The 2005 survey covered 13 stations in three markets, whereas in 2007 the survey covered 17 stations in four markets. In order to make a valid comparison the coverage of the different ethnic communities represented in both international and domestic stories was compared across the three-city cohort of Perth, Sydney and Shepparton for both 2005

and 2007. Data for Townsville 2007 is listed in a separate table. The international stories (Tables 11a,11b,11c) continue to show the global focus on the ‘War on Terror’ hotspots. While Muslim issues still head the list, the number of Muslim-related stories has reduced in the later survey, though the focus on Islam underpins the ongoing battles in the Middle East and Afghanistan. The stories from Turkey also relate to religion, dealing with local protests over the Turkish government’s intention to mandate the wearing of the veil for women. The East Timorese elections bring that country into greater prominence in the second survey.

**Table 11a: 2005 International Top 5 by Community (3-City)**

Community	Stories
Muslim	107
Singaporean	11
African	8
Vietnamese	5
Arab/Iraqi	4

**Table 11b: 2007 International Top 5 by Community (3-City)**

Community	Stories
Iraqi	36
Muslim	36
East Timorese	22
Afghani	17
Turkish	15

**Table 11c: 2007 Townsville: International Top 5 by Community**

Community	Stories
Iraqi/Muslim	14
Afghani/East Timorese	6
Turkish	5
Palestinian	4
Syrian	3

As for domestic news (Tables 12a, 12b, 12c) the focus on Islam promoted by the 2005 anti-terror raids has been replaced in 2007 by the focus on Sri Lanka with the arrest of two Australian-Sri Lankan men alleged to have been collecting money in Australia to support the rebel Tamil Tiger movement. The Zimbabwean stories related to controversy over whether the Australian cricket tour should be suspended in protest at the regime of President Robert Mugabe. The African stories related to a yacht which capsized off the

South African coast causing the death of an Australian sailor. The Indonesian stories related to the ongoing appeal hearings for the Bali Nine drug smugglers. The Asian and Indian stories in Townsville related mostly to the local scandal of the employment of under-qualified foreign interns in regional Queensland hospitals.

**Table 12a: 2005 Domestic Top 5 by Community (3-City)**

Community	Stories
Muslim	200
Lebanese	13
Singaporean	8
Philippine	8
Uruguayan	5

**Table 12b: 2007 Domestic Top 5 by Community (3-City)**

Community	Stories
Zimbabwean	22
Asian	19
Sri Lankan	18
Indonesian	8
African	8
Muslim	7

**Table 12c: 2007 Townsville: Domestic Top 5 by Community**

Community	Stories
Asian	7
Indian	7
Zimbabwean	4
Indonesian	4
Sri Lankan	3

The lowering of international and domestic tensions is reflected in the way stories are reported. In 2005 most EM news was negative in tone, and only small amounts were positive (Table 13a).

**Table 13a: 2005 Percentage of EM stories by tone Three Cities**

Tone	All EM News	Domestic EM News	International EM News
Positive	7.25%	10.17%	2.43%
Balanced	40.77%	41.58%	39.44%
Negative	51.97%	48.25%	58.13%

In 2007, around 65% of EM news fits into the ‘balanced’ category, and while around 24% of EM news is negative, a higher proportion (around 12%) can be described as ‘positive’ in tone (Table 13b, 13c).

**Table 13b: 2007 Percentage of EM stories by tone Three Cities**

Tone	All EM News	Domestic EM News	International EM News
Positive	11.85%	12.35%	11.45%
Balanced	64.64%	65.14%	64.24%
Negative	23.51%	22.51%	24.31%

**Table 13c: 2007 Percentage of EM stories by tone Townsville**

Tone	All EM News	Domestic EM News	International EM News
Positive	9.84%	15.81%	0.61%
Balanced	69.80%	69.79%	69.81%
Negative	20.36%	14.39%	29.58%

Tables 14a and 14b allow us to see how the stations compare in the tone of their coverage for 2005 and 2007.

**Table 14a: 2005 Tone Group – Percentage of Networks International and Domestic EM News**

Network	International			Domestic		
	Balanced	Negative	Positive	Balanced	Negative	Positive
Perth ABC	39.87%	60.13%	0.00%	51.02%	48.98%	0.00%
Perth Nine	41.58%	58.42%	0.00%	28.69%	69.48%	1.83%
Perth Seven	34.87%	65.13%	0.00%	32.59%	67.41%	0.00%
Perth Ten	48.63%	51.37%	0.00%	42.80%	51.39%	5.81%
SBS	49.24%	45.20%	5.56%	50.87%	42.11%	7.02%
Shepparton ABC	24.96%	68.51%	6.53%	41.29%	39.30%	19.41%
Shepparton Nine	26.67%	73.33%	0.00%	28.31%	43.62%	28.07%
Shepparton Seven	30.30%	69.70%	0.00%	16.46%	77.33%	6.21%
Shepparton Ten	31.51%	61.74%	6.75%	38.79%	52.92%	8.29%
Sydney ABC	47.85%	52.15%	0.00%	61.78%	33.70%	4.52%
Sydney Nine	52.80%	47.20%	0.00%	51.29%	21.17%	27.54%
Sydney Seven	20.92%	79.08%	0.00%	35.65%	47.95%	16.40%
Sydney Ten	39.48%	60.52%	0.00%	56.42%	43.58%	0.00%

**Table 14b: 2007 Tone Group – Percentage of Networks International and Domestic EM News**

Network	International			Domestic		
	Balanced	Negative	Positive	Balanced	Negative	Positive
Perth ABC	72.38%	18.80%	8.82%	68.96%	20.61%	10.44%
Perth Nine	64.20%	35.80%	0.00%	88.92%	11.08%	0.00%
Perth Seven	9.47%	90.53%	0.00%	85.79%	0.00%	14.21%
Perth Ten	61.19%	26.01%	12.80%	72.81%	27.19%	0.00%
SBS	63.34%	23.04%	13.62%	65.24%	11.72%	23.03%
Shepparton ABC	73.13%	18.08%	8.78%	72.68%	23.91%	3.42%
Shepparton Nine	77.66%	22.34%	0.00%	59.31%	19.31%	21.38%
Shepparton Seven	65.73%	0.00%	34.27%	38.37%	61.63%	0.00%
Shepparton Ten	55.85%	41.53%	2.62%	89.10%	0.00%	10.90%
Sydney ABC	91.39%	8.61%	0.00%	54.31%	20.71%	24.98%
Sydney Nine	57.76%	42.24%	0.00%	64.26%	35.74%	0.00%
Sydney Seven	28.41%	46.31%	25.29%	36.79%	56.95%	6.26%
Sydney Ten	54.34%	33.84%	11.82%	60.36%	26.71%	12.93%
Townsville ABC	76.94%	23.06%	0.00%	87.63%	0.00%	12.37%
Townsville Nine	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	56.34%	14.32%	29.34%
Townsville Seven	64.84%	35.16%	0.00%	70.76%	7.63%	21.61%
Townsville Ten	63.31%	34.65%	2.04%	63.53%	36.47%	0.00%

For international news, compared to 2005 the tone in 2007 is much less negative overall with most stories now falling into the balanced category and much more positive reporting. Sydney ABC has the most balanced stories (91.39%) with the other ABC services also strong performers. The strongest commercial station is Shepparton Seven with 65.73% balanced stories. Perth Seven leads in negative coverage (90.53%) followed by Townsville Nine (50%) and Sydney Seven (46.31%). Shepparton Seven has the highest concentration of positive stories (34.27%).

While international news can sometimes add reinforcement to domestic stories (Poole 2002: 258; Akbarzadeh and Smith 2005) it is domestic news which is of most interest in this study as it shows how Australian journalists report to the Australian public about Australian issues. In the absence of terror panics, the 2007 data shows reportage to be overwhelmingly balanced, though negative reporting still far outweighs positive reporting in relation to EM content. Domestic news affords more opportunities than international news for variation across the country as each station responds to the daily events in its

own market. Yet it is hard to explain how for example Sydney ABC could jump from 4.52% positive news in 2005 to 24.98% positive news in 2007 while Sydney Nine, in the same market and responding to a similar news agenda, could drop from 27.54% to 0.00% in the same period. The data can simply tell us what was on our screens – it invites no judgement as to the relative performance of the different services. Having said that the following observations can be made about 2007:

- Shepparton Ten has the highest proportion of balanced content in domestic EM news (89.10%), much higher than Ten records for the other centres. Perth stations Nine (88.92%) and Seven (85.79%) perform strongly as does Townsville ABC (87.63%).
- Seven is the service with the highest negative content with Shepparton Seven in the lead with 61.63% followed by Sydney Seven with 56.95%. Perth stations Nine and Ten and Sydney Nine had no positive EM content at all in the 2007 survey.
- The highest positive content levels were recorded for Townsville Nine (29.34%), Sydney ABC (24.98%), SBS (23.03), Townsville Seven (21.61%) and Shepparton Nine (21.38%). Note that Shepparton Nine was also a strong performer in the previous survey with 28.07% positive content. This reflects the contribution of the regional WIN news services which comprise the first half hour in both these centres and make a point of focusing on local community events.

## Community harmony

Stories were assessed where possible according to any perceived impact they might have on community harmony (negative, neutral, positive or reinforces stereotype). This rating was more subjective than any other and the most difficult to assess and in the end not all stories could be categorised in this way. The tables below (15a-f) include only the stories out of the total which could be categorised. Once again the 2007 Townsville data is shown separately from the 2005/2007 3-city comparison.

The 2005 data (Table 15a) shows the level of Muslim-inspired panic that gripped not just Australia but the world at that time. The Muslim community attracts by far the most coverage, and the most negative coverage, much of which reinforces the stereotype of a community which is alien, threatening, and ‘not like us’.

**Table 15a: 2005 Domestic Community Harmony**

Community	Domestic				Total
	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Reinforces Stereotype	
Muslim/Islamic	119	26	15	36	196
Lebanese	7			6	13
Filipino	1	2	4	1	8
Singaporean	3		3		6
Uruguayan		2	1		3

In 2007 (Table 15b) the community profile is much more diverse, with many more communities featuring, but with mostly a scattering of stories pertaining to each. The Zimbabwean stories relate to the threatened Australian cricket tour to that country and the Sri Lankan stories relate to the allegations of Tamil Tiger fundraising in Australia. The Indonesian stories relate to the appeal hearings of the Bali Nine. The Muslim community is not in the Top 5 at all, but in 6<sup>th</sup> place and is included in order to compare with the 2005 figures.

**Table 15b: 2007 Domestic Community Harmony - 3 City**

Community	Domestic				Total
	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Reinforces Stereotype	
Zimbabwean	19	1	1	1	22
Sri Lankan	16	1		1	18
Asian	3	6	4	3	16
African	3	2	2	1	8
Indonesian	8				8
Muslim/Islamic	2	3	1	1	7

In Townsville (Table 15c) the negative domestic stories about the Indian and Asian communities relate to the ongoing investigation into unqualified staff from India and

other Asian countries working in the Queensland hospital system. It is interesting to note how, despite the relative paucity of stories relating to non-Anglo communities, most of the reportage was deemed to be negative in terms of community harmony impact.

**Table 15c: 2007 Domestic Community Harmony - Townsville**

Community	Domestic				Total
	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Reinforces Stereotype	
Indian	7				7
Asian	3	2			5
Muslim/Islamic	2		2		4
Indonesian	4				4
Zimbabwean	4				4

In the previous survey the WIN regional news service in Shepparton (broadcast as the first half of Nine's bulletin) was singled out as having the greatest number of positive local stories featuring people from non-Anglo backgrounds. This is reflected in Table 16a.

**Table 16a 2005 Shepparton Community Harmony Impact**

Community	Domestic				Total
	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Reinforces Stereotype	
Muslim/Islamic	41	9	11	19	80
Lebanese	4			2	6
African			2		2
Singaporean	2				2
Ethiopian			1		1
Iraq			1		1
Italian			1		1
Vietnamese			1		1

Table 16b shows the data for 2007. As with the other services, there is less of a focus on the Muslim community and much more of a diverse mix. However most of the stories fall into the Negative category this time – in fact given how few stories there are on this regional service the data underscores the fact that where non-Anglo communities are mentioned at all, it is likely to be in negative rather than positive contexts.



**Table 16B 2007 Shepparton Community Harmony Impact**

Community	Domestic				Total
	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Reinforces Stereotype	
Sri Lankan	8	1			9
Zimbabwean	6				6
Asian	1	2	2		5
Arab	2		1		3
African			2		2
Indonesian	2				2
Indian		1			1
Italian			1		1
Japanese	1				1
Muslim	1				1
Tamil	1				1
Vietnamese	1				1

## Quantitative Data Summary

To sum up, the 2007 survey appears to revert to a more ‘normal’ television news mix without the distorting effects of the 2005 domestic terror scare. What we see on our screens is a broader range of ethnic communities, but far fewer stories. The coverage is more balanced than in 2005, but there are still many more negative than positive stories in the EM group, and a higher proportion of EM news is negative (53%) compared to non-EM news (29%). It continues to be the case that a greater proportion of EM news is concerned with crime-related issues compared to non-EM stories. The community harmony ratings bring out even more starkly the extent to which those relatively few stories featuring non-Anglo communities are more likely to leave a negative rather than a positive impression. The WIN regional news services going out on the Nine network in Townsville and Shepparton, with their focus on local community events, are noteworthy for their higher concentration of positive EM news, compared to the metropolitan services.

## **Qualitative Analysis: Story treatment**

In previous papers relating to the 2001 and 2005 surveys, which form part of this longitudinal content analysis of Australia's television news services, it has already been noted that television news is a product of its business model, formats and conventions (Phillips and Tapsall 2007a, 2007b). The need to attract audiences through attention-grabbing storytelling, the time pressures of newsgathering and constraints of the bulletin format have resulted in services which favour easy-to-gather news focussing on action rather than analysis, on the black-and-white as opposed to the shades of grey. The purpose of this long-range study has been to show what is on our screens every night, and to see whether and how it is changing over the years. Studies of television news in other countries have shown how quality has been declining in terms of diversity of stories, diversity of sources, and quality of the storytelling – with critics decrying the move towards superficial and sensationalist reporting( eg. Altheide 1997, Johnson-Cartee 2005, Patterson 2000, Rosentiel et al 2007). Similar trends have been observed in Australia (Phillips and Tapsall 2007a). However when it comes to the representation of the diverse groups that make up Australian society these trends could have more serious implications for community harmony. In this part of the paper we take a closer look at how television news stories are being told and in this process reveal the unintentional assumptions embedded within them.

In the 2005 study of Australia's television news, the representation of non-Anglo communities was inflated by the focus on domestic terrorism. This provided the opportunity to show how the characteristics of television news storytelling contributed to the sense of moral panic, at that time attached to the Muslim community in particular. The overall conclusion was that the dominant representation of non-Anglo communities was as 'bad, sad mad or "other"' (Phillips and Tapsall 2007b). Minority groups of all kinds feature far less in the 2007 survey. However this serves to highlight even more some starkly significant differences in treatment in the stories in which they do feature that repeatedly underscore the distinction between 'us' and 'the other'.

## What stories feature Ethnic Minority (EM) talent?

As in the 2005 survey, most of the stories featuring EM talent present them as either deviants or victims. The deviants include:

- The ‘Australian citizens of Sri Lankan descent’ in the most terror-linked of the domestic stories, following allegations that two Melbourne men were fundraising for the Tamil Tigers. The men had been collecting money for tsunami relief and were accused of funneling this money to the rebel Tamil Tiger movement. (1 May, all services).
- The Chinese intern who was the focus of local media attention in Queensland over the issue of unqualified foreign-trained doctors in a Cairns hospital. (Townsville Seven, Nine, Ten, ABC, 2 and 3 May). These stories were linked both implicitly and explicitly to the long-running scandal of the Indian surgeon Jayant Patel nicknamed ‘Dr Death’ who had practiced in a Queensland hospital with no checks being done into what was a notorious medical record of malpractice leading to the deaths of many patients.
- The ‘two Chinese nationals’ arrested following discovery of drug lab in south Sydney (Sydney Nine, Shepparton Nine, 11 May). The ethnicity of the criminals is referred to only in the newsreader introduction. The report itself makes reference only to ‘outlaw motorcycle gangs’. (Note the newsreader introduction to the same story in Nine’s Shepparton bulletin makes no reference to the Chinese nationals, but instead links the story to ‘police fears a potent new form of cannabis developed by Vietnamese drug gangs in Canada could soon hit our shores’).
- The Indian-Australian woman on trial for defrauding an old man by illegally accessing his savings (Townsville ABC, Nine, Seven Ten, 2 May). She is named and pictured walking behind the fence of the court compound.
- The unnamed and unpictured Pakistani taxi driver identified as a rape suspect in Perth. (Perth ABC, Nine, 11 May)

- The bearded turbaned man (unnamed but an identikit picture) police were seeking for questioning over an attempted child abduction (Perth Seven, Nine, 11 May)
- The Imam sacked from a Canberra mosque on grounds of inciting violence (SBS 11 May). The Imam refused to be interviewed and while a group photo supposedly including the imam was used he was not identified in that shot.
- The man of Arabic background accused of predatory behaviour after groping a breastfeeding woman in a shopping centre in Melbourne (3 and 4 May, commercial services only). Only CCTV images are included in the first story, though his name which identifies his ethnicity is used the next day. Nine's newsreader introduction includes its own gloss on the story by describing the predator as a 'pervert'.
- The "men of middle-Eastern appearance" who robbed an Indian-Australian shopkeeper (Sydney Ten, 8 May).

The victims include:

- a Japanese exchange student allegedly threatened by a knife-wielding attacker (Townsville Nine, Ten, 1 May ). We see vision of her on Nine, but not on Ten. She is not interviewed on either service.
- A Muslim murder victim, Kevin Palmer (Townsville Seven, Nine, Ten, 11 May). His religious background is revealed by a reference to his friend and 'fellow Muslim' Anthony Mundine on Seven, and by references to services in both a church and a mosque on Ten. Nine makes no mention of Muslim connections.
- The African refugee children from traumatized backgrounds who are the subject of a special school program in Shepparton (Shepparton Nine, 3 May)
- A Chilean migrant family attacked in their home by a gang of thugs (Sydney Seven, 9 May).
- An Asian man punched and killed while standing in a taxi queue (Townsville ABC, Seven, Ten, 30 April)
- An Asian disabled woman whose modified car was stolen and crashed in Perth (Perth, all services except SBS, 4 May). All versions of the story include an interview with the woman.

- A missing boy ‘of black African appearance’, the subject of a Sydney police alert on 4 May (Sydney Nine, Ten).
- A Middle Eastern taxi driver murdered in a violent attack in Sydney, on the occasion of the sentencing of the teenage perpetrators. (Sydney, all stations except SBS, 4 May)
- A Vietnamese woman subjected to a vicious hammer attack in her home (Sydney Ten, 7 May), interviewed with subtitles.
- An Indian-Australian shop-owner, victim of the robbery by the ‘men of middle eastern appearance’ noted above in the Deviants list (Sydney Ten, 8 May).

There are positive stories, which show EM talent as proactive agents in charge of their own destinies and with their own voice. These include:

- Two recipients of bravery awards in Sydney (ethnic backgrounds not specified). Both were victims of crime and received the awards, one posthumously, for their bravery when under attack. The wife of the man who lost his life is interviewed, as is the other award recipient. (Sydney Ten, 9 May)
- A group of Pacific Islanders who are prosecuting a pub owner for discriminating against them by banning them from his premises. They are not pictured or interviewed, though the head of the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board justifies their action. (Sydney Ten, 3 May).
- Zimbabwean political activist Sekai Holland, married to an Australian, returning to Australia in a wheelchair after being the victim of a violent attack by Mugabe supporters in Zimbabwe (SBS, Sydney Ten, 4 May). This is linked to the ongoing story about a possible cricket boycott of a proposed tour of Zimbabwe. While the sports-related story is carried on all services, only Sydney Ten and SBS cover Holland’s return and carry interviews with her where she strongly condemns the violence of the Mugabe regime.

We occasionally see EM talent as ‘experts’:

- The Indian senior specialist who comments on the scandal surrounding the employment of unqualified foreign interns in Queensland hospitals (Townsville Ten, 3 May)
- The Asian-Australian spokesperson for Right to Life Association in a story on manufacture of euthenasing drug Nembutal (ABC, 7 May)
- The Arab-Australian spokesperson for People Helping People in a WIN (Nine) story on a local Rain Festival (Shepparton Nine 7 May)
- Two EM experts commenting on food allergies (Townsville Seven, 8 May)
- The Asian-Australian spokesperson for the National Union of Students in a story on funding of universities (ABC, SBS 9 May)
- The Asian-Australian medical expert interviewed for story on sleep problems of children with ADHD (Shepparton Nine, 9 May)

We see EM faces in schools (eg classroom shots illustrating story on literacy testing, Sydney Seven and Ten, 7 May; students at a technical school during a visit by then Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd, Sydney Ten, 11 May); universities (eg. international students featuring in story on Business Export Awards in Townsville, Nine, 11 May); and hospitals (eg. EM staff assisting in a ‘cross country mercy dash’ to convey organs for transplant to a Sydney hospital, Sydney Seven, 8 May). However there is an interesting inconsistency in relation to the faces we tend to see in the crowds, the generic representations of the ‘Australian public’. We see EM faces where we would expect to see them (eg Townsville’s Greek festival, Seven and Nine 1 May; Townsville’s Italian festival, Seven, Nine, 2 May; the launch of police Multicultural Policy Statement in Victoria, Shepparton ABC 30 April). But mostly the faces in the crowds are Anglo – the cameras focus on faces that represent the stereotypical white Australian (eg. the crowds at the Royal Show, Perth Nine, 30 April; the entirely Anglo talent in a story on the manners of young people, Perth and Townsville Ten, 30 April; the Anglo students in the MS Readathon, Townsville Nine 2 May; the all-Anglo talent and faces at the Labour Day Rally, Townsville ABC, 7 May).

The segregation of EM talent into EM stories is illustrated by the way in which EM talent is on display in the story about Townsville's local cultural festival (Seven, 8 May), but absent from the coverage the previous day when Townsville covers the local Labour Day Rally (Townsville Seven, 7 May).

While there are a few instances where EM talent features in a vox pop (a woman in headscarf interviewed as the victim of a petrol fuel scam, Sydney Nine, Ten, 9 May; consumers in telemarketing story, Perth Ten, 3 May; a commuter commenting on traffic chaos on Sydney's Spit Bridge, Sydney ABC, 2 May), the majority of vox pops tend to feature exclusively Anglo talent (eg. reaction to the State budget, Perth ABC, 9 May; community reaction to Federal budget, Townsville Seven, 9 May; crowd reactions at local concert, Townsville Nine, 11 May). On one occasion the omission seems almost willful: Sydney Ten on 11 May has good news story about the graduating class of new police recruits. While the story focuses on three recruits including an Asian-Australian man, only the Anglo talents are interviewed.

In summary we see that

- EM talent features only rarely compared to Anglo talent in television news stories,
- the stories where they do feature place them in roles of deviant or victim rather than as ordinary members of our community,
- where they do feature they are less likely to have a speaking role, and
- where they have a speaking role subtitles may underscore the sense of 'difference' between them and the perceived mainstream.

## Discussion

### How stories are told

In 2007, as in 2005, the storytelling conventions of television news often exacerbate the negative impressions we gain of the EM talent who feature in the stories. While there are often legal reasons that people wanted for criminal activities may not be pictured, or may not give interviews, the effect of the repeated portrayal of non-Anglo talent as voiceless and even faceless underscores a sense of depersonalised menace. This is often compounded by other aspects of the story. This can be illustrated by a more detailed analysis of three stories from this period.

#### The Tamil Tiger Fundraising Story, 1 May

On Nine, the story is covered most fully in Melbourne where the action has taken place, leading the bulletin. The story entitled ‘Terror scam’ shows pictures of the two alleged fundraisers being taken away in a car. We also see pictures of their families and supporters outside the court, who answer ‘no comment’ when asked to speak to the reporters. The reporter refers to the men having taken money from ‘charitable Australians’, and in a grab from a police news conference the Victorian Deputy Police Commissioner says ‘Australian citizens have been duped’. A Federal Police spokesperson in the same conference states that there is ‘no evidence these men were engaged in any activity which would have led to an attack on Australian soil’. While the other Nine services feature abbreviated versions of the story, all retain the quote from the Deputy Police Commissioner. The ‘dogwhistle’ power of the term ‘Australian’ as a signifier for ‘us’ as against ‘them’ was noted in the previous survey (Phillips and Tapsall 2007b:27-28). The coded implication is that the ‘Australian citizens of Sri Lankan descent’ are not real Australians like the rest of us.

The ABC puts first the Federal Police comments that there was no evidence of any domestic threat, while still carrying the grab from the Victorian Deputy Police



Commissioner about Australians being duped. The story also refers to the complaint by the men's lawyer that the police held their press conference before one of the men had even been charged. While the ABC appears to present a more toned down version of the story, it is bracketed with two other terror-related stories, one concerning the setting of a trial date for the suspects from 2005 Sydney counter terror raids and the other from the UK concerning new information relating to the 2004 foiled terror attack there. As was noted in the 2005 study, the way stories are bracketed together can lead to a bleeding of associations from one story to another (Phillips and Tapsall 2007b:31).

Ten's version of the story features an interview with the uncle of one of the men, who is stunned by the events and says he had no knowledge of any links with the organization. The story also refers to a previous raid on one of the houses in November 2005 with file footage of a book seized at that time with a large artillery gun on the cover and 'what appears to be Tamil writing'. While the association with the November 2005 counter-terror raids is implicit here, it is made explicit in Seven's coverage where it is noted that the men have the same lawyers as the November 2005 counter-terror suspects.

SBS's coverage is the briefest of all, restricted to a newsreader voiceover over pictures of the men in cars, though it is also part of a bracket including international terror stories.

We see here how the bare facts of the story are coloured by implied or explicit connections with other local or global terrorism threats, and by language which sets the two accused men apart from 'genuine' Australians.

The 'Do Not Call' Register Story, 3 May

In this story concerning the introduction of a 'do not call' register to reduce the incidence of nuisance telemarketing calls, channels Seven and Nine go to Anglo members of the public to articulate the intrusiveness of telemarketers, and illustrate the telemarketers themselves with file vision of employees at an Indian call centre. Thus 'we' are pitted against a dark-skinned alien 'them' who threaten our very domestic space. However

interesting differences in treatment emerge on the ABC and SBS which feature Anglo telemarketers from an apparently Australian operation. Ten features Anglo and non-Anglo talent in its vox pops as well as a local telemarketing operation, though the camera homes in on the single Asian employee amongst all the other Anglo staff as the reporter refers to the ‘annoying telemarketers’. The WIN news services in both Townsville and Shepparton do their own versions of this story which contain no foreign telemarketers and which are more neutral in tone. This shows the extent to which the selection of images and talent is a potent tool for conveying different subtextual messages to the audience. It was deliberate editorial decision-making which selected the Indian images for the Seven and Nine stories, and which excluded them and the associated racial undercurrents from the ABC and SBS versions. Meanwhile Ten’s inclusion of an EM vox pop broadened the definition of who was ‘us’ in the community.

The Queensland Untrained Interns Story, Townsville, 3 May

This story, relating to ongoing problems of under-qualified overseas-trained medical professionals in Queensland hospitals, was carried only in the Townsville/Brisbane market. The discovery of an under-qualified intern who had been employed at a succession of local hospitals was covered by all stations except SBS. Of interest here are the different ways the news services deal with the intern’s nationality. Seven’s story refers only to an ‘unqualified foreign-trained doctor’. Ten features a picture of the unnamed intern from which we easily deduce her ethnicity. Unusually the story features an Indian senior specialist at the hospital who deplores the current situation where ‘the system is rife with unregistered unqualified medical staff’. The reporter raises the spectre of Jayant Patel by adding that the specialist is concerned that ‘post Patel nothing’s changed’. The ABC restricts itself to a more formal reference to ‘a Chinese woman referred to as person 2’ along with lengthy quotes from a hospital report justifying her sacking from a similar position at another hospital. Nine features a picture of the intern in the opening graphic and not only names her, but alone of all the services carries an interview with her in which she defends the quality of her Shanghai medical degree and declares her intention of mounting a legal appeal.

Whether the link is explicit or not the Jayant Patel scandal provides the context for this story which presents ‘foreign’ doctors as a threat to ‘us’. There is a certain coyness about the way the issue of racial background is alluded to, but on all stations except Seven the identification is made nevertheless, either through words or pictures. Only Nine is totally upfront and allows us to see and hear the person herself, rendered more human and less of a demon by being able to give her side of the story.

## **Recommendations**

This analysis shows that the peculiarities of the television news genre often do no favours to people from non-Anglo backgrounds, and indeed, whether deliberately or otherwise, may encourage us at worst to fear them, or at best to assume they are not there at all. This matters because of the very power television news has, and retains, to provide a representation of our nation as an ‘imagined community’ (Schudson 1995:171). In the medium which remains the main source of news and current affairs for the Australian population (Roy Morgan 2007) who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’ is of crucial importance in terms of how we see ourselves. Even more dangerously, what we don’t know, we tend to fear.

There have been many studies, especially in the panicky post-9/11 climate, which have highlighted problems with reporting practices that have exacerbated community tensions (eg Akbarzadeh and Smith, 2005, Greater London Authority 2007, Anti-Discrimination Board of New South Wales 2003, Manning, Peter, 2004, Noakes and Wilkins 2002, Norris et al 2003, Poole and Richardson 2006). All have advocated changes to journalism practice to ensure less inflammatory, more fair and balanced reportage, especially relating to the Muslim community. The current study shows that Australian television news is no less susceptible to storytelling techniques which stereotype and isolate certain sectors of the community presenting them as different from and even threatening to an implied ‘mainstream’ Australia. While acknowledging that drama and

sensationalism are the very stuff of modern television news as it tries ever more frantically to counteract the dwindling of its audiences (Patterson 2000, Project for Excellence in Journalism 2008, Rosentiel et al 2007) it can be argued that what we see on our screens is increasingly divergent from what we witness in our daily lives. In their 2001 survey of racism in Australia Dunn et al described how 'old racism' based on racial differences was being supplanted by 'new racisms of cultural intolerance, denial of Anglo-privilege and narrow constructions of nation' (409) with the main focus of negative attitudes shifting from Asian and Jewish communities to Muslim groups. While the younger generation appeared to be more tolerant than their parents, the researchers nevertheless concluded that 'the Australian national imaginary still remains very Anglo-Celtic.'(427). A 2002 study of Australians' appreciation of cultural diversity within their society showed that while 'Cultural mixing and matching is almost universal'(Ang et al 2002:6) the perception of Australia's national identity lags behind, with 'Australianness"...still not generally perceived in a manner than recognises and is fully inclusive of the cultural diversity of the Australian people.'(ibid:7). Most pertinently the overwhelming view of the people surveyed, both Anglo and non-Anglo, was that 'The Australian media are not seen as reflecting the Australian way of life' and do not 'represent their way of life.'(ibid:8).

Just as the community has had to accept the reality of a diverse population drawn from all parts of the world so do Australia's news services need to accept the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If they are to continue to have relevance for the community at large they have no choice but to modernise their look. This may require changes to previously safe, comfortable and familiar routines, but more importantly it is about changing the mindset and culture of the newsroom.

The 2007 survey provides examples of things being done differently and perhaps they can point the way to future best practice.

1. Selecting for diversity – crowd shots and vox pops

It was noted in the analysis that most of the random crowd shots focused on Anglo faces and most of the vox pop talent was also Anglo. Making news gatherers aware of this tendency may encourage them to look with different eyes and to attempt to capture pictures and voices which reflect the observable diversity in the general population.

## 2. Selecting for diversity – expert talent

Non-Anglo talent featured only rarely as professional experts, compared to the occasions when they appeared as either villains or victims. The media can broaden the range of their diaries of expertise by searching proactively for new talent outside the traditional stamping grounds. And as Tanya Dreher notes, ethnic communities can be trained to intervene more proactively themselves to exert their own influence on the news agenda and news practices in general (2003).

## 3. Deciding who speaks

It can be challenging and even uncomfortable for Anglo reporters to approach people from non-Anglo communities. Their uncertainty may result from doubts about culturally appropriate behaviour and even extend to fears for their own safety. Reporters need to be actively encouraged to build relations with people from non-Anglo backgrounds so they don't feel like strangers when they are doing a story. By normalising their own relations with non-Anglo people they will be better able to represent them as normal human beings rather than as alien 'others'. By reducing their own distance from non-Anglo communities reporters may find they are more comfortable approaching EM talent and have greater confidence in letting them speak for themselves, without the often superfluous and distancing contrivance of subtitles.

## 4. Deciding how they speak

While subtitles are essential when people are speaking in a foreign language, they convey a different message when used for people speaking English, underscoring a sense of difference from the mainstream. While there are undoubtedly occasions when people's accents may make their speech difficult to follow, evidence from this

survey showed a tendency to err on the side of caution and to put subtitles in when the person was easily understandable. In this way news services can appear patronising towards not just the non-Anglo talent but also their audiences who are assumed to be unable to make sense of something for themselves. In a diverse society where people are adjusting to English delivered in a rainbow collection of accents the news services can afford to be more relaxed in their treatment of linguistic variation.

#### 5. Expanding the reporter base

As Schudson notes, '...who writes the story matters. When minorities and women and people who have known poverty or misfortune first-hand are authors of news as well as its readers, the social world represented in the news expands and changes.'(1995:8). While there were a few non-Anglo reporters who were observed in this survey they were no different from Anglo reporters in their conformity to the established model of television news reporting. It in fact appeared quite discordant to see, for example, a non-Anglo reporter bringing us conventional anti-Muslim scare stories (SBS 11 May). Instead reporters from non-Anglo backgrounds could and should be an invaluable resource in the sort of bridge-building that is necessary to increase the cultural diversity of television news. Rather than simply getting them to report 'our' way they could help increase awareness in newsrooms and build up the confidence of Anglo reporters in extending their range beyond the 'Anglo' known.

On the evidence of this survey which has provided a snapshot of television news trends from 2001 to 2007, things have not changed much since Jakubowicz et al noted that 'structural self-interest and attitudes of management and programming executives' presented 'major barriers to employment and representation of minorities' (1994:158). Unless news organisations, managers and editors decide to change, nothing will change. Editorial direction from the top is essential to effect a genuine culture shift and to instil best practices that will lead to news services that genuinely reflect the nation back to itself.

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