

MEDIA STATEMENT

8 October 2014

Upgrading newsrooms and new skills training for Fairfax journalists and sales staff in South West NSW

Fairfax Media's regional publishing business Australian Community Media (ACM) is consulting with employees in South West NSW about the introduction of new editorial systems and new skills training for journalists and sales staff across the network's newspapers and websites, including the *Wagga Daily Advertiser* and the *Griffith Area News*.

The proposed changes are part of an 18-month plan, announced in August 2014, to progressively transform ACM's hundreds of newspapers, websites and events across Australia into a modern, stronger, sustainable rural and regional media network.

Under the plan, all Fairfax newspapers and websites currently published in South West NSW will be redesigned and revitalised.

Director of ACM, John Angilley, said: "The changes we are seeking to introduce are all about setting up our newspapers and websites for the future. We want our publications to remain the most trusted source of news and information in the communities we serve.

"We are strengthening our newsrooms by adopting new newsroom structures, new systems and digital-first editorial production practices, together with a vastly enhanced local sales approach.

"Local news and content and sales capability remain at the heart of our business and will remain well resourced. We will have a smaller management layer, work more closely together in groups and across mastheads, share resources and adopt some of the latest technology."

The proposal involves creating several new positions, including Sales Manager and Managing Editor roles that would lead re-focused teams that would service the South West NSW group. Some senior editorial and sales roles would be reshaped, new opportunities would be available for some staff, and training would provide further career development and skills enhancement.

"We are committed to ensuring our journalists and sales force have the new skills, capabilities and resources to serve our audiences and customers - across print and digital - well into the future," Mr Angilley said.

“Our reporters will receive training and support so they can use the latest technology systems to report local news. They will use multi-media, as well as write headlines, captions and fact boxes and copy-check their work. There will be quality checking processes and procedures in place and our editors remain responsible for managing risk and maintaining our editorial standards.”

The new approach does not require the same on-site resources for editorial production. Should the proposal proceed there would be a reduction in staff across sales, admin and editorial.

The hub-and-spoke operating model being adopted across ACM over the next 18 months is expected to result in more centralised but still regionally-run and locally-focused newspapers.

Wagga will be the South West NSW hub, with local presences remaining throughout the region to accommodate local reporters and sales staff.

“We will be consulting with our staff in South West NSW and talking with communities over the next fortnight,” Mr Angilley said. “No final decisions have been made yet. Elsewhere in our business it remains business as usual as no plans for change have been developed for those regions.”

Australian Community Media connects with local communities via hundreds of newspaper titles across Australia, including 16 dailies, and a digital network of more than 140 websites.

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