



**SPEECH BY RONALD J WALKER AC CBE**  
**Chairman, Fairfax Media**  
**Announcement of Media House**  
**Melbourne, 13 December 2007**

Premier John Brumby  
Leader of the Opposition, Ted Baillieu  
Lord Mayor John So  
David Kirk, CEO of Fairfax Media  
My fellow Board Member David Evans  
Fairfax colleagues, including from The Age:  
Don Churchill, CEO and Publisher  
Andrew Jaspan, Editor in Chief and their teams  
Distinguished guests

Welcome to The Age - Australia's fastest growing newspaper.

I am especially delighted to have John Brumby, our Premier, with us today and I thank him in particular for the help his office has given us to bring this very technical project to fruition.

I'm proud to say that John Brumby and I have worked on many projects together over the years and I look forward to his presence at the opening of the building in the next two years.

I would also like to acknowledge some former Age editors, managing directors and publishers who are here with us today:

Ronald Macdonald  
Greg Taylor  
Creighton Burns  
Mike Smith  
Steve Harris  
Mike Richards  
Michael Gawenda

I would also like to make special mention of Peg Perkin, wife of the late Graham Perkin, one of our truly great editors, and I am proud to say, a good friend to me.

Welcome home Peg. It's great to have you back.

This is a memorable day for The Age, Melbourne and Victoria's leading quality newspaper.

This is the day when we at Fairfax not only reaffirm our confidence in the future of newspapers, but our commitment to Melbourne.

That commitment dates back to the birth of The Age 153 years ago, when its founding fathers, John and Henry Cooke, followed by Ebenezer and David Syme, had a vision of bringing world class news to the people of Victoria.

Since then, thousands of people have worked, treasured and cared for this great paper which is now one of the world's and Victoria's oldest continuously running metropolitan newspapers.

This includes generations of the Syme family such as David Syme's great grandson, Randal Macdonald, who is here today, and who became managing director upon his return from Harvard and made a great contribution to what The Age is today.

When I became a Director of Fairfax, representing Melbourne interests, to my dismay I found that editorial of The Age was controlled from Sydney.

And with the help of my fellow board members at the time - Sir Roderick Carnegie and Margaret Jackson, both of whom are with us today - we convinced our board colleagues to return editorial control to Melbourne, and give the paper back its heart, with decisions taken by people on the ground here, who know this city.

**After all, The Age is Melbourne.**

I have long dreamt of one day our company being able to announce a new landmark building for The Age and many of our media interests here, in a most prominent place, befitting the status of The Age in our community.

Under David Kirk, together with Don Churchill and Andrew Jaspan's leadership in Victoria, and now Brian McCarthy and his team joining Fairfax Media, The Age has connected in an unprecedented way with the city, its readers, advertisers, business and community leaders.

It's back in town and booming.

Circulation is up. Readership is up.

We are now powering ahead of our competitors online.

And commercially we've never been stronger. Thanks to the great support from our trusted clients - many of whom are here today - and who know advertising in The Age works for them.

One of the proudest moments of my time as Chairman occurred recently when this great paper won the newspaper industry's highest honour - the P.A.N.P.A. Newspaper of the Year award, which includes newspapers across Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Hong Kong.

This is what the international and Australian judges said:

***“Undoubtedly one of the best broadsheets. An exceptional product with readership growth to prove it. Hard to fault the professionalism in all aspects of the publication.”***

Congratulations to you, Andrew Jaspan, and your great team of people. I have continually said that our journalists are our greatest asset.

What a marvellous achievement by the staff who work for this great paper.

Another matter I was keen to address when I became Chairman, was for The Age staff to have the best possible working environment.

We have done this for our printing staff at Tullamarine, which is now producing world class printing.

And it is now time to modernise our editorial and commercial headquarters - to give The Age and our other publications an innovative workplace and state-of-the-art newsroom with the latest multimedia technology.

What this new building is about, is growing The Age, cementing our future in the heart of the city, providing the best possible environment for our staff, clients, partners, and giving Melburnians and Victorians something of which we can all be proud.

But it is also about journalism and retaining the core values that make this paper what it is today - trusted, independent, high quality and fearless in its reporting.

Buildings may change, but the enduring values of The Age will live on.

The Age is now part of a growing, prosperous Fairfax Media, which, with our merger with Rural Press, is now Australasia's largest metropolitan, regional and rural print and digital business.

Today, I can proudly say that Fairfax Media publishes some 360 newspapers and magazines in Australia and New Zealand, and 21 publications in the USA.

We have 50 major websites with over 14 million unique browsers per month who download more than 4 million videos each month - this represents a staggering growth rate of 33% over last year.

And with our recent acquisition of Southern Cross we now own 15 radio stations, including Melbourne icon 3AW, which once again becomes part of this great company, and which will also work out of our stunning new headquarters.

Just as The Age led the way environmentally, with extensive recycling at the printing plant in Tullamarine, I am delighted to announce that the new Age building will also be a green building, with a 5 star rating and the highest environmental standards.

There are lots of people to thank who have brought this project to fruition:

- Not least our architects Bates Smart, led by Roger Poole
- Michael Hynes at Vic Urban
- The State Government and various authorities
- Our great Fairfax team, headed by Anthony Cullen
- Our builder, Daniel Grollo of Grocon, who successfully built the new MCG in time for the Commonwealth Games. Daniel, we look forward to working with you on this wonderful Melbourne landmark that I am sure you will complete on time

Thank you for coming.