



**Fairfax Media Limited  
Annual General Meeting  
30 November, 2007  
Address of Ronald Walker, AC CBE**

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

My name is Ronald Walker and I have the honour of being Chairman of your company – Australasia's largest and oldest media business, spanning more than 176 years of service to readers in Australia and New Zealand – and this year expanding throughout regional and rural Australia, and now with 21 publications in the USA.

I welcome our shareholders, my fellow directors and our valued staff who are here today.

We especially welcome the former shareholders of Rural Press Limited.

I wanted you to feel at home today because I've been baking scones in your honour – a promise made to Rural Press shareholders by the former chairman, John Fairfax, at their Extraordinary General Meeting before the merger.

So, after this meeting, scones, jam and cream will be served with tea and coffee.

The merger of our two companies was a strategic milestone at Fairfax Media and it has created, I'm proud to say, the largest media company in Australasia.

We have now completed the acquisition of the metropolitan radio assets of Southern Cross Broadcasting – which include award winning AM stations 3AW and 1278, 2UE, 4BC and 6PR, the leading news talk radio network, and the Southern Star video production business, and Carnival Productions in the UK. This is another historic milestone in Fairfax Media's growth, and David Kirk and I will have more to say about that shortly.

May I introduce you to my distinguished fellow directors with me on the dais this morning, from my left:

Bob Savage, John B. Fairfax, Peter Young, Roger Corbett, Sankar Narayan, our outstanding CFO, is seated next to Roger. Our CEO David Kirk has led Fairfax Media's business for the past two year and we are very pleased with his achievements. Gail Hambly is our Group General Counsel and Company Secretary. Mark Burrows, Julia King, David Evans, and Nicholas Fairfax.

Can I thank my Board colleagues for their support for where I wanted to take our great Company for the future when I became Chairman three years ago, and above all, to thank them for their dedication and service as Directors of Fairfax Media and the hard work they do.

I would also like to welcome our senior executives here this morning, and I invite them to stand:

Brian McCarthy, our Deputy CEO and CEO Australia. Brian is building a new team of excellence and expertise in Australia Publishing and Printing and I want to invite Brian and his team to stand be recognised.

I also want to introduce Joan Withers, CEO, Fairfax New Zealand. Graham Mott, Managing Director of the radio stations we acquired from Southern Cross. Linda Price, Director, IT and Human Resources, and Michael Gill, Chief Executive and Publisher, Fairfax Business Media.

Fellow shareholders: Welcome to our 2007 Annual General Meeting.

Since we last reported to you a year ago, our company has irrevocably changed for the better, entering a dimension not seen possible in the past 175 years.

Our market capitalisation has increased by over 50% ...

Our EBITDA is up 13.1% ...

And our dividends have grown by 2.6% to 20 cents per share -- a record in our Company's history.

And our Total Shareholder Returns for the year grew substantially -- by over 34%.

Our costs in Australian publishing have been reduced by \$52 million over the past two years -- quite an achievement and a great credit to David and his team.

The Board and I are pleased to report to you, our shareholders, that Fairfax Media is a more dynamic and entirely more modern media company than at any time in our proud history in Australia.

Fairfax Media is truly a fully integrated digital media company with our content available in print, online, radio and mobile devices.

This has been the most dynamic year in our history with the \$3 billion merger with Rural Press, embracing 200 publications in Australia and New Zealand, including the prestigious Canberra Times, 21 publications in the USA and 15 radio stations, including the former Southern Cross radio assets we now control.

With respect to our strategic merger with Rural Press, we are more than delivering on our promises:

Fairfax Media will secure \$22 million in cost synergies with Rural Press in the 2008 financial year, with \$45 million to be achieved by the end of the 2009 financial year.

We also purchased The Border Mail, the Riverina Media Group, and significantly expanded online with Brisbane Times DOT com DOT au -- an online newspaper bringing media diversity to Brisbane and Queensland with over 500,000 unique browsers per month.

Trade Me, our internet business in New Zealand, enjoys outstanding market leadership in online auctions, real estate, cars, travel and employment. Trade Me continues to be an astonishing success.

Every day, we reach over 6 million people, in print and online: in Australia, New Zealand, America and worldwide.

We publish over 360 newspapers and magazines, and have over 50 major websites.

I am proud to say we are the leaders in online news in Australia. Fairfax Digital has over 14 million unique browsers per month online -- a growth rate of over 33% last year. Its online audience downloads over 4 million videos a month of breaking news and entertainment.

As you can see, ladies and gentlemen, taken as a whole, we are poised for further growth as a digital media company for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

After a period of successful expansion, we are now focussed first and foremost on the earnings, and earnings growth, we will deliver to our shareholders.

EPS growth based on the investments we have made is our core objective.

In the past few years, with local management control and superb editorial direction, The Age is back as a major force in Melbourne. It was named Newspaper of The Year by the Pacific Area Newspaper Publishers Association – the industry's highest honour.

Congratulations to you, Don Churchill and Andrew Jaspan and to our staff from us all.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am proud to say today that Fairfax Media has a great future, led by dynamic people, backed by a very focussed and hard working Board. We met 17 times in the last financial year as a united team.

After 176 years, there are not many media companies that can say they are stronger than ever before – but we can, because we are.

We are proud of our heritage, our tradition of excellence and quality, independent journalism, and the respect we have in Australasia and worldwide.

On the subject of freedom of speech, may I say Australia is one of the world's great democracies, something we all take for granted.

We do enjoy a free press, but it is endangered by ongoing series of regressive steps taken by governments across Australia to limit what the public can learn about how government functions, and how tax dollars are spent.

Fairfax Media is a founding member of Australia's Right to Know Coalition. We have joined together with every major media company in the country, and the public broadcasters, to urge for a return to transparency and accountability in government at all levels.

We want stronger Freedom of Information laws, protection for courageous whistle-blowers, shield laws for our journalists so that they are not jailed for doing their jobs, and a reduction in suppression orders in the courts.

In the past 11 years of the previous government they have made the suppression of public information an art form.

We look forward to working with the Rudd Government to implement the constructive proposals they have made to strengthen our Freedom of Information laws and other key reforms.

Fellow shareholders we face the future with great confidence. Fairfax Media's best days are still ahead of us.

Finally, and as always, I thank our staff for a great result. They are our strongest asset.

Thank you.

I would now like to introduce our Chief Executive, David Kirk.

-- ENDS --

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