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Working for less: the aftermath for journalists made redundant in Australia between 2012 and 2014

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Working for less: the aftermath for journalists made redundant in Australia between 2012 and 2014

ABSTRACT

While media organisations continue to lay off journalists in Australia, the long-term outcomes of mass redundancies are just beginning to unravel. A key finding from a survey sample of 225 Australian journalists who exited their jobs between 2012 and 2014 is that while just over 60% of respondents continued to work wholly or partly in journalism roles, income loss was significant across the board. This is partly explained by the precarity of work experienced by many participants post-redundancy. But lower incomes were also noted amongst those who remained in full time journalism positions: indeed, those who moved to full time roles in other professions were likely to be earning more. Meanwhile, the finding that those aged over 50 faced the most significant drop in income points to particular problems faced by older workforce participants.

Keywords: journalism jobs; journalism layoffs; journalism redundancies; journalism work; media work; media jobs

Since 2012, it is estimated by Australia's journalism union, the Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA), that around 2,500 journalists in Australia have lost their jobs (Scott, 2015). The scale of these cuts in the news media industry almost unprecedented in the nation's history. While an estimated 700 jobs were lost in Australia during 2008 and 2009 (Este, Warren, & Murphy, 2010, p. 3), hopes remained high that the extent of journalism layoffs by then experienced in the US (Brownlee & Beam, 2012) and Britain (Nel, 2010) might have been avoided. In 2010, Christopher Warren, the then head of the MEAA, began his introduction to a report about the future of journalism with the observation that: 'For many of us, 2010 brought with it a degree of optimism that the "carnage" that had been forecast for the business of journalism has abated somewhat' (Este et al., 2010, p. 3).

Journalists were also relatively upbeat about the future. In the survey cited in that report, 53 per cent answered that they felt either 'positive' or 'very positive' about their career prospects and only 23 per cent saying they felt 'negative' (including just 3 per cent who felt 'very negative') (Este et al., 2010, p. 18). The clear message from these respondents, who were MEAA members, was that most journalists were increasingly aware of the possibilities presented by online and multimedia journalism. Their concerns lay in what they perceived as a lack of training that might not allow

them to take full advantage of those possibilities.

But the worst was yet to come. In mid-2012, mass redundancies at the country's two largest media corporations prompted the suggestion in September that as many as one in seven journalism jobs from the country's two largest media companies, Fairfax Media and News Limited (known as News Corp Australia since mid-2013), had been lost. This is particularly noteworthy considering that newspapers – the core business of both companies above - are still the largest media employers in Australia. In 2011, The Australian Bureau of Statistics found print journalists and newspaper or periodical editors comprised 10, 569 of the 16,125 people employed in journalism (ABS, 2011).

Like the Keepers of the Night's Watch in *Game of Thrones*, it seemed they knew winter was coming but appeared to have no clear plan to hold back, let alone overcome, the White Walkers of the internet that were destroying their longstanding business model. Delivering the annual A.N. Smith memorial lecture on journalism at the University of Melbourne in 2011, the chief executive of Fairfax, Greg Hywood, said he believed 'the future of journalism has never looked stronger'. In the past when newspapers' monopoly on classified advertising had afforded them plump profits, their journalism 'was an added extra' but he said the plummeting advertising revenue caused by the internet had prompted the company to focus primarily on producing great journalism (Hywood, 2011). The following year, however, Hywood drove the redundancy program that saw 1900 Fairfax Media employees leave the company, including around 400 editorial staff.

The speaker at the same lecture one year later in 2012 was Kim Williams, then CEO of News. With job losses by then mounting at both Fairfax and News he acknowledged that 'none of us can know with any certainty how the future of the media will play out', but also argued that there was much to be positive about, including 'robust continuing and truly great journalism; sustainable business models for print and shiny new business models in digital media; and a heightened and voracious appetite from consumers for diverse news and information across their spectrum of passions and interests' (Williams, 2012).

It wasn't just media executives voicing this kind of optimism. A month earlier, even the MEAA's Federal Secretary Christopher Warren predicted that the latest announcement of 65 more job cuts from News Limited's centralised sub-editing hub, NewsCentral and its newspapers in Queensland, 'should be the last round of job

losses' in the print restructuring at News and Fairfax. The MEAA said 'it was now vital for the industry to focus on investing in journalism and exploiting the opportunities presented by digital technology' (Brook, 2012).

While it is clear that the business of media and the activity of journalism in Australia are being radically reshaped by the rise of new communication technologies, the full extent of these changes remains uncertain. In 2012 the great majority of journalistic job losses were in national and metropolitan daily newspapers following the major media companies' shift to digital-first news production. In 2013, 2014 and into 2015, cuts followed the closure of the free commuter newspaper, MX (Christensen, 2015) a \$AUS207 million funding cut to the national broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (Kidd, 2014) and there were substantial job losses in a number of rural and regional newspaper newsrooms (Lewis, 2014).

The fate of journalists who are laid off is the central focus of the New Beats research project, which was set up in 2013 as a joint industry-academy research project and the following year received Australian Research Council funding to explore these issues. What has been the impact of redundancy on these people? What kinds of careers are they forging? Have they been able to find meaningful work, in journalism or elsewhere? And what are the consequences of their job losses for journalism itself? These questions are far from straightforward to answer because the news media industry remains in the state of existential uncertainty that has bedevilled it for several years now.

This article by the New Beats research team follows a previous examination of the aftermath of 2012 redundancies in our 2013 pilot survey (O'Donnell, Zion, & Sherwood, 2015) by extending our inquiry to those affected by redundancies across the three years from 2012-14.

Literature Review

Research in disciplines including journalism and media studies, the sociology of work, and management makes it clear that the 21st century is a period of fundamental transformation across all areas of human activity, including work and professional occupations (Castells, 2009; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Potts, Cunningham, Hartley, & Ormerod, 2008). Sociological literature analyses how developing technological capacities (for example, ICTs, microelectronics, and genetic technology), and globalising economic forces (for example, convergence, the

information economy and knowledge work), are fundamentally reshaping workplace organisation, practice, and experiences across many occupations (Castells, 2009). The manufacturing workforce globally has long grappled with major organisational restructuring and career transition challenges, but today those working at the leading edge of the new knowledge based economy are facing similar uncertainty. The media industry is one that is facing significant challenges, with some parts of the industry facing a profound struggle for survival. This struggle concerns not only business and financial models, but also the continuing relevance and forms of media content.

Within this broad context, recent news industry restructuring efforts, characterised by job cuts and so far unsuccessful experiments to create viable digital revenue streams to replace print advertising revenue (Burrowes, 2014), have generated uncertainty and fear about the sector's future work prospects. Where one perspective argues that journalism 'is coming to an end' as the internet renders legacy news media 'obsolete' (Deuze, 2008, p. 4), another view asserts that journalism is evolving and adapting, however unevenly, to new economic, technological and political realities (Anderson, Bell, & Shirky, 2012; Broersma & Peters, 2013; Heinrich, 2011; Waisbord, 2013).

Internationally, workplace flexibility, including the use of redundancy as a means of managing the corporate restructuring of the workforce, is seen as a crucial strategy for managing change at times of industry volatility and uncertainty (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Kalleberg, 2009; Spies-Butcher, Paton, & Cahill, 2012). Yet, for those employees, including journalists and other media workers, whose positions are made redundant, they represent a critical life event that can have long-term deleterious impacts, ranging from the breakup of workplace communities to loss of income, social isolation and poor physical and mental health outcomes (Blyton & Jenkins, 2012; Gardiner et al., 2009). From work related to other dimensions of workplace experience of change in journalism, it is also evident that gender and other social relations may well feature as part of the redundancy process (North, 2009). As such, workplace change has significantly contradictory outcomes for employers, managers and employees.

In the media context, there is also an emerging body of research analysing career uncertainty and transition, job loss and redundancy. Interestingly, while some of this research is coming out of universities, important contributions are also being

made by industry based researchers, including consultants and unions (Este et al., 2008; Este et al., 2010; The Natelson Dale Group, 2011).

Mark Deuze's research has made an important contribution, engaging with transformations in media work to argue that 'what typifies media professions in the digital age is an increasing complexity and ongoing liquefaction of the boundaries between different fields, disciplines, practices, and categories that used to define what media work was' (Deuze, 2007, p. 112). While technological innovation is critical to media work, so too are the processes through which technology is negotiated at the corporate and workplace level, meaning that while technological innovation provides opportunities for media workers, it also creates risk around job opportunities and futures. For Deuze, media workers face a context of uncertainty and risk (2007). A common theme emerging through this body of research is that for journalists the experience of redundancy and of finding and retaining work after it is difficult and unsettling. Further, such experiences are not unique to Australia. In the media context, there is also an emerging body of research analysing career uncertainty and transition, job loss and redundancy. Interestingly, while some of this research is coming out of universities, important contributions are also being made by industry based researchers, including consultants and unions (Este et al., 2008; Este et al., 2010; The Natelson Dale Group, 2011).

A major study of San Francisco Bay Area journalists over the period 2000-2010 found that lay-offs and other forms of job dislocation were widespread as was anxiety and uncertainty afterwards while journalists were looking for work (The Natelson Dale Group, 2011). In the UK, a study conducted by Francois Nel of what journalists do once they have been laid off found that 'life after being laid off is tough' (Nel, 2010, p. 29).

In addition to the difficulties of finding employment, respondents found the process of leaving the industry challenging. In an important contribution from Finland, Nikunen (2014) found that workplace management of a crisis in Finnish journalism in 2010 was linked to two processes: first, the move towards convergent newsrooms and, second, the use of pension packages as a strategy for downsizing the newsroom. This second strategy had a disproportionate effect on older journalists, meaning that newsrooms also lost significant expertise and knowledge. This mirrors the work of O'Donnell et al (2015) in the Australian context, which found that redundancy processes led to a loss of journalistic corporate memory from newsrooms.

Given that this paper addresses the Australian context, this study is relevant and timely. For the New Beats pilot, 225 journalists whose positions had been made redundant in 2012 were approached, leading to a non-probability sample for the study of 95 journalists who then submitted answers to a survey of 33 questions about their redundancy experiences and work histories both before and after their redundancy experience. The findings from this study are not generalisable but they provide an important foundation for the current paper. The average age of the respondents was 49.1 years, and they had spent an average of 25.7 years in journalism. On gender, 50.5% of respondents were men, and 49.5% were women. Importantly, 89% of this cohort found employment post-redundancy but only 28% found full time journalism jobs. The rest of the cohort were out of work, or had created new careers for themselves, sometimes involving forms of journalism including freelance work as well as working in areas including PR and higher education. Crucially, there was an important decline in income, with 67% of those employed indicating their income had declined post redundancy. On a more positive note, a majority reported that their quality of life as measured by factors including stress and work-life balance had improved. Underpinning this, however, was a clear indication that the process of job loss was highly unsettling and traumatic, exacerbated in many cases by a perception that management had handled the redundancy process poorly. Such processes were further aggravated by the challenges to professional self-identity that the redundancy process brought with it.

Common to the research on redundancy experiences across newsrooms and media organisations more generally are experiences of income loss, uncertainty, and a sense of a challenge to professional and self-identity. But at least some of the time, opportunities emerge for media workers to use their skills in new contexts, whether in the media or other industries. As Deuze has argued, complexity and uncertainty defines the present for media workers. The findings in this paper provide an empirical foundation to extend debate on this important topic through presenting the results of a survey of journalists in Australia whose positions had been made redundant in the years 2012, 2013 and 2014. Before that, we set out the methodology used to engage with these issues.

Method

The New Beats project is a five-year university-industry collaborative research investigation of job loss in Australian journalism. It addresses the research problem of what happens to journalists after job loss by locating journalists who have experienced this disruptive major life event, and documenting their changed circumstances, including their subjective accounts of searching for new work, forced career change, income loss, and unexpected new opportunities. The project is motivated by an interest in finding out whether these journalists found new jobs and resumed their careers in the aftermath of job loss. It aims to produce an analysis of the challenges journalists face in looking for work and restarting their careers, and the resulting consequences for their health, income, identity and well-being.

The 2014 New Beats survey reported here is the first in a scheduled series of four annual surveys (2014-2017). It was designed to gather and collate base-line data on what happened next to the careers of a sample of Australian journalists whose newsroom positions were made redundant in 2012, 2013 or 2014. The project will follow this cohort of respondents for the three subsequent annual surveys (2015-2017) to provide longitudinal data on how many remain in journalism.

The survey rationale and design drew directly on insights gained from an exploratory pilot study undertaken in 2013 (see O'Donnell et al., 2015). Three insights were particularly helpful. First, finding journalists affected by job loss proves difficult once they have left newsrooms, but we found the non-probability method of snowball sampling (Atkinson & Flint, 2001; Ryan, 2009) provides an effective way of recruiting hidden populations of this kind, particularly via their formal and informal professional networks. Second, we found that questions about potentially sensitive issues (e.g. income loss, demotion) need to ask for measurable quantitative information rather than general descriptive answers to enable in-depth analysis of major post-redundancy trends drawn from detailed results. Third, because we want the project to be as useful as possible for the journalism profession, we asked pilot study respondents to nominate topics of concern and included questions on themes they identified in the 2014 survey, including the availability and requirements of journalism job openings, skills needed to remain competitive in the job market, and types of journalism required in current employment compared to previous jobs.

The population of concern for the 2014 survey comprised all Australian journalists who lost their jobs between 2012 and 2014. The research sample was

recruited via the non-probability method of snowball sampling. This method is effective for contacting journalists who have moved from the limited number of major newsrooms, where contact details are public and easy to obtain, to an unknown number of dispersed workplaces or to unemployment. In this case, potential research participants were identified using a call-out to interested parties via the New Beats website (see newbeatsblog.com/about), the pilot survey database, industry contacts provided with permission by the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA), published lists of journalists who had been made redundant (see, for instance, Crikey, 2012) and personal contacts. These journalists were invited via email to participate in a survey about their individual job loss and post-redundancy experiences. Those who agreed were asked to share details of the survey with other colleagues who had lost their newsroom job in the 2012-2014 period. In addition, Twitter and other social media platforms were used to recruit potential respondents. In this way, snowball sampling enabled us to identify and invite participation from approximately 500 journalists. However, one potential limitation that this study acknowledges is that using snowball or respondent driven sampling (Lee, 2009) runs the risk of over-representing those most invested in the topic (e.g. disgruntled ex-journalists).

The data collection instrument was a self-administered online survey of 52 questions that was created and accessed using the cloud-based SurveyMonkey tool. This included eight questions about the respondent's journalism career, nine questions about the redundancy experience, twenty questions on current work situation either in journalism or another field, five questions about making sense of change, five questions on demographic information and five questions about future involvement with the New Beats project. 17 of the questions were open-ended, in order to collect valuable qualitative data about the respondents' redundancy experiences.

The survey opened on October 15, 2014 and the data presented in this article were gathered over a three-month period, until January 30, 2015. A total of 266 of the around 500 journalists in the database answered the questionnaire for a response rate of 53.2 per cent. However, 41 entries were subsequently excluded from the data set because of inadvertent duplication, failure to meet the 2012-2014 job loss criterion, or invalid responses. Therefore the final sample was 225 responses, which represents 45 per cent of the targeted sample, and between 11.25 to 15 per cent of the estimated total population of concern.

This article presents the findings from the quantitative questions in the survey. In terms of data analysis, all the quantitative questions were analysed within the SPSS analytic software. Particular variables, such as demographic characteristics, the year of redundancy, and area of current work (in journalism or another field), were used to further analyse and explore relationships within the data. One limitation of the study, however, is that the significance of these relationships could not be calculated as most of the data failed to meet the requirements for valid chi-square tests. This means the results reported below offer insights into the experiences of this particular cohort of 225 journalists, but cannot be generalised or used to explain trends across the whole population of concern.

The presentation of the findings is organised according to the following key themes: descriptive statistical profile of respondents, redundancy overview including year of job loss, employment destinations, current income, change in employment status and income, age and current type of work, and gender and income.

Results

Descriptive statistics of respondents

As shown in Table 1, this cohort was overwhelmingly aged 41 and over (85.3%) with a university education (70.7%). There were more male respondents than female (57.8% male to 42.2% female). Most had completed some form of journalism education (48.9% had completed a journalism cadetship and 31.1% had completed a related undergraduate degree).

<<Insert Table 1 near here>>

Redundancy overview

More than half of the respondents had more than 25 years' experience at the time of their redundancies. Fairfax and News Corporation accounted for more than 80% of the redundancies (47.4% and 34.2% respectively). More than three quarters of respondents took a voluntary redundancy (76.9%). A similar proportion took redundancy from a full-time position (77.3%). Most respondents (71.6%) had MEAA membership at the time of the redundancy. Nearly three-quarters (74.2%) had not received or undertaken any re-skilling in digital content creation before their redundancy. This overview of redundancy is presented in Table 2.

<<Insert Table 2 near here>>

Where do they go?

One of the most important aims of this survey was to start to answer the question, where do redundant journalists go? Participants were asked to select whether they were still working, and if so, working within journalism, a combination of work that included journalism and other work, or outside journalism. In this way, the participants themselves were allowed to define their own work. As Table 3 indicates, 60.9% (137) of respondents selected that they worked within journalism, which included a mix of those entirely employed within journalism at the time of the survey (70 or 31.1%) or a combination of journalism and other roles (67 or 29.8%). 22.2% (50) identified that they were working in a job outside of journalism. Other options included looking for work (17 or 7.6%), taking a break (9 or 4.0%), or retired (12 or 5.3%).

<<Insert Table 3 near here>>

Participants were also asked to nominate their job title and the type of organisation they worked for, which then allowed us to better understand the nature of roles that respondents are now engaged in. From this data we can conclude that just over half of the 50 people who left journalism (27 people or 56%) were working in strategic public communication, which is shown in Table 4. Among these titles were roles such as ‘Communications Adviser’, ‘Media and PR Lead’ and ‘Media Manager’. We know that these people worked across a range of organisations, including a hospital, sports club, a real estate agency, a statutory body, universities and a social media company, as well as various others.

<<Insert Table 4 near here>>

Just over half of the 27 people working in strategic public communication were working in political roles. These positions included ‘Media Adviser’, ‘Public Affairs Adviser’ and ‘Speech Writer’. There was also one respondent working as a

‘Policy Analyst’. We categorised this as political strategic public communication for the purposes of the survey.

In addition nine of the 50 people who identified that they worked outside journalism (18%) held positions that might be classified as in-house content production. These positions, which we have not classified as strategic public communication, included roles such as ‘Copy Editor’, ‘Research Editor’ or ‘Content Editor’. The remaining roles held by non-journalists included self-employed (seven people or 14%), university lecturers four or 8%) and other (two people or 4%).

Of those who stayed in journalism, a surprisingly high proportion stayed within legacy media. Table 5 shows that 46 of the 137 respondents who selected they were still working within journalism (or 33.6%) said they were working at a newspaper, broadcaster or magazine. This includes those who worked for outsourced editing hubs. Only 12 of the 137 respondents who were still in journalism said they worked solely for an online media outlet. We can infer from the results, as shown in Table 5, that a high proportion of the other people who continued as journalists are each working across a range of new and legacy media companies in different capacities, including freelance and contract. In other words, they are going where there’s work, regardless of whether it is a new or legacy media outlet.

<<Insert Table 5 near here>>

Interestingly a further 25 people (18.2%) of those who self-identified they were still working within journalism, listed positions that did not appear to be journalism-related. These roles in what we have classified as ‘other organisations’ included communications, public relations or writing or editing roles at a range of organisations, such as architecture firms, universities, government agencies, technology or travel companies, event management businesses, banks and sporting clubs. It seems many of these respondents selected that they still worked in journalism because they also still undertook freelance journalism work, but we note the overall proportion of those working in strategic public communication would increase if these 25 respondents were included in that category. However, as these people self-identified as still working in journalism we kept them in this category.

Some of the other roles nominated by the people who said they were still working as journalists were coded as ‘Industry Organisation’ as they were journalism-related, but might not include actual journalism work. These positions were labelled ‘industry organisation’ and included ‘international media development’, or involvement in a journalism-related trade union, or work at a production agency.

Income

One of the aims of the survey was to make an assessment of journalists’ incomes pre and post redundancy, and to compare the salaries of those working inside and outside journalism post redundancy. In other words, were redundant journalists who were still working earning more as journalists or in other fields of work? To make these comparisons meaningful we looked at all 225 respondents’ pre-redundancy salaries with the salaries of only the 187 people who were working at the time of the survey. Generally, we can conclude that there was a notable drop in income for journalists post-redundancy and that incomes generally fell across the board, regardless of whether respondents were working inside or outside journalism. As Table 6 indicates, nearly half of the respondents (111 people or 49.1%) earned more than \$100,001 before redundancy. But only 36 of the 187 people who were working (26.2%) were earning over \$100,000 at the time of the survey.

<<Insert Table 6 near here>>

The changes were also notable in the lower salary bands. For example, 56 people (25.2% of the 225 respondents) told us they earned \$80,000 or less before redundancy. After redundancy, 112 respondents (or 59.9% of the 187 people who were then working) told us they were then earning \$80,000 or less.

Only five of the respondents (2.2%) told us they earned under \$40,000 before redundancy. However, 39 of the 187 people working (26%) reported salaries below this figure at the time of the survey.

While incomes fell across the board, we can conclude that of those who continued to work, the people who left journalism were more likely to be earning over \$80,000. For example, only 35% of the 137 people who continued to work in journalism after redundancy (48 people) earned more than \$80,001. But 54% of the

50 people who found work in other fields (27 people) earned salaries over the same amount. These comparisons can also be found in Table 6.

Employment status and income

It appears the major reason for the drop in income for those who have continued to work post redundancy is that they have moved from fulltime employment to other working arrangements, including part time, contract, casual or freelance work categories described here as ‘precarious’ employment (Deuze, 2007, p. 100). Table 7 shows of the 225 respondents, 174 (77.3%) were working fulltime pre-redundancy, 49 (21.8%) were working part time and two people (0.9%) were on contracts. Of the 187 who continued to work post-redundancy, only 72 people (38.5%) were in fulltime employment. The remaining 115 people (61.5%) were working in ‘precarious’ employment.

<<Insert Table 7 near here>>

The survey reveals that people who found work outside of journalism were more likely to have a full-time job (48% to 35%).

But the survey also demonstrates that incomes fell considerably for people who continued to work as fulltime journalists after redundancy. Table 8 indicates that of the 174 who were employed fulltime pre-redundancy, 105 people (60.2%) earned \$100,001 or more. However, only 14 of the 48 people (29.2%) who continued to work as fulltime journalists post-redundancy were earning comparable incomes.

<<Insert Table 8 near here>>

Redundant journalists who found fulltime work in other fields fared better. 12 of the 24 people who were in this category, (50%) earned \$100,000 or more. At the other end of the income scale, only one respondent who was working fulltime pre-redundancy earned \$40,000 or less.

Of the 39 respondents who earned less than \$40,000 post redundancy, only one was in fulltime employment

Incomes are in part determined by the full and part-time status of the work.

Age and current type of work

The survey gives us a greater understanding of the part that age plays in the experiences of journalists who become redundant. We were keen to determine how age affects continuing employment and income. We can conclude that younger people are more likely to be still working in journalism after redundancy. We asked all 225 respondents to describe their current work, 16 of the 19 respondents aged between 18 and 35 (or 84.2%) were still working within journalism. However the percentage decreases among older respondents. For example, 48 of the 85 people aged between 36 and 50 (or 56.4%) were still working in journalism, while 71 of the 121 people aged 51 or over (60.4%) were still working in journalism.

A higher proportion of those aged 36 – 50 left journalism. In that age group 30.6% left the industry, compared to only 5.3% of 18 – 35-year-olds and 19% of those aged 51 years and over. The remainder were either taking a break, looking for work or retired. All 12 of those who had retired were aged 51 and over. These results are presented in Table 9.

<<Insert Table 9 near here>>

As noted above there is a tendency for incomes to fall post redundancy, regardless of whether people stay in journalism or leave the industry. The survey reveals that age is a factor. People who are older tend to have a greater loss of income.

Before redundancy all those aged between 18 and 35 were earning between \$20,001 and \$100,000 per annum. This statistic did not change post redundancy for those in this age group who continued to work in journalism. Only one person in this age group left journalism. That person earned between \$120,000 and \$140,000. Those in this age group who were still working in journalism experienced no loss or growth of income.

Of those aged 36 – 50, 38.8% earned \$100,001 or more before redundancy. However only 16.7% of people who continued to work in journalism in this age group post redundancy earned over \$101,000. In comparison, the proportion of 36 – 50 year olds who left journalism and earned over \$100,001 was 34.6%. This demonstrates that those in this age group who left journalism were more likely to be on a higher income, although still not as high as their pre-redundancy income.

In comparison, those aged 51 and over experienced a more significant drop post-redundancy. A total of 64.6% of respondents in this age group earned more than \$100,001 pre-redundancy. For those who continued to work in journalism, just 17.8% earned \$100,001 or more, while 21.6% of respondents aged 51 and over who had left journalism earned \$100,001 and more. The survey revealed that before redundancy, no one had an income of less than \$20,001. However post redundancy, 15 of the people who still worked in journalism earned less than \$20,001 and 13 of these were aged 51 plus. We will examine this particular finding in the discussion below.

Gender and income

The survey reveals some interesting findings regarding gender and income. Pre-redundancy, 84 of 130 male respondents (or 64.5%) earned \$100,001 or more. Just 27 of 95 female respondents (or 28.4%) earned a comparable income. Only 20 of 130 men (or 15.4%) earned \$80,000 or less pre-redundancy, compared with 36 of 95 women (or 37.6%).

While income did drop across the entire cohort post-redundancy, it is not surprising that women still continued to earn less than men if they stayed in journalism. Of those respondents who continued to work in journalism post-redundancy, just 21 of 137 respondents still earned \$100,001 or more. Of these, 17 were men and four were women. While 44 of 57 women (or 77.2%) who continued to work in journalism earned \$80,000 or less, the same could be said for 45 of 80 men (56.4%).

However there did appear to be more pay equality for those who left journalism. While there were women (26) than men (24) who had left journalism, and this is a smaller cohort than those who stayed in journalism, there was an almost equal percentage of women and men who earned \$100,001 or more post-redundancy. Of those who had left journalism, seven of 24 men (or 29.8%) earned \$100,001 or more in their current job at the time of the survey. Eight of 26 women (or 30.8%) also earned \$100,001 or more. At the lower end of the wage scale, men actually outnumbered women. Of those respondents who had left journalism, 12 of 24 men (50%) earned \$80,000 or less in their current role. In comparison, 11 of 26 women (42.3%) earned a similar wage at the time of the survey.

Year of redundancy

The survey asked respondents to identify the year they became redundant. We were interested in whether the year was a factor in the type of work people were doing and the income they were earning at the time of the survey. We also wanted to track the average ages of people who became redundant in each year. The majority of respondents, 160 of 225, became redundant in 2012. A further 43 became redundant in 2013 and 22 in 2014, as indicated in Table 10.

<<Insert Table 10 near here>>

The survey shows that the ages of those who became redundant in each of those three years have trended down over time. The proportion of respondents who were aged 51 and over at the time of the survey and became redundant in 2012 was 58.1%. The figure fell to 44.2% in 2013 and 40.8% in 2014.

The year people took redundancy had little correlation with the type of work people were doing at the time of the survey. Of the 2012 cohort, 96 of 160 people (60%) were working in journalism, while 40 of the 160 (25%) were working outside journalism. The 2013 figures are similar, with 31 of 43 people (72.1%) working in journalism and seven of the 43 (16.3%) working outside journalism.

The figures for the 2014 cohort are not comparable because a much higher proportion of respondents were newly redundant and still looking for work at the time of the survey. This was one of the few notable findings from this section of the survey. The 2014 cohort appears to be struggling to a greater degree than those who became redundant in 2012 and 2013.

The 2014 cohort consisted of just 22 people, seven of whom (31.8%) were still looking for work at the time of the survey. The proportion of the 2013 cohort still looking for work was only 4.7% (or two of the 43 people). Of the 2012 cohort, 5% (eight of the 160 people) were still looking for work. This suggests that while it takes time to find work, the longer people search the more likely they are to find some form of employment.

Thirteen of the 2014 cohort were working at the time of the survey. Of these, four people were working full time. The others were working in various forms of precarious employment, including part-time, contract, self-employed, freelance and casual work. The results were comparable both for those inside and outside of

journalism. Ten of the 13 people from the 2014 who were employed were still working in journalism at the time of the survey, however only three of these people were working full time. Of the three people who were working outside journalism, only one was full time.

However, this result was not found in the 2012 and 2013 cohorts. In these years, the proportion of those in full-time work was different depending on whether they still worked in journalism or had left the industry. Those who left journalism were more likely to have full-time work. In the 2012 and 2013 cohorts who stayed in journalism, 38.5% and 25.8% respectively had full-time work at the time of the survey. Of those respondents who left journalism in 2012 or 2013, 50% of each cohort had full-time work at the time of the survey.

Discussion

This study illustrates some of the continuing challenges faced by Australian journalists whose positions were made redundant between 2012 and 2014. The standout finding is the extent of the loss of income experienced by participants who became redundant. That the percentage of those working earning over \$100,000 fell from 49.1% before redundancy to just 19.3% after redundancy is just one illustration of the decline. From another perspective, those earning less than \$80,000 before redundancy rose from 24.9% to 59.9%.

While we have noted that a major reason for the drop in income for those who have continued to work post redundancy is that they have moved from fulltime employment to other working arrangements, the research also points to a rapid downturn in journalism wages in full time positions. This is supported by the finding that those who have moved outside of journalism in full time roles are earning more, on average, than those who have found new full time roles in journalism. This reported loss of income seems to relate to the wider industry trend to produce news at lower costs, such as Fairfax's offshore outsourcing of editing functions to Pagemasters in New Zealand (Christensen, 2014), and is consistent with anecdotal Australian media reports about the decline in remuneration to freelancers (Buckingham-Jones and Ward, 2015) and American research identifying a widening gap between the salaries earned by journalists and public relations practitioners (Williams, 2014).

The exception of the small sample of participants under 35 who post-redundancy stayed in journalism without income loss might be explained by a range of factors including their skillset, their relatively low salary base pre-redundancy, or the appeal of younger workers as potential employees. Further tracking of this group is required to make sense of the extent to which their post-redundancy experiences diverge over time.

By contrast, the finding that those aged 51 and over faced the most significant drop in income points to particular problems faced by older workforce participants. The difficulty many of them have faced finding suitable work is a theme that emerged in response to several of the open-ended questions in the survey, even though none of these questions directly addressed issues related specifically to the age of respondents. To quote one respondent from the 56-60 age range:

I was rejected for many, many jobs because of my age and experience. The job interviews I did have were often conducted by 30 year olds who showed immediately that I was unsuitable because of my age or experience. The ones in which I made it past the first interview turned into 4-5 return interviews. Then after making it through the final interview I was told three times the job had changed. I resorted to driving hire cars to keep a trickle of money coming through the door until I finally got my present job - outside of journalism - again after five interviews. (#177 – Q 15 – 56-60 years)

Such experiences align with a recent Australian Human Rights Commission survey that show that at a time when the retirement age is set to rise from 65 to 67, age discrimination is growing in workplaces, and that about a third of people who experienced age discrimination gave up looking for work as a result. To quote Australia's Age Discrimination Commissioner Susan Ryan: 'The high prevalence of age discrimination in the workplace has obvious and lasting impacts on the health and personal financial security of those trying to get or keep jobs' (Ireland, 2015). Elsewhere Ryan pointed out that '... if you lose your job in your 50s through downsizing or restructuring, and because of age prejudice you can't get back into the workforce, you could be without paid work for 40 years' (Harrison, 2015).

As redundancy packages are depleted, the impact of the significantly lower incomes many are earning is likely to become an increasing issue. This has certainly been the case in the UK, where concerns about future earnings of laid off journalists are dramatically reflected in Nel's study, with 50% of 135 surveyed worrying about money above job satisfaction (16%) (Nel, 2010, p. 38). Changes to

income and well-being are both significant longitudinal themes to follow over the life of this project and will be tracked in future New Beats surveys.

The kinds of work journalists take up post-redundancy will also be a continuing theme of the New Beats project. The finding here that just over 60% of participants said that they working in some form of journalism is complicated by definitional issues. That 25 people (18.2%) of those who self-identified they were still working within journalism-listed positions that did not appear to be journalism-related, hints at one of the complexities of tracking and interpreting the post-redundancy careers of journalists. As noted, our conclusion here is that some of these might also be undertaking some freelance work, which points to the possibility that many of those made redundant might still identify primarily as journalists even if much of the work that they do could be seen to fit into other professional categories.

But it may also be that it is becoming more difficult to make definitive statements about the trends relating to media work when the media itself is diffusing and fragmenting. What Deuze describes as ‘increasing complexity and ongoing liquefaction of the boundaries between different fields, disciplines, practices, and categories that used to define what media work was’ (Deuze, 2007, p. 112), is also being reflected in the erosion of the once solid boundaries between different kinds of media work, and between media work and other forms of employment. As Peters (2015) has noted in his study of journalists who serve as media coordinators for Missouri courts, ‘the study of journalistic role conceptions, based on the assumption that role conceptions influence journalistic outputs, has not addressed the idea that journalists possess multiple roles inside and outside the journalistic field’ (Peters, 2015, p. 324).

Future research plans

As mentioned in the method section, this survey included several open-ended questions that invited participants to discuss their redundancy experiences, professional identity, networking with former colleagues, looking for work, training, and questions of well-being. The extensive material this garnered will be the focus of subsequent articles by members of the New Beats team that will focus on these themes separately.

Future surveys from this team will also track the extent to which experiences of redundancy over time correlate with the year of redundancy. As noted above, the

sample of 2013 and 2014 participants is far smaller than the 2012 subset, but a notable trend is that redundancy is progressively spreading to younger workers. Might their relative youth point to an easier transition to other work? Or will those of them who remain in some form of journalism be more exposed to the growing precarity of media work?

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors

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Table 1 - Descriptive Statistics of Survey Respondents

Variable	Value	Frequency	%
Gender	Female	95	42.2
	Male	130	57.8
Language spoken at home	English	222	98.5
	Language other than English	3	1.5
Education Level	Year 10	1	0.4
	High School	48	21.3
	Advanced Diploma or TAFE	17	7.5
	Undergraduate Degree	99	44.0
	Postgraduate Degree	60	26.7
Journalism education*	None	40	17.8
	Cadetship	110	48.9
	Undergraduate Degree	70	31.1
	Postgraduate Degree	21	9.3
	Other	28	12.4
Age**	18-25	3	1.3
	26-30	7	3.1
	31-35	9	4.0
	36-40	14	6.2
	41-45	33	14.7
	46-50	38	16.9
	51-55	49	21.8
	56-60	32	14.2
	61-65	30	13.3
	66+	10	4.4

n=225

*respondents could select more than one answer to this question.

**This is age at the time of the survey, not the redundancy.

n=225

Table 2 - Overview of respondents at the time of redundancy.

Variable	Value	Frequency	%
Job status	Contract	2	0.9
	Part-time	49	21.8
	Full-time	174	77.3
Redundancy Type	Voluntary	173	76.9
	Involuntary	52	23.1
Previous employer	Fairfax	107	47.6
	News Corporation	77	34.2
	ABC	8	3.6
	Channel 10	6	2.7
	The West Australian	6	2.7
	Bauer Media	3	1.3
	AAP	2	0.9
	Channel 9	2	0.9
	Channel 7	1	0.4
	Commercial Radio	1	0.4
	Other	12	5.3
Journalism Experience (Years)	1-5	8	3.6
	6-10	15	6.7
	11-15	19	8.4
	16-20	30	13.3
	21-25	37	16.9
	26-30	38	17.3
	31-35	39	16.3
	36-40	15	6.7
	40+	24	10.7
MEAA Membership	Yes	161	71.6
	No	61	27.1
	Other Union	3	1.3
Digital Content Training	No training or re-skilling	167	74.2
	Yes, employer funded	48	21.3
	Yes, self-funded	3	1.3
	Both employer & self-funded	7	3.1

n=225

Table 3 – Current work situation

Variable	Value	Frequency	%
Current work situation	Taking a break	9	4.0
	Retired	12	5.3
	Looking for work	17	7.6
	Working within journalism	70	31.1
	Working in a combination of journalism and other	67	29.8
	Working outside of journalism	50	22.2

n=225

Table 4 - Where did those who left journalism actually work?

Variable	Value	Frequency	%
Work - Not Journalism	Public Relations for an Organisation	15	30.0
	Public Relations in Politics	13	26.0
	Writing or Editing for an Organisation	9	18.0
	Self-Employed	7	14.0
	University Lecturer or Tutor	4	8.0
	Other	2	4.0

n=50

Table 5 - Where did those who stayed in journalism actually work?

Variable	Value	Frequency	%
Work – In Journalism	Combination of Organisations	41	29.9
	Newspaper	26	19.0
	Other Organisations	25	18.2
	Magazine	13	9.5
	Online Media Outlet	12	8.8
	Industry Organisation	10	7.3
	Broadcaster	7	5.1
	Other	3	2.2

n=137

Table 6 - Comparison Table – Income

Income	Pre-Redundancy (225)	No.	%	Post-Redundancy Journalism (137)	No.	%	Post Redundancy – Non-Journalism (50)	No.	%
	Under \$20,000	0	0.0	Under \$20,000	15	10.9	Under \$20,000	4	8.0
	20,001-40,000	5	2.2	\$20,001-\$40,000	15	10.9	\$20,001-\$40,000	5	10.0
	40,001-60,000	18	8.0	\$40,001-\$60,000	30	21.9	\$40,001-\$60,000	5	10.0
	60,001-80,000	33	14.7	\$60,001-\$80,000	29	21.2	\$60,001-\$80,000	9	18.0
	80,001-100,000	58	25.7	\$80,001-\$100,000	27	19.7	\$80,001-\$100,000	12	24.0
	100,000-120,000	44	19.5	\$100,000-\$120,000	7	5.1	\$100,000-\$120,000	6	12.0
	120,001-140,000	34	15.0	\$120,001-\$140,000	6	4.4	\$120,001-\$140,000	7	14.0
	140,001-160,000	16	7.1	\$140,001-\$160,000	3	2.2	\$140,001-\$160,000	1	2.0
	160,001-200,000	11	4.9	\$160,001-\$200,000	2	1.5	\$160,001-\$200,000	1	2.0
	200,001-240,000	3	1.3	\$200,001-\$240,000	2	1.5	\$200,001-\$240,000	0	0
	240,001 +	3	1.3	\$240,001+	1	.7	\$240,001+	0	0

Table 7 - Comparison Table – Employment Status

Employment status	Pre-Redundancy (225)			Post-Redundancy Journalism (137)			Post-Redundancy – Non-Journalism (50)		
	No.	%		No.	%		No.	%	
Full-time	174	77.3		Full time	48	35.0	Full time	24	48.0
Part-time	49	21.8		Part time	18	13.1	Part time	7	14.0
Contract	2	0.9		Contract	14	10.2	Contract	9	18.0
				Self-employed	12	8.8	Self-employed	7	14.0
				Freelance	32	23.4	Freelance	2	4.0
				Other	13	9.5	Other	1	2.0

n=225

Table 8 - Comparison Table – Income Pre & Post-Redundancy – Only Full-Time

Income	Pre-Redundancy (174) – Full-time workers only	No.	%	Post-Redundancy Journalism (48) Full-time workers only	No.	%	Post Redundancy – Non-Journalism (24) Full-time workers only	No.	%
	Under \$20,000	0	0.0	Under \$20,000	0	0.0	Under \$20,000	0	0.0
	20,001-40,000	1	0.6	\$20,001-\$40,000	0	0.0	\$20,001-\$40,000	1	4.2
	40,001-60,000	8	4.6	\$40,001-\$60,000	3	6.3	\$40,001-\$60,000	1	4.2
	60,001-80,000	18	10	\$60,001-\$80,000	13	27.1	\$60,001-\$80,000	3	12.5
	80,001-100,000	42	24.0	\$80,001-\$100,000	18	37.5	\$80,001-\$100,000	7	29.2
	100,000-120,000	38	21.8	\$100,000-\$120,000	5	10.4	\$100,000-\$120,000	5	20.8
	120,001-140,000	34	19.5	\$120,001-\$140,000	4	8.3	\$120,001-\$140,000	5	20.8
	140,001-160,000	16	9.2	\$140,001-\$160,000	2	4.2	\$140,001-\$160,000	1	4.2
	160,001-200,000	11	6.3	\$160,001-\$200,000	2	4.2	\$160,001-\$200,000	1	4.2
	200,001-240,000	3	1.7	\$200,001-\$240,000	0	0.0	\$200,001-\$240,000	0	0
	240,001 +	3	1.7	\$240,001+	1	2.1	\$240,001+	0	0

Table 9 - Age and Current Type of work.

Age	18-35 (19)	No.	%	36-50 (85)	No.	%	51+ (121)	No.	%
	Taking a break	1	5.3	Taking a break	1	1.2	Taking a break	7	5.8
	Retired	0	0.0	Retired	0	0.0	Retired	12	9.9
	Looking for work	1	5.3	Looking for work	10	11.8	Looking for work	6	4.9
	Working within journalism	8	42.1	Working within journalism	25	29.4	Working within journalism	37	30.6
	Working in a combination of journalism and other	8	42.1	Working in a combination of journalism and other	23	27	Working in a combination of journalism and other	36	29.8
	Working outside of journalism	1	5.3	Working outside of journalism	26	30.6	Working outside of journalism	23	19.0

Table 10 - Year of Redundancy

Variable	Value	Frequency	%
Year of Redundancy	2012	160	71.1
	2013	43	19.1
	2014	22	9.8

n=225