

**FORUM<sup>#</sup>****BROADCASTING AND MEDIA LAWS****FOREWORD**

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The recent legislative reforms to Australia's media laws have received a mixed response.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the political background to these laws itself suggest that this would be the case. This Forum seeks to critically explore the issues arising from these reforms from both a theoretical and practical perspective. Whilst the Forum covers a broad array of topics, it largely avoids the heavily debated social issues surrounding media reform, such as cultural diversity and media bias. Rather, it considers the practical implications of the reform packages, its policy underpinnings, the context of media reform in a rapidly evolving technological environment, and the application and interpretation of the amendments by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission ('ACCC') and the Australian Communications and Media Authority ('ACMA'). In this regard, it is hoped that this Forum will offer readers practical insights into the operation of recent media reforms, and encourage debate as to the adequacy of the principles underlying the reform package and the sufficiency of the reforms in light of the current social, political and technological environment.

The intention of the *University of New South Wales Law Journal* in all its Forums is to grapple with current legal issues that may not have yet been widely written on, or would perhaps benefit from consideration in a compendium of articles. The Forum aims to promote greater awareness and considered analysis of contemporary legal issues within academic, judicial and professional circles. Here, consideration of the amendments to multichannelling, the new regulatory powers of ACMA, the technical application of the new amendments, and the implications of new technology (including Virtual Worlds) on media reform, will hopefully assist in achieving this objective.

The first five articles in this Forum explore the main features of the media reforms and the policy underpinning them, including a comparison of the media

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1 See, eg, *Broadcasting Services Amendment (Media Ownership) Act 2006*, *Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (Digital Television) Act 2006*, *Television Licence Fees Amendment Act 2006* and the *Communications Legislation Amendment (Enforcement Powers) Act 2006*.

reform process in Australia to that in the United States, and the application of the reforms by the ACCC and ACMA. The sixth article critically considers the commercial and social consequences of the reforms, and the final three articles delve into more specific areas of the reforms, including the practical application of the media diversity laws, the legal implications of Virtual Worlds, including the Virtual World 'Second Life', and consideration of the foreign ownership reforms.

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