



The Riverina's Own Television Service



CSU Regional Archives Summer Research Project

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Introduction

RVN-2 was established in 1964 as Wagga Wagga's dedicated local Television Station, providing a television service to the people of the Riverina and South-West Slopes area of New South Wales, both in the production of local television programs such as the news service, and the broadcasting of purchased television programs seen to Metropolitan Audiences.

RVN-2 refers to the broadcast license call sign of the station, "2" being the channel number of the frequency. However, RVN-2 was also the name and reference attributed to the station and the channel for many decades amongst viewers, and up to today, those who experienced RVN-2 sometimes still refer to the channel as that.

RVN-2 was more than just a television service. Its identity on air and its Koorringal Studio facility became local institutions equivalent to that of a landmark. The station was a major local industry, at one time employing 150 local people in various roles from production to technical to clerical, as well as providing an introduction and training ground for young television employees.

RVN-2 represented regional localism and a commitment to community at its finest, and this research report celebrates the history and achievements this television station provided to the people of the Riverina.

The report details the introduction and origin of television in the Riverina, the significance it has played to the communities and audiences it has served, and the changes in ownership and Government policy that have impacted on the existence of this television station.

This report is the publication of the CSU Regional Archives Summer Research Scholarship, utilising the resources and materials currently held at the CSU Regional Archives in Wagga Wagga, and assisted by Archives and University staff.

Formation of Television in Australia

Television in Australia first went to air on 16th September 1956 at 7pm on Australia's first television station, TCN-9, the famous words of Bruce Gyngell, "Good Evening and welcome to Television", etched forever in Australian history. The Postmaster General (PMG) introduced Television across Australia in stages, Stage 1 was in Sydney and Melbourne where within six months of the first broadcast, both cities had three television stations (TCN-9, ATN-7, ABMN-0 for Sydney, and GTV-9, HSV-7 and ABMV-0 for Melbourne). Stage 2 introduced television to other capital cities like Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth, who all received their service in 1959¹, Stage 3 covered provincial cities such as Canberra, Newcastle, Ballarat, and Stage 4 was for general regional areas, including the Riverina.

Formation of Television in the Riverina

In 1962, tenders were called by the Postmaster General for the establishment of a television service in the Riverina and South West Slopes area of NSW. Competition for the licenses was high. Not only were local businesses in the region bidding for the tenders, but they were in direct competition with the capital city television networks, who only wanted to set up relay transmitters to direct their City-based broadcasts out into the region. Such local tenderers were known to be the following:

- Wagga based *The Daily Advertiser* newspaper and the area's popular radio station 2WG
- Long-running Young based 2LF Radio station, with local councils and businesses in the South-West Slopes region
- Wagga RSL Club and Leagues Club²

Eventually, the 2LF and South-West Slopes consortium merged with the 2WG/*The Daily Advertiser* bid, as a means to give more strength in their bid for the license so that capital contributions from each stakeholder would not be as high, with this now officially forming the company Riverina Television Limited. The newly formed board agreed to allocate 2LF 10% of shares, 2WG holding 20% and *The Daily Advertiser* with 15%, with the remaining 55% of shares floated for subscription by locals in the future viewing area.³ The consortium was successful in its bid and was awarded the Television broadcasting licence by the Postmaster General in November 1963⁴

The prospectus to financially form Riverina Television Limited was announced on 17 May 1963, with an allocation of 543 995 shares to be made available to interested shareholders residing in the future viewing area. By then, it was officially finalised and announced that the principal shareholders of Riverina Television Limited were Riverina Broadcasters, owners of 2WG, A. and P. Sullivan Ltd, principal shareholders in *The Daily Advertiser* and Young Broadcasters, 2LF.⁵

The initial board of Riverina Television Limited was formed with Eric Roberts, 2WG's Owner, to act as Chairman, Ted Thomas, 2WG's General Manager, to act as Managing Director, John Jackson (The Daily Advertiser), Bill Marsden (2LF's General Manager), Frank Twomey (Mayor of Cootamundra Shire) and Keith Dunn (Kyeamba Shire President) acting as directors of the company. A disagreement between the Board and Ted Thomas and Eric Roberts led to their resignation from the board, and were subsequently replaced as chairman by Wal Hucker who owned a radio recording and film animation business in Sydney, with Bill Marden to be promoted to Managing Director. ⁶

To effectively serve the proposed viewing area of the Riverina and the South West Slopes (Refer to Appendix _) surveys established that the required transmitter would be located on the summit of Mount Ulandra, at 2498ft above sea-level, located 25kms South-West of Cootamundra, or 4km from the village of Bethungra. The original proposal by the company sought to procure a site on Willans Hill in Wagga Wagga, to establish its transmitter, which would have allowed a virtually direct 'line of sight' path for the microwave link to the Mount Ulandra transmitter. However, this was declined by Wagga Wagga City Council⁷, and it was subsequently decided that a repeater at Brucedale, 15km north of Wagga Wagga, would be required to transmit the broadcasting signal from the Studio to Mt Ulandra. Also of significance is, due to the remoteness of Mt Ulandra in the context of accessibility, this television transmitter was the first in the Southern Hemisphere to be remotely controlled from the studio facilities⁸

Upon the issuing of the licence, establishing the office and sales facilities, at 2WG's, Fitzmaurice Street office, tenders were called by Riverina Television Ltd for the acquisition of transmission and broadcasting equipment. This tender was awarded to Amalgamated Wireless Australasia (AWA) Ltd, for studio equipment including cameras, lighting and other broadcasting tools, the Mt Ulandra transmitter and its accompanying microwave repeater located at Brucedale. The mast on Mt Ulandra was 550ft (165m) tall atop the 2498ft summit on Mt Ulandra, and was initially powered at 100kW ⁹

The tendering process was also made for the construction of the studio facilities, to be built at Koorungal, and was awarded to Wagga Architect G. Trafford Walker and builder H. C. Buckman and Sons Pty. Ltd. Construction of the studio began on the 31st July 1963¹⁰. The design of the studio reflected the company's modest ambitions, as former Managing Director Bill Marsden writes:

*"..we had to scale right down to a minimum, and expand as we could afford it. Most stations had been built like movie studios, expecting to do lots of productions and were too lavish. I thought 'radio with pictures' was a more sensible approach, and we set up accordingly."*¹¹

Testimony to Marsden's approach, RVN-2's studio was only 60x40ft (18x12m)¹², which was a modest size compared to other regional stations at the time. Of note, was that Television was already available in the Riverina and South-West Slopes, with the transmission signal from already operating stations GMV-6 Shepparton in Victoria, CBN-8 Orange and CTC-7 Canberra reaching as far as Wagga Wagga, as well as the government broadcaster ABC (ABMN-0). Television sets and aerial installation services had been marketed at least two years before RVN-2 began.

Opening Night

RVN-2 officially began transmission on the night of 19 June 1984 at 7pm, to much anticipation by the people of the Riverina and South-West Slopes. Prior to the opening of RVN-2, many in the Riverina heeded marketing advice of purchasing their television sets and installing their aerials in advance to avoid any last minute demands, while others who did not own television sets were invited to view them from shopfronts.¹³

The opening broadcast began with the Royal Australian Engineer's Band from the Kapooka Army Base, playing the Australian National Anthem on the grounds of the RVN-2 Koorinal Studios, before the appearance of the first presenter of the station, Paul Griffiths, welcoming viewers to the broadcast and introducing the Chairman of Riverina Television Limited, W.J. Hucker. RVN-2's commitment to the community was pledged from the moment of their first broadcast as stated by Hucker's address to the viewers

"Without you, the viewer, and 144 000 others like you, the station we're opening tonight could not be, for it was for you that we have built our magnificent studios, and it was for you that we tore up a rugged road up a mountain to erect a 550ft steel tower on a peak where only wild mountain flowers existed. It is for you, the viewer, that we have gathered together the finest television programs of today and it is for you and your special needs that we are pledged to serve.

*As far as possible, we intend to cover local events and to encourage local talent so that RVN will truly be your station. "*¹⁴

Following the address by W.J. Hucker, the then Minister for National Development and Member for Farrer, Mr David Fairbairn, was introduced to viewers, to officially open the station through the signing of the visitors book. Fairbairn was also very positive and optimistic for the future of the new television service, and in his address, stated the importance of television to the region as well as dispelling concerns individuals may have had upon the introduction of television

"I've always felt, that television is more necessary in the country than it is in the city. Although of course, it is a way of life throughout the world today but in the country I think it plays a bigger part, you have people more isolated in the remote areas and for them to be able to sit at home after a day's work and get the entertainment which in the past they wouldn't have been able to get, I think which is something very worthwhile for the country person..

*..I have a set myself, if anything I think that television has tender to bring the family back together again, because they stay at home and look at television instead of going out to get their entertainment as they did in the old days. "*¹⁵

Addressed by both Hucker and Fairbairn was their tribute to the late Eric Roberts, the first Chairman of radio station 2WG, his previous work to establish and operate the radio station, which was one of the major stakeholders to establish RVN-2. The opening proceedings included a documentary film, showing the construction of the RVN-2 studio facilities. The documentary was filmed and

produced by RVN-2 staff throughout the process of construction of both the Koorinal Studios and the Mt Ulandra transmitter.

Following the Opening Ceremony which concluded at 7:30pm, the first featured program on the channel was *The Frank Ifield Show*, which was a traditional musical entertainment program featuring Australian entertainer Frank Ifield. This program's duration was half an hour, and was followed by an hour long documentary program entitled *Hollywood, The Golden Years*, which detailed the growth of the Hollywood film industry.

At 9pm, RVN-2's first local news bulletin and weather report was broadcast, with their first presenter and news reader Paul Griffiths. The bulletin was very short by today's standard, of only 5 minutes, and was primarily Griffiths reading to the camera with photographs and graphic slides shown as overlay. Upon the conclusion of the news bulletin, the feature film *The Dam Busters* was shown, followed by entertainment program *Jack Benny Special* at 11pm, and then the station's closure.¹⁶

From the following day and for the next two years, RVN-2 was limited to no more than six hours of broadcasting a night compared to other regional stations and the ABC at the time with some having 12 hour programming schedules. RVN-2's began at 5pm with news, weather and evening program highlights, generally concluding before 11pm.

RVN-2 in the community

As pledged from its opening night on 19 June 1964, RVN-2 worked to serve the community of the Riverina and the South West Slopes, not only through its local programming to engage the interaction of local audiences, but also assisting in various campaigns to heighten community awareness of local issues. RVN-2's afternoon children's program *Channel 2 Children's Club*, which was hosted by RVN-2's first hostess, Ms Colleen Schoff, was the first program of this nature, and was part of honouring such a pledge.

Almost a year after it began operation, RVN-2 engaged in promoting its first public campaign in April 1965, a Road Safety Awareness quiz for local High-School students. The campaign established teams of students from participating high schools within the RVN-2 viewing area such as in Tumut, Junee, Narrandera, Griffith, Young as well as Wagga, to compete against each other in their awareness of road safety issues, with the winning team awarded a trophy shield for their possession until a renewed challenge in the quiz was made a month later. The quiz was an initiative of the Channel 2 Children's Club, with direct support from the local Wagga Branch of the Road Safety Council of NSW, with Senior Constable Ian Mortimer Wagga Wagga Police compiling the questions¹⁷. The competition was won by a team representing Young's combined Catholic School. RVN-2 received a certificate of Merit from the Road Safety Council for their outstanding assistance in promoting road safety through the Children's Club television show¹⁸.

RVN-2's encouragement of "local talent", as pledged from the station's opening night is shown with their introduction of a local Talent show which was first broadcast live on Sunday 9 October 1966. The program featured local artists and groups in the program, and requested viewers to write into the station to comment on each act to determine a monthly winner, who would then feature on a half-hour special at the end of the season¹⁹.

Encouraged by the success of this program, RVN-2 introduced the *Junior Star Quest* program the following year, aimed at children under 16 years. The program not only sought to foster young talent in the region, but also to assist supporting local charities. Audition concerts were held in Tumut, Cootamundra, Leeton and Wagga, organised by the Lions Club in Cootamundra and Apex Clubs in other towns, with an admission fee charged going towards the charities organising the concerts. As a result, an estimated 3000 locals attended the exhibition concerts, with 200 entrants reaching the preliminary rounds, and 36 entrants selected to compete in the televised heats on RVN-2, the first program broadcast at 5:30pm on 16 June 1967, and airing nine heats²⁰. The winning contestant at the end of the series was awarded a National Four Track Stereo and Mono Cassette Tape recorder, with wrist watches awarded to the three runners up, prizes which were deemed of great value at the time²¹.

RVN-2's most significant community contribution in its early years was the station's efforts in fundraising for an upgrade of Wagga Wagga Base Hospital's Childrens Ward at the beginning of 1967. The State Government's consolidation of hospital facilities under the Riverina Regional Scheme, had centralised the region's Children's wards into the one facility at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, and as a result, the ward was visited by many patients from outlying towns in the region. Critics said that the centralised facility lacked the sufficient equipment to properly treat and accommodate young patients from across the region, with Chairman of the Hospital Board, Mr L. J. Kennedy describing the facilities, as quote, "hopelessly inadequate"²².

The hospital board sought to raise the required \$20 000 to upgrade the ward, primarily through public appeal, and RVN-2 began *RVN-2 Children's Ward Appeal* almost immediately, with an initial donation of \$1000 towards attaining the \$20 000 target. It was stated by RVN-2's General Manager W. Marsden that many children in the station's viewing area would require the hospital facilities at sometime in their life and through public service announcements, the station encouraged viewers to assist with the appeal.²³

With an initial \$5000 raised, Children's Ward Appeal Walkathon was held on 12 February 1967. Organised with the assistance of the South Wagga Apex Club, the Walkathon required participants to make contributions to the appeal through donations, with prominent community members partaking in the walk being sponsored by viewers. 85 participants, including RVN-2 staff and on-air personalities took part in the walkathon, with the starting line outside of the RVN-2 studios in Koorinal, to the outskirts of Brucedale and onto the Wagga Wagga City Council Chambers, a total distance of 15 miles (Approximately 27.75km). Upon conclusion of the walkathon, more than \$4500 had been raised by viewers and public donations, with the total amount of the appeal to have reached in excess of \$9500, almost past the half-way mark for the ultimate \$20 000 goal.²⁴

As the appeal neared its goal, an announcement indicated the estimated cost of renovating the Children's Ward and acquisition of equipment was highly underestimated. It was revealed the estimated cost would total \$38 000. However, the Member for Wagga, Wal Fife, publicly announced in a telecast on RVN-2 that through the State Government Hospitals Commission, the additional \$18 000 would be made available in a grant, on top of the \$20 000 raised in the appeal.²⁵ Ultimately, the persistence of the Children's Ward Appeal had successfully reached \$20000, only eight weeks after the introduction of the appeal by RVN-2, on 26 April 1967, with work on the renovation undertaken in advance with well predicted anticipation of the conclusion of a successful public appeal.²⁶ The Hospital Commission later upgraded their offer of the grant to match that of the public appeal, which resulted in a total of \$40 000 raised, with further donations being received throughout the renovation.

After six months of renovation, the newly named RVN Children's Ward was opened on 12 November 1967, with the ward named in honour of the television station's efforts to raise the require funds for the upgrade.

Aside from fostering local talent and assisting with community projects, three years after the merger of RVN-2 and AMV-4 in Albury (Discussed on Page 11), the station's role in serving the community continued strongly, this time serving the many viewers in the now enlarged viewing area who were enrolled at the Riverina College of Advanced Education, by telecasting a series of 14 weekly half-hour lectures of a common university subject entitled "Effective Communication", included in many Teaching Courses. This program, the first of its kind in Australian tertiary education and Australian television, was aimed at enrolled students who were unable to attend lectures due to remoteness or domestic obligations. Its first telecast was 10:30pm on 6 March 1973 simultaneously on both RVN-2 and AMV-4, over a trial period of 14 weeks, with the program funded by the College at a subsidised rate by RVN-AMV²⁷. The program was unfortunately short-lived.

Aside from the local news bulletins and afternoon children's show, other local programs included *Your Member Reports*, first broadcast on 26 June 1967 at 9:55pm, allowing politicians to address viewers on their political activities and local issues in the region²⁸. *Compass* was a 30 minute locally produced series on interesting aspects of life of the people residing in the Riverina and North-Eastern Victoria. It was jointly produced by production crews at RVN-2 and AMV-4 and premiered on Saturday 4 November 1978²⁹. *Videorock* was a Saturday morning music video program aimed at teenager audiences.

Television Impact

It should be noted that television's introduction also impacted locally in the region through many indirect ways. One of two cinemas in Wagga was closed, and this was a common impact across Australia in areas immediately upon the introduction of television. In addition, normally crowded streets of the city centre at cafes and restaurants became deserted from the first night of RVN-2's broadcast in June 1964. Newsagents reported a decrease in sales of paperback novels, and the Wagga City Library borrowings dropped from 140 000 to 120 000 in the first year since television's introduction. However ironically, television programs and advertisements on handicrafts increased borrowings and sales of books on the subject!³⁰

RVN-2 and AMV-4 Merger

Even prior to the start of RVN-2, many other existing regional television stations in NSW and Victoria began their first year with financial losses, and such experiences made the initial share subscriptions into RVN-2 a risky venture. Even with such risk, RVN-2 produced a profit in its first financial year of operation and was one of the first stations in Australia to do so. RVN-2's nearest neighbour was AMV-4, the television station serving Albury and North-Eastern Victoria (Refer to Appendix A – Page 19), which began operation four months after RVN-2, performed marginally well in its first year, before the challenges of rising operating costs in subsequent years.

On 14 May 1971, RVN-2 and AMV-4 merged to form a sole company and television operation, initiated by a takeover from RVN-2 and approved by shareholders the day prior³¹. In doing so, the two television stations would pool together their technical and sales resources to combine their programming and viewer bases, which would appeal to advertisers. On air and publicly, the merged television stations were referred to on-air as *RVN-AMV*. Upon the merger of the two stations, Riverina Television Limited and Albury Upper Murray Television Limited were transitioned to the sole company name of Riverina and North-East Victoria Television Limited, which was finally granted through re-registration of the company by the NSW Corporate Affairs Commission on 8 October 1971³².

The first addition to the merged television operation was the establishment of a Micro-Wave link between the two stations in Wagga Wagga and Albury completed in October 1972, to allow television programs to be relayed between the stations simultaneously, essentially cutting many costs in freight and tape duplication in sharing programs between facilities³³. The link consisted of a Microwave dish, linked to the RVN studios by cable, installed on the PMG towers on Willans Hill in Wagga, relayed by other Microwave dishes located on Mount Burngoogie and Mount Raven, before being received on a dish located on Easter Hills on the Albury end. With this established link, RVN/AMV became the first television stations in Australia to simultaneously broadcast videotape programmes by Microwave link, on 24 October 1972³⁴.

The following significant investment was the introduction of colour television to their audience base. Riverina and North-East Victoria Television Limited invested in excess of \$1 Million to upgrade the stations' equipment to accommodate colour broadcasting. The first colour test transmission on RVN-AMV was on 5 October 1974, being a live baseball telecast from Sydney, as well as other select programs in colour. After a number of months of testing, and with the Federal Government's plan of introducing colour television in line with the rest of the nation's television stations, the first day of complete colour broadcasts in the region was on 1 March 1975, with the first program being the children's cartoon, *Yogi Bear*³⁵.

Although the Microwave Link was only intended to save on the transfer of videotapes, thus keeping the separate programming jobs and tasks to each station, this changed four years later, with all programming and transmission for both stations done solely out of RVN-2 in Wagga, consequently reducing staff numbers in Albury who previously entailed these tasks. This shift in programming created many interesting challenges for staff at RVN-2. Their programming for AMV-4 also served viewers in North-East Victoria, essentially providing programs for viewers in two separate states. In terms of sporting telecasts, RVN-2 was required to broadcast NSW Sports such as the Rugby League whereas AMV-4 catered to their primarily Victorian viewers with the Victorian/Australian Football League broadcasts, at many times, broadcast simultaneously.

Adding to such challenges was a unique situation, which emerged in March 1983 when the State Governments of New South Wales and Victoria decided to end their Daylight Savings periods differently for a period of a fortnight. This consequently required RVN-2 staff to transmit the same programming at different times for the separate states, to the difference of one hour. This was accomplished by the separated equipment to transmit to the two different states and audience bases. It is believed RVN-AMV was the only television station in Australia to have had the challenge of simultaneous programming to two separate times at that time³⁶.

Paul Ramsay and The Prime Network

From the introduction of colour television, and the consolidation of transmission tasks, RVN-AMV performed with much financial success and growth. Programming wise, with the acquisition of an Outside Broadcast truck in 1980, RVN-AMV accomplished its first ever live Outside Broadcast in May 1980 at the annual Wagga Gold Cup horse race³⁷. The success of this allowed the television stations to also expand other live broadcast of regional sporting events. On the financial side, such success allowed Riverina and North East Victoria Television Limited to expand their interests, and in May 1982, purchased Koorinal Mall Pty Ltd, the company that owned and administered the Koorinal Mall Shopping Centre, for \$1.2million³⁸.

On 6 July 1984, just over twenty years from RVN-2's opening night, Bill Marsden retired from RVN-AMV³⁹, and was replaced by Norman Brown⁴⁰. Having been a driving force behind the formation of Television in the Riverina, Marsden's retirement was a significant conclusion in the company's direction, which was about to change the following year.

Paul Ramsay, the founder and CEO of the Ramsay Corporation which was a conglomerate group who owned many interests in Healthcare and Media businesses, owned a moderate stake in Riverina and North East Television Limited. Upon the retirement of Bill Marsden in June 1984, the Ramsay Corporation began making its first bid for Riverina and North East Victoria Television Limited on 24 May 1985⁴¹ through acquisition of shares from other stakeholders, a process which didn't take long to accomplish. Rupert Henderson, a majority stakeholder in Wagga's *The Daily Advertiser* newspaper and one of the main shareholders in Riverina and North East Television Limited, sold his remaining shares in the stations to Paul Ramsay Communications Pty Ltd, thus allowing Ramsay to gain majority control in the company on 3 June 1985, holding a 42.6% majority stake in the stations⁴²

Upon the takeover of Riverina and North East Victoria Television, the Ramsay Corporation sought to invite viewers to form committees in assisting with local television programming⁴³. This was a move to assure local viewers and stakeholders in the stations that the company did not seek to alter or make any drastic changes to the television service and promised to remain a local driving force in the Riverina.

However, despite assurances that very little would change at RVN-AMV, the opposite occurred. On 2 August 1985, four employees of RVN-AMV were made redundant, comprising a clerical worker at RVN-2, an operations manager and two other staff at AMV-4. At the time, then General Manager Norm Brown, could not confirm of any further job losses, although following the redundancies, Managing Director of RVN-AMV, Allan Hoy, stated uncertainty for job losses, but likely cancellation of locally produced shows such as *Videorock*, a local music program aimed at youths, and *Scope*, a local current affairs program⁴⁴. This occurred a short time later.

Upon these changes, community consultation was still being undertaken, amidst disapproval for the changes which occurred. Meetings with the community indicated many suggestions, but an overriding desire from these meetings was a resurrection of the previously axed local program *Videorock*, which viewers preferred more than the purchase of the Seven Network's *Sounds* program⁴⁵.

After intense community consultation, RVN-AMV decided to succumb to community consultation, and begin Saturday transmission at an earlier time of 7am, and provide programming to appeal to local young audiences, like cartoon and children's style programming, and the reintroduction of the local music program *Videorock*⁴⁶

November 1985 marked the start of what was to become the future of regional television in Australia. RVN-AMV, which was run by the Ramsay Group, formed an alliance with Country Television Services Limited, which operated two other television stations and a repeater in NSW, those being MTN-9 in Griffith, CBN-8 in Orange and CWN-6 in Dubbo, which was known on-air as Mid-State Television. An alliance with Country Television Services later formed what remains as "The Prime Network". This amalgamation of stations was primarily for further combining the company's sales resources to attract advertisers, with both companies independently managing their own operations and programming tasks⁴⁷.

Aggregation Looms

For decades, regional Australia was constrained by the provision of no more than two television channels, one being their local commercial station, the other being the Government funded and operated ABC. This was a major disadvantage to regional audiences, compared to their metropolitan counterparts, with majority of Australian mainland capital cities having up to five television channels to choose from. Owners of regional stations dictated the viewing habits of audiences in their selections and purchases of television programs, and consequently, were a monopoly operation in their regions. Government reports criticised regional television station owners as having a “wild party of massive profits”.

The former Communications Minister, Michael Duffy, informally stated at a conference in September 1985, on the future of Australian Television that the provision of extra commercial television services in regional areas would now become imminent, with a deadline by the start of 1990, ending the monopoly played by regional television station owners⁴⁸. Such suggestions were naturally resisted by the then Regional Television Association, on the potential loss of significance they provide to their local communities⁴⁹.

The Federal Government officially announced on the 20th May 1986, labelled as the ‘Federal Government’s Indicative Plan for Equalisation of Regional Commercial Television’, the confirmation that regional areas are to have two additional commercial television channels. Two options were provided to Regional Television operators. Provide the additional services themselves through the provision of additional channels, hence maintaining their prized monopoly positions, or affiliate themselves with an existent Metropolitan Network and expand into each others market. RVN-AMV at the time opposed the latter option, owing to its existent links with MTN-9 and The Prime Network for its advertising and program alignment⁵⁰. Naturally, the official announcement was highly criticised by station operations as a means for the then Hawke Government to retain their marginal seats in regional areas⁵¹.

On 17 November 1986, Communications Minister Michael Duffy announced four new competitive markets for commercial television in the regional areas, with the decision to introduce two additional stations in Wagga as part of the plan for aggregation. This provided Wagga with three commercial stations, the other two being Canberra’s CTC-7 (Subsequently becoming the present Southern Cross Ten) and Wollongong’s WIN-4 (Subsequently becoming the present WIN Television). RVN-2 was to remain independent and not expand into other markets, as its ownership of AMV-4 was already servicing regional Victoria. The announcement also noted that Griffith’s MTN-9 was not approved as a commercial market that would benefit from the provision of additional commercial television channels, and hence would not be receiving them⁵².

The Ramsay Group favoured the option of expanding The Prime Network into other television markets, in Canberra, Wollongong, Northern NSW and Newcastle, rather than the provision of Multi Channel servicing⁵³, and submitted its nomination for this option to the Minister for Transport and Communications in August 1987. In the following month, Ramsay purchased Television New England Limited, which operated television stations in Northern NSW being Tamworth's NEN-9 and Armidale's ECN-8. These purchases continued in October, with the purchase of Country Television Services Limited, the operators of Orange's CBN-8 and its translator station CWN-6 in Dubbo. In doing so, The Prime Network finally had the strongest hold of regional television audiences, spanning from the Queensland Border right through inland New South Wales to regional Victoria. Such a stronghold was of great appeal to national advertisers⁵⁴.

As aggregation drew closer by the end of 1989, a new Television tower was erected on Willans Hill. Completed on the 18th December 1989, this new tower was to accommodate the incoming new commercial television networks, confirmed to be WIN Television and Capital Ten.

Changes for the future

The year 1985 saw most dramatic changes at RVN-2, that would forever change the identity of the station. These changes marked the start of the end of a totally local independent entity. Upon the Ramsay Group's acquisition of NSW Regional Television stations up to the end of 1987, drastic changes became imminent. In June 1987, although Ramsay emphasised the importance of local staff to the new enlarged TV group, this assurance was followed by the announcement the separate news bulletins produced by RVN/AMV serving Wagga Wagga and Albury were to be merged into the one bulletin, with a half-mixture of news reports from each region, produced and broadcast from RVN-2 in Wagga Wagga. With the last Albury based AMV-4 news bulletin broadcast on Friday 11 June 1987, such a move was met with much opposition from community and business groups in both cities⁵⁵, citing a lack of interest and relevance in the news and events of their counterpart city, featured in the same bulletin⁵⁶.

This bulletin carried through for six months, amidst continued community opposition, detailed by letters of complaint constantly written to their local newspapers. However, in reacting to such opposition after much community and council complaints and dissatisfaction, The Prime Network announced on 15 December 1987, the RVN-2 local news would be separated from the combined format of the Wagga Wagga and Albury news, and that the separate bulletin for the Albury and regional Victorian market would be returned in the beginning of the new year. In fulfilling this announcement, both news bulletins were separated and the Albury news bulletin finally returned on 18 January 1988⁵⁷.

As the Federal Government's deadline for regional television aggregation neared, the fate of the television stations continued to diminish. Following the reinstalment of the Albury news bulletin, Paul Ramsay announced in October 1988 the moving of RVN-AMV's transmission facilities to a centralised broadcasting centre in Canberra, and expected the move to be completed by the 31st March 1989, nine months before the start of aggregation. This would consequently reduce staff numbers at RVN-2, essentially leaving only the production and sales staff to remain at the Koorngal studios⁵⁸.

In preparing for aggregation, and fulfilling the Federal Governments guidelines of affiliation and alignment to an existent metropolitan television network, The Prime Network chose to affiliate to The Seven Network, and in doing so, RVN-2 removed programs from its schedule that were produced by competing networks. This angered RVN-2 viewers as programs such as *The Ray Martin Show* and *Days of Our Lives* from daytime television were axed from RVN-2, as these programs were associated to incoming competitor WIN-4, affiliated with the Nine Network. Instead, they were replaced with *The Power*, *The Passion* and *The Bert Newton Show*, RVN-2 citing their support for Australian productions⁵⁹. Despite the ownership changes and aggregation, the old community values of 1960s, RVN-2 continued to be part of the Wagga station's commitment to its region.

At midnight on the 1st January 1990, WIN Television and Capital Ten began their first television broadcasts across the Riverina, ending twenty-six years of dominance by RVN-2 in the region.

RVN-2 Today

RVN-2 continues to operate at the time of publication, having been completely integrated into the Prime Television network, with their other television stations in Albury, Orange and Tamworth. The only local production to be facilitated at the Koorinal Studios is the production of the half-hour weekday local news service, with all other programming aligned to the same schedules throughout all the Prime Television markets, facilitated from their Canberra headquarters, and directly affiliated to that of The Seven Network. The Koorinal Studio facility is still in use for their news service, however the studios are also shared with radio stations 93.1FM 2WZD (Star FM), 1152AM 2WG, and the sales office of Southern Cross Ten, all three owned by Macquarie Southern Cross Media, the latter subsidiary being a direct competitor to Prime Television.

AMV-4 was demerged from RVN-2 to become Prime Television's Regional Victoria license holder. Much like the Wagga, Orange and Tamworth stations, Albury's only local production is their own half-hour weekday local news service, with other programming aligned to the rest of the Prime Network.

Both stations continue to operate, albeit employing a small number of staff, in News Production and Sales. Local advertising and commercial production has also ceased at both television stations.

Appendix A - AMV-4

AMV-4 began operation on Monday 7th September 1964, three months after the first broadcast of RVN2 in Wagga Wagga. AMV-4, like many regional television stations after their introduction, was an independent, locally owned and managed company, with its Board represented by locals of business prominence in the viewing area. Located on the border of New South Wales and Victoria, AMV-4, by callsign, was a Victorian based television station located in New South Wales, and as a result, majority of its primary viewing area and audience was in North-East Victoria, with coverage was as far West as Deniliquin, South as Euroa and Bright, Far East as Corryong and Far North as Lockhart. AMV-4 produced many local productions in addition to their local news service, as well as the broadcast of selected programs from Metropolitan stations.

AMV-4 remained independent of RVN-2, until their merger in 1971 as detailed on page 11 of this report. AMV-4 demerged from RVN-2 in late 1989, to become Prime Television's license holder for Regional Victoria.

Appendix B - MTN-9

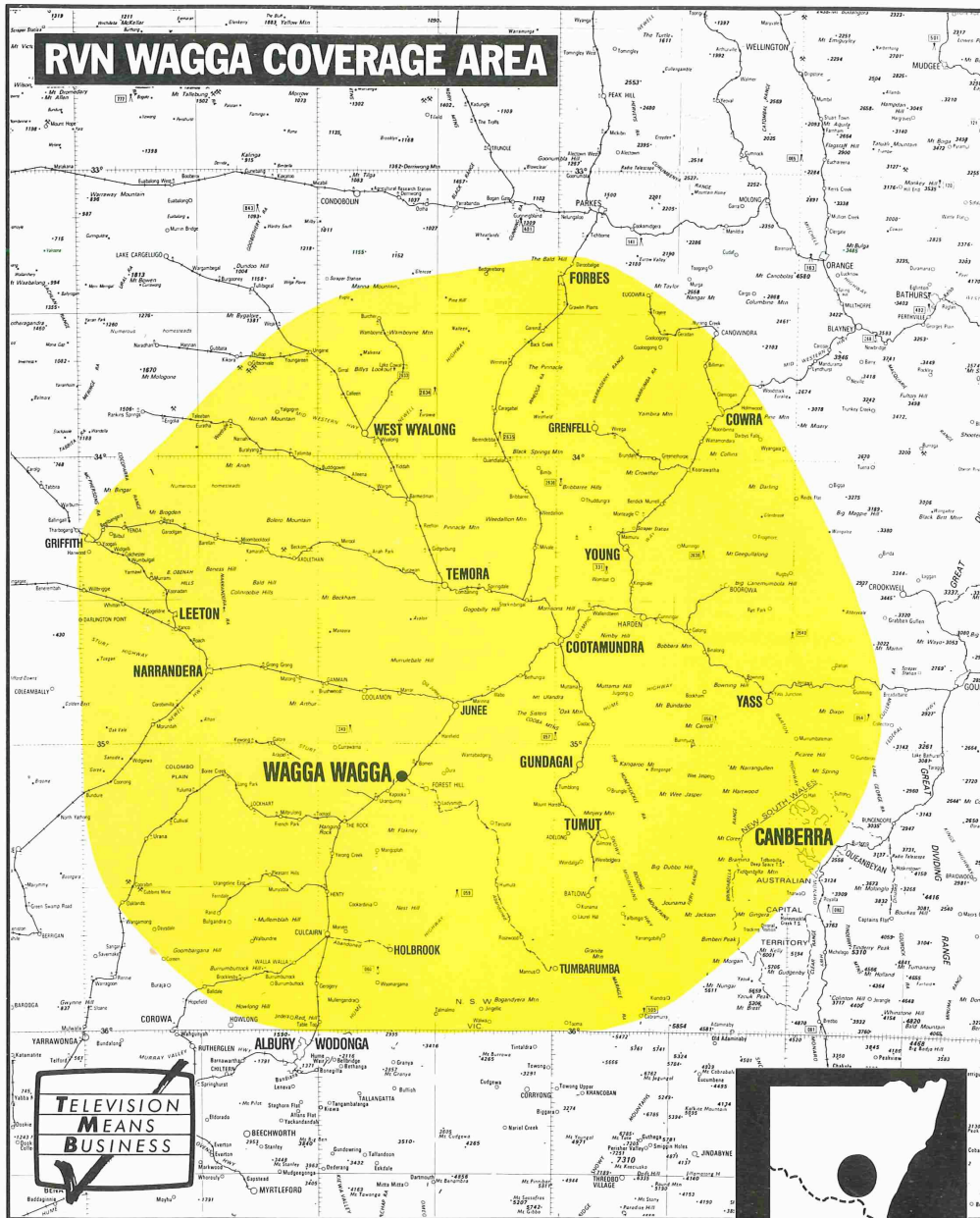
MTN-9 began operation on Wednesday 15th December 1965 at 7pm, over a year and a half after the first broadcast of RVN2. Also an independent, locally owned and managed company, Murrumbidgee Television Limited, MTN-9 served not only the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area of Griffith, Leeton and Narrandera, but extended as far south as Hay, far east as Hillston and far north to Lake Cargelligo. MTN-9 produced a limited amount of local programming (compared to that of RVN-2's and AMV-4's) in addition to a local News Service and advertising production.

MTN-9's only association with RVN-2 was in November 1985 when RVN/AMV was aligned into the Prime Network, see page 13

Upon the Federal Government announcement of Regional Television Aggregation, the television market serving Griffith and the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area was deemed too small for the addition of two commercial channels, and consequently, MTN-9 was later separated from The Prime Network, and continued its operation independently, until its purchase in 1998 by WIN Corporation, owners and operators of WIN-4 in Wollongong, which has subsequently been successful in expanding into other television markets post-Aggregation.

Apart from the production of television commercials, MTN-9's final local production was the long running news service, *WIN News Griffith*, which aired its last bulletin on 18th August 2006.

Appendix C – Viewing Area, RVN-2



Registered Office & Studios:
TELEVISION CENTRE
 Wagga Wagga NSW 2650
 PH (069) 21 1222

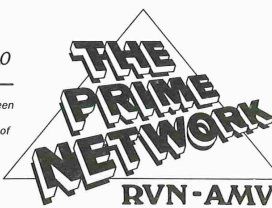
Wangaratta Office:
 69 Ovens Street
 Wangaratta VIC 3677
 PH (057) 21 8544

AUSTRALIAN MEDIA MARKETING:
 SYDNEY (02) 959 4411
 MELBOURNE (03) 525 1010

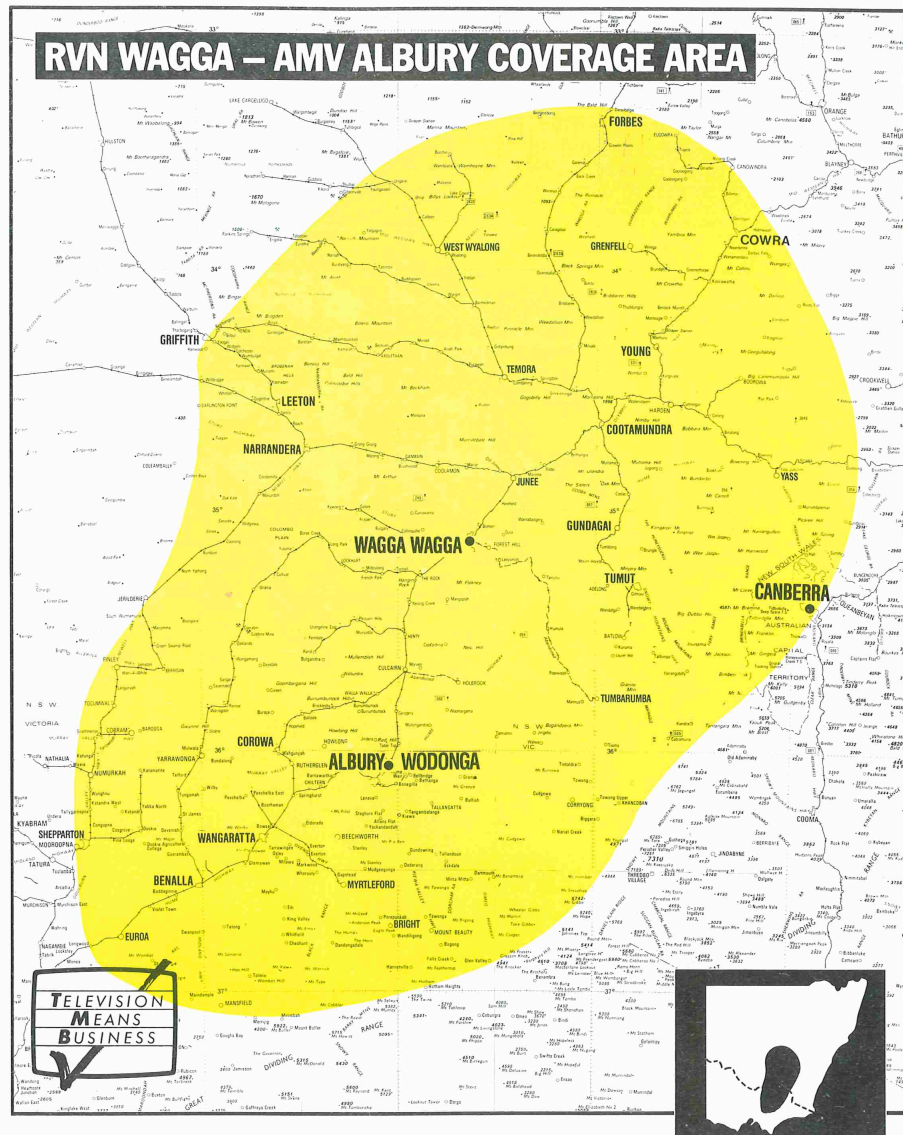
Albury Office & Studios:
TELEVISION CENTRE
 Albury NSW 2640
 PH (060) 25 1444

Young Office:
 2 Mill Court, Lynch St
 Young NSW 2594
 PH (063) 82 1991

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Appendix D – Viewing Area, RVN-AMV



Registered Office & Studios:
TELEVISION CENTRE
 Wagga Wagga NSW 2650
 PH (069) 21 1222

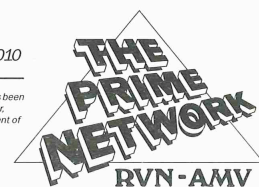
Albury Office & Studios:
TELEVISION CENTRE
 Albury NSW 2640
 PH (060) 25 1444

Wangaratta Office:
 69 Ovens Street
 Wangaratta VIC 3677
 PH (057) 21 8544

Young Office:
 2 Mill Court, Lynch St
 Young NSW 2594
 PH (063) 82 1991

AUSTRALIAN MEDIA
 MARKETING:
 SYDNEY (02) 959 4411
 MELBOURNE (03) 525 1010

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First Broadcast on RVN-2: 19th June 1964

Transcript from the recording of the first broadcast held by Wagga Wagga City Library

Paul Griffiths: *“Good Evening, I’m Paul Griffiths, and welcome to the first program transmission from RVN Channel 2, and of course our opening ceremony. It is my pleasure this evening to introduce to you the chairman of our board of directors of Riverina Television Limited, Mr W. J. Hucker”*

W.J. Hucker: *“Good Evening. I address myself personally to you in your home for television is a personal experience. Without you, the viewer, and 144 000 others like you, the station we’re opening tonight could not be, for it was for you that we have built our magnificent studios, and it was for you that we tore up a rugged road up a mountain to erect a 550ft steel tower on a peak where only wild mountain flowers existed. It is for you, the viewer, that we have gathered together the finest television programs of today and it is for you and your special needs that we are pledged to serve. RVN-2 is one of the finest TV Stations in Australia today, and it is a station that has been built with an eye to the future to fully serve your needs for many years. It is a station that has introduced many new techniques, automation for one, the extensive use of transistors for another, that has excited TV experts around the nation. Your board has endeavoured to give you a station that is efficient, modern and one of which you can be justly proud.*

As far as possible, we intend to cover local events and to encourage local talent so that RVN will truly be your station. All this, was the original vision of one man, whose work in organising our company, and by the winning of our license at a public hearing, has made tonight possible, our first chairman, the late Eric Roberts. We have tried to carry his work through to fulfilment as he would have wanted. On behalf of the board, I would like to thank our manager, Mr Marsden, and our chief engineer Mr McDonald, both of whom have done a magnificent job, our staff, our architect, Mr Gordon Trafford Walker, the builders and contractors, and all those many people that have contributed to the construction of RVN-2.

It is now my pleasure to welcome the honourable David Fairbairn , DFC MHR, the Minister for National Development to formally open RVN Channel 2, by the signing of our visitors book, Mr Fairbairn”

David Fairbairn: *“Good Evening Mr Hucker, Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen. Well today is a great day for Wagga, or perhaps I should say, for the Riverina and South West Slopes, because I understand from Mr Hucker that you will be covering an area very much larger than Wagga itself, and composing some 150 000 people who live in that area. It’s amazing when you think back, if one were to think of 30 years ago it would have been a fantasy of Jules Verne to have said that people were going to sit in their homes and look in and see what we are doing here in Wagga, and see films, in the comfort of their own home, but today, that fantasy has become a reality, and today the 42nd TV Station has been opened in Australia. TV is big time in Australia, today the industry has an investment of something like 300 million pounds and I believe that there are something like two and a quarter million licenses in Australia for people who own TV sets. I’m glad to see the faith that Riverina Television has had in this station, and after all one must realise that they*

have invested a great deal of money here, I believe that something like half a million pounds has been spent on this magnificent station, I hope that many of you will get an opportunity of coming here, and looking at the station and seeing what they have done.

I've always felt, that television is more necessary in the country than it is in the city. Although of course, it is a way of life throughout the world today but in the country I think it plays a bigger part, you have people more isolated in the remote areas and for them to be able to sit at home after a day's work and get the entertainment which in the past they wouldn't have been able to get, I think which is something very worthwhile for the country person, so I'm particularly glad to see that this station has been opened, primary of course, television is for pleasure but it also serves very many other uses, of education, particularly of education in agriculture, of advertising, news, weather and it fills a great many uses to the man on the land and I'm sure you're going to find that your viewers will be served, and served well by the programs that will be put over from this station.

There were those in the early days who were perhaps a little bit frightened of television when it started up in Australia, we were told that television was going to alter our way of life, that it was going to affect the family. Well all I can say, and I have a set myself, is, I think that television has tended to bring the family back together again, because they stay at home and look at television instead of going out to get their entertainment as they did in the old days.

Now Riverina Television has privileges by having its license here, but with those privileges goes responsibilities, and I know that Mr Hucker, you and the directors, are very well, ah, well realise the responsibilities that you have got. Just as there are responsibilities with the great newspapers and the broadcasting stations they must do their utmost to cover fully and to cover well, the news and the news commentaries, and to give the true picture to the public, of what is happening in their midsts, and what is happening throughout the world. And when I'm speaking of the directors of Riverina Television, I want also to mention as did Mr Hucker, your first chairman of directors, the late E.V. Roberts, because I knew him well, personally for a long time, I know what a magnificent job he did, in getting 2WG operating and making it the first class station that it is today, and I'm mainly sorry that he wasn't able to see this opening here tonight.

Now I understand that the Postmaster General has told me that early in the new year, the national station will be operating here, and then you will have a choice of two stations, this of course presents some difficulties, I read recently of a case in New Zealand where one man went into his next door neighbour to see the film that he wanted to see but they refused to put it on, and I think he finished up shooting two of them. I hope that this won't happen in this area.

I now have very much pleasure indeed in declaring this station officially open by signing the visitors book. "

CSU Regional Archive resources

The Daily Advertiser, various

RVN-2 Newsreel Film

- RW6 – Various newsfilm and scripts, 1975-77
- RW1529 – Item 1: Wagga Floods Newsfilm (1974) and Wagga Centenary (1970)
- RW1529 – Item 2: Gough Whitlam's visit to Wagga Wagga

RVN-2 License Renewal Application

- RW2150: Television License Renewal applications. Riverina and North-East Victoria Television Pty Ltd, Prime Television and WIN Television

Other Resources

Personal Interviews

- Kevin Olsen
- Patrick Coombes
- Bruce Gater
- Marilyn Chapman

Wagga Wagga City Library

- Video recording of RVN-2 Opening Night on 19th June 1964
- Photograph of RVN-2's Koorinal Studios (On cover of report)

Roy Vision Website

- Personal account written by Bill Marsden. Retrieved 11-03-2008
<http://www.xroyvision.com.au/ecv/rvn/2003/origins.html>

The author also greatly acknowledges the assistance of the following people:

The staff of the Charles Sturt University Regional Archives

- Nancy Blacklow
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- Vivian Tucker
- Marilyn Chapman
- Andrew Skewes
- Narelle Gardiner
- Deborah Braines

Terms

This report uses the following terms as a means to distinguish the various contexts implied on topics and information:

- **RVN-2**, with the hyphen, was the official registered callsign and broadcasted public identity of the television station. RVN-2 has also been referred to as RVN2 (Without the hyphen). In the context of this report, the use of RVN-2 will encompass the television station as a whole entity, including that of the production, technical, financial and clerical departments.
- The same context is implied in the use of the term **AMV-4**, to describe the local Albury based television station, which otherwise has also been referred to as AMV4 (Without the hyphen).
- In describing the merged state of RVN-2/AMV-4, the single whole entity of the merged stations is referred to in this report as **RVN-AMV** (Officially registered with a hyphen between RVN and AMV) encompassing the production, technical, financial and clerical departments of both television stations in Wagga Wagga and Albury.

In referring to the business and financial aspect of the station, which is completely independent of television production aspect of the station mentioned, the following terms are used:

- **Riverina Television Limited**: Referring to the original registered company name of the television station upon its formation in 1963, prior to its merger with AMV-4 in 1971.
- **Riverina and North-East Victoria Television Limited**, referring to the registered company name of the merged television stations RVN-2 and AMV-4 (RVN-AMV) after 1971.
- **The Prime Network**, which refers to the initial Television Stations change in ownership towards the Ramsay Group and its corporate and programming alignment to other television stations under the same ownership, all of which were affiliated to the programs and schedules of the Seven Network.
- **Prime Television**, referring to the present ownership and public identity of the television station at the time of this report's publication.

In referring to the parent company of Riverina and North East Victoria Television Limited and subsequently The Prime Network, which is completely independent of the television production aspect of any station owned or affiliated by the company, the following terms are used:

- **The Ramsay Corporation**: Encompassing its subsidiary Paul Ramsay Communications Pty Ltd, which was the official controlling stakeholder in Riverina and North East Victoria Television Limited, and encompassing Paul Ramsay, founder and CEO of The Ramsay Corporation

Footnotes

- ¹ Graeme Turner and Stuart Cunningham, *The Media and Communications in Australia* (2006) p177
- ² *Riverina Express*, 6th April 1962
- ³ Marsden, B. *The Origins of Riverina Television Pty Ltd*. Retrieved March 11, 2009, from <http://www.xroyvision.com.au/ecv/rvn/2003/origins.html>
- ⁴ *The Daily Advertiser*, 6th November 1963
- ⁵ *The Daily Advertiser*, 17th May 1963
- ⁶ Marsden, B. *The Origins of Riverina Television Pty Ltd*. Retrieved March 11, 2009, from <http://www.xroyvision.com.au/ecv/rvn/2003/origins.html>
- ⁷ Marsden, B. *The Origins of Riverina Television Pty Ltd*. Retrieved March 11, 2009, from <http://www.xroyvision.com.au/ecv/rvn/2003/origins.html>
- ⁸ *The Daily Advertiser* Tele-guide, 11th May 1963
- ⁹ *The Daily Advertiser*, 17th May 1963
- ¹⁰ *The Daily Advertiser*, 11th May 1964
- ¹¹ Marsden, B. *The Origins of Riverina Television Pty Ltd*. Retrieved March 11, 2009, from <http://www.xroyvision.com.au/ecv/rvn/2003/origins.html>
- ¹² *The Daily Advertiser*, 18th June 1964
- ¹³ *The Daily Advertiser*, 20th June 1964
- ¹⁴ 19th June 1964, Opening Broadcast [Television roadcast], Wagga Wagga, RVN-2's, held by Wagga Wagga City Library
- ¹⁵ 19th June 1964, Opening Broadcast [Television roadcast], Wagga Wagga, RVN-2's, held by Wagga Wagga City Library
- ¹⁶ *The Daily Advertiser*, 19th June 1964
- ¹⁷ *TV Times*, 21st April 1965
- ¹⁸ *TV Times*. 3rd November 1965
- ¹⁹ *TV Times*, 6th October 1966
- ²⁰ *TV Times*, 21st June 1967
- ²¹ *Broadcasting and Television*, 25th May 1967
- ²² *The Daily Advertiser*, 13th January 1967
- ²³ *The Daily Advertiser*, 16th January 1967
- ²⁴ *The Daily Advertiser*, 13th February 1967
- ²⁵ *The Daily Advertiser*, 10th April 1967
- ²⁶ *TV Times*, 26th April 1967
- ²⁷ *The Border Mail* (13th February 1973) and *The Daily Advertiser* (13th February 1974)
- ²⁸ *The Daily Advertiser*, 26th June 1967
- ²⁹ *The Daily Advertiser*, 30th October 1978
- ³⁰ *TV Times*, 6th March 1966
- ³¹ *The Daily Advertiser*, 9th September 1971
- ³² NSW Corporate Affairs Commission registration document, held by Prime Television, Koorringal, sighted 22nd January 2009
- ³³ *The Daily Advertiser*, 30th June 1972
- ³⁴ *Broadcasting and Television*, 9th November 1972
- ³⁵ *The Daily Advertiser*, 28th February 1975
- ³⁶ Kevin Olsen interview – conducted 11th December 2008
- ³⁷ Scrapbook, held by Prime Television, Koorringal

-
- ³⁸ *The Daily Advertiser*, 13th May 1982
- ³⁹ (1984, June 18). At Home [Television Broadcast]. Wagga Wagga, Australia: RVN-AMV
- ⁴⁰ *The Daily Advertiser*, 27th June 1984
- ⁴¹ *The Daily Advertiser*, p8, 24th May 1985
- ⁴² *The Daily Advertiser*, p3, 2rd June 1985
- ⁴³ *The Daily Advertiser*, p3, 26th July 1985
- ⁴⁴ *The Daily Advertiser*, p3, 5th August 1983
- ⁴⁵ *The Daily Advertiser*, p3 4th September 1985
- ⁴⁶ *The Daily Advertiser*, p6 27th September 1985
- ⁴⁷ *The Daily Advertiser*, p2, 23rd November 1985
- ⁴⁸ *The Daily Advertiser*, p1, 1st September 1985
- ⁴⁹ *The Daily Advertiser*, p1, 2nd October 1985
- ⁵⁰ *The Daily Advertiser*, p1, 21st May 1986
- ⁵¹ *The Daily Advertiser*, p1, 26th May 1986
- ⁵² *The Daily Advertiser*, p1, 19th November 1986
- ⁵³ *The Daily Advertiser*, p3, 26th February 1987
- ⁵⁴ *The Daily Advertiser*, p2, 13th August 1987
- ⁵⁵ *The Border Mail*, 11th July 1987
- ⁵⁶ *The Border Mail*, p9, 14th July 1987
- ⁵⁷ *The Daily Advertiser*, p5, 15th December 1987
- ⁵⁸ *The Daily Advertiser*, p7, 15th October 1988
- ⁵⁹ *The Daily Advertiser*, p1, 4th February 1989