Commentators on mass media issues in Australia in the 1970s were stuck in one analytical groove: monopoly, generally the evils of it. Authors of journal articles and books harped upon this theme. Humphrey McQueen was blunt: “Monopoly is the right term for Australian newspaper ownership. Even though there is more than one major firm operating in the general field, there is little direct competition between them... The only important fights are takeover bids — that is, competition to increase monopolisation.” In Queensland, when News Ltd sold the *Gladstone Observer* in mid-1975 to Provincial Newspapers (Qld) Ltd, the sale was interpreted as an extension of the Herald and Weekly Times Ltd’s dominance of the Queensland press. The Australian Journalists’ Association said the Herald and Weekly Times was the “ultimate controller” of PNQ and so the sale increased “the Melbourne Herald’s stranglehold on the press in Queensland”. PNQ managing director

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Rod Kirkpatrick is the Editor of the *Central Western Daily*, Orange, N.S.W., and a noted historian of Australian newspapers.
Lex Dunn accused the A.J.A. of making erroneous statements. He said the Herald and Weekly Times did hold (approximately) a forty per cent interest in Queensland Press Ltd, which in turn, through its subsidiary, Queensland Newspapers Pty Ltd, held a thirty-three per cent interest in PNQ. But, he asked, who owns the remaining sixty-seven per cent?

A search of the share register will disclose that over fifty per cent of the shareholding is still firmly held by the Dunn, Manning and Irwin families with further strong holdings by the Ipswich families. Queensland Newspapers Pty Ltd has no representative on the Board . . . * The control of the Provincial Newspapers (Qld) Group still lies where it has always been: in the hands of the Queensland newspaper families who have pioneered the provincial newspaper industry in this State.3

Today PNQ publishes nine of Queensland's thirteen regional daily newspapers, including the newest, the Sunshine Coast Daily (Maroochydore), launched on 7 July 1980.

The control of PNQ continues to rest in the hands of those pioneering newspaper families.

This paper deals with the three families to which Lex Dunn referred specifically in his response to the A.J.A. Emphasis is placed on the patriarchs of each dynasty. Each of the three families has had virtually unbroken links with the State's provincial press since the initial connection: the Irwins since 1867; the Mannings since 1878; and the Dunns since 1887.

THE IRWIN FAMILY

Samuel John Irwin, the patriarch of the dynasty which has guided the destiny of Warwick newspapers since 1867, was born at Newtown, Limavady, Ireland, on 3 March 1838 and emigrated to the United States with his parents at the age of three. After his schooling in Philadelphia, he became apprenticed to the famous publishing firm of McKellar, Smiths and Jordan, entering their book-composing department. He lived in a number of American cities, including Washington where he was engaged in government publication work when the capital was threatened by Confederate troops during the Civil War. He apparently returned to Ireland with other family members and sailed for Queensland on the Wansfell on 18 March 1866, arriving in Brisbane on 26 June. S.J. Irwin

* PNQ was listed as a public company on 9 December 1976 after having issued a prospectus on 27 October 1976. Queensland Newspapers Pty Ltd then accepted an invitation to be represented on the PNQ board by its chief executive officer.
reportedly worked for the Queensland Times, Ipswich, before travelling on to Warwick when he heard of plans to issue a paper to compete with the Warwick Argus. Squatting interests launched the Examiner and Times at Warwick on 15 February 1867, with Alfred Mallalieu as publisher. Irwin was one of the compositors. Four months later he and another compositor, Richard Appleby Cowton, bought the paper from Mallalieu, who had not been able to achieve a basic harmony with readers and advertisers. They traded as Cowton and Irwin, reflecting the dominant role that the Yorkshire-born former choir boy, Cowton, played as editor of the paper.

The Cowton-Irwin partnership brought stability to the Examiner and Times, but Samuel John Irwin would have been startled if he had had an inkling that he was laying the foundations for Irwin family connections with the Warwick press that would span four generations and endure to the 1980s. Irwin, a competent printer, a businessman who could make ends meet, but not a journalist, was probably more interested in producing fine wines than in publishing a fine newspaper. He was a partner in Warilla Vineyards at Ipswich with brothers Robert and John. Their wines would win a Prize Medal and Certificate of Merit at the Philadelphia Centennial exhibition in 1876 and Honourable Mention at the Paris Exhibition in 1878. For a decade or more, Warilla was probably the best known Queensland-produced wine. Lyle Irwin, a grandson of the patriarch, would surmise that S.J. Irwin’s first love was his wines and that he had been reluctant to leave the vineyards at Ipswich on the death of his newspaper partner, Cowton, in 1891. Return to Warwick, he did, however, and the Examiner remained a profitable business concern under his guidance for the eighteen years until his own death.

S.J. Irwin, at the age of forty, married a twenty-three-year-old Irish woman, Matilda Jane Boyd, in a double ceremony at the Presbyterian Church, Toowoomba, on 23 December 1878. (Matilda’s sister, Sarah Lamonte Boyd, married George S. Backhouse on the same occasion.) It was a wise choice of partner for Samuel, for Matilda would exercise a matriarchal influence over the family of four sons and two daughters which she bore him.

Matilda had borne two children and was five months pregnant with a third when Samuel’s younger brother, Robert, the managing partner in the Warilla Vineyards, died on 6 June 1882. John Irwin, the next most senior partner in the firm, sent out a call for Samuel to join him in the day-to-day running of the vineyards. Because of Matilda’s pregnancy, Samuel delayed moving to Ipswich until January 1883, three months after the birth of his second daughter.
The Irwin Brothers had thirty acres under vines — they favoured the black Spanish grape, or Mataro, the white sherry, and the Verdeilho — on a branch of the Bremer River about four miles on the Toowoomba side of Ipswich.

Death took Samuel to Ipswich, and death brought him back to Warwick. His newspaper partner, Cowton, died on 12 September 1891, and Samuel returned to take charge of the business side of the Examiner and Times, appointing a capable young man, Henry Sterne, as editor. James Irwin, a former part-proprietor of the Gympie Times, remained at Ipswich to assist John in running the vineyard, but death struck again soon. On 18 November 1891, John Irwin died at Bundaberg while returning from one of his regular northern promotional trips for the vineyard. Samuel remained in Warwick, attending to advertisers instead of vines. The harvest, for the family, continues to this day.

On 31 December 1899, S.J. Irwin bought out the Cowton family interest in the Examiner, bequeathed by the former editor. Even as Arthur Morgan was easing himself out of the editorial chair at the Warwick Argus for political reasons (he would soon become Premier), Irwin was releasing the managerial reins gradually at the Examiner because of age. For the final few years of his life, he is believed to have "practically retired from active labours on the journal whose destiny he guided. He could gain satisfaction from the knowledge that his first three sons, Samuel Boyd (born in 1879), William Boyd (1885), and James (1887), were well equipped to conduct the family business, having learned the various facets of journalism and printing in the Examiner office. Samuel Boyd could recall having written editorials as early as seventeen years of age (probably when editor Sterne was on leave, or out of town). When S.J. Irwin died on 28 July 1909 at the age of seventy-one, his wife became the proprietor, son Samuel became the manager, Sterne continued as editor, and William and James Irwin played dominant roles on the production side.

It was after her husband's death that Mrs Matilda Irwin exerted her matriarchal influence positively. She would entertain her family — wives excluded — at lavish lunches each Thursday. Harold Boyd Irwin, a son of S.B. Irwin's, can recall as a boy of five "polishing off the remaining goodies on a Saturday" and being paid threepence to do the messages for his grandmother. There was a long arbor in the backyard, covered with many varieties of grapevines, and she would tell Harold the different names of the grapes. When he was about ten, and his brother John twelve, they would be up at 5 am to deliver the newspapers in the icy winter of Warwick, clothed in "balaclava cap, mittens and all". It was during this period that the two
Warwick triweeklies merged to become the Warwick Daily News. The Dunn family were the dominant partners in The Warwick Newspaper Co. Ltd., with the Irwin brothers obtaining shares to the value of the assets previously owned by the Examiner. W.H.A. Dunn, chairman and managing editor of the Argus, held similar positions in the daily newspaper enterprise which began on 1 February 1919. S.B. Irwin became associate editor, brother William took charge of the printing side and James ran the commercial printing section. When the Dunn family expanded its newspaper interests in June 1922 by buying the Toowoomba Chronicle from the Groom family, W.H.A. Dunn left Warwick to run the enterprise, the family’s fourth daily newspaper. S.B. Irwin became editor of the Warwick Daily News, but resigned only four years later — in June 1926 — after failing to gain the support of his brothers in his request for award wages as editor. (The family rift is said to have been healed about 1929.) He joined the Daily Telegraph, Sydney and was still in its employ when he died on 30 January 1933, aged fifty-three. His directorship on the board of The Warwick Newspaper Co. Ltd. passed to his widow, Edith.

W.J.B. Irwin became managing director of the Warwick Daily News on his elder brother’s resignation as editor, and served in that position until the end of 1945. He became chairman of directors when the Dunn family sold its majority interest in the Warwick Daily News to the Irwins for £7500 in September 1936. On his death on 3 November 1958, at the age of seventy-three, William’s brother, James, his junior by twenty months, became chairman till his own death on 20 October 1966 at the age of seventy-nine. James’ son, Lyle, edited the paper from the beginning of 1946 until his death on 14 February 1972, aged fifty-seven. Business manager from 1 January 1946 and managing director from 1962 until August 1979 was Edwin Hollingworth, husband of the former Mary Irwin, a daughter of William’s. When Hollingworth stepped down, his son, Robert Paul, a great-grandson of Samuel John Irwin, was appointed general manager. A fourth-generation Irwin was in command.

THE MANNING FAMILY

William Joseph Manning, editor of the Daily Mercury, Mackay, from 1910-38, chairman of directors from 1917-43, and senior proprietor 1924-43, was an unwilling starter in the newspaper game. He was born at Eden, on the far south coast of New South Wales, on 31 May 1864, the son of a miner who would be lured to Gympie by the gold rush of the late 1860s. When William left school two months before his fourteenth birthday, he had no inclination whatever to become an apprentice printer. He would recall:
At that early period a boy’s ambition was to act as a whim boy (on the diggings); to drive a whim horse and sharpen drills was an achievement worthy of the most ambitious youth, and when it was suggested that I should seek employment in the printing office — there was only one — it appeared to my immature mind that I was being thrown to the commercial Philistines without just cause. I remember the day my father took me to the (Gympie Times) office, led like a lamb to the slaughter, I thought, and presented me for inspection to Mr. Ramsey...

He was to start on 1 April 1878, and the normal pranks of All Fools’ Day only added to William’s misery for he felt he was being made a fool of anyway “by going to a printing office when there were so many whims about and so many horses to drive and drills to sharpen”. Manning joined the Gympie Times only four months before it faced its first competition, from the Gympie Miner, launched by Henry Marcus on 9 August 1878. Gympie’s greatest golden days had passed, but, still, for the Times “nothing counted but mining”, Manning would recall fifty years later. The Times, issued twice a week, had a circulation of 320 and was printed on a hand-driven Columbia press, two pages at a time. Manning recalled that the machine fed the paper on the tympan, one boy rolled the type and another lifted the printed sheet off and straightened or folded it as required.

If either boy failed to do his part he was liable to receive a crack from the tympan as the machinist, doing his part with mechanical precision, moved onward regardless of any part of the boys’ anatomy that might be in the way.
At the age of twenty-one, after completing his apprenticeship with the Gympie Times, Manning moved to Brisbane to work on a brightly, gossipy weekly, Figaro. It is said that Manning was recognised at the time as the fastest hand compositor in Queensland.¹⁶ Four years later, in 1889, he saw an advertisement in Figaro for a manager for the Gladstone Observer. The recently married printer, with his wife, the former Charlotte Emma Black, expecting their first child, applied successfully for the position. The child, Henry John, was born at Gladstone on 6 August 1889 and was destined to work on or administer newspapers for seventy years. William Manning’s opportunity in Gladstone came two years after the death of William Peel Mellefont at the age of forty-six. Mellefont launched the Observer on 1 December 1880 — a new journal taking the same title as Gladstone’s first journal which survived from 1868-72. On his death on 4 February 1887, his widow, Ellen, left with six children and expecting No. 7, sought help from her brother, Robert Kilfeder, who went to Gladstone, bought an interest in the paper and managed it.¹⁷ He appointed Manning as manager two years later when thinking of leaving Gladstone. Manning bought out the Kilfeder-Mellefont partnership after a year in Gladstone and ran the Observer as proprietor-editor for twenty years, a period which covered the emergence and closure of an opposition newspaper, the Gladstone Advocate (1898-1902). In the Mellefont mould of earlier years and the Macfarlan¹⁸ mould of later years, Manning was both the Observer’s editor and a major participant and decision-maker in the affairs of the Gladstone community. Each was a newsmaker as well as a news reporter and editor. Manning was Mayor of Gladstone three times: in 1897, 1898 and 1901. He was chairman at times of both the Progress Association and the Hospital Committee and was officially associated with the foundation of the Gladstone meatworks and the Port Curtis Dairy Association.¹⁹

In early 1910 Manning visited Mackay on business and this is how the story has been passed down in the Manning family:

W.J. was chairman of Port Curtis Dairy factory and the Mackay factory went bung. They sent him up to see whether there was any machinery in the Mackay factory that would be of any use to them in Gladstone. He went up there and there was nothing to be got from the factory, but he always had his eye on having a controlling interest in a daily paper. While he was strolling around Mackay waiting for the next steamer back to Gladstone, he saw the Mercury office and noted that it was very run down. So he went down to his banker — the manager, Mr. Barnard — and said, ‘Mr. Barnard, I see there’s a newspaper round
there in Wood Street. Do you think it’s for sale?’ And Barnard hesitated for a while and said, ‘Are you serious?’ W.J. said, ‘Yes, I’m very serious.’ ‘Well,’ Barnard said, ‘if you give me a cheque for the overdraft, you can have it.’

W.J. Manning actually bought the 2200 shares which A.F. Williams, as managing editor, held in the Daily Mercury till his resignation on 24 April 1910. Manning sold the Gladstone Observer to John Henry Kessell and moved his wife and six children to Mackay, for which he saw a much brighter future.

When Manning introduced himself to the Daily Mercury readers on 25 April 1910, he said that the journal had been, for nearly half a century, the outspoken champion of every movement for the expansion of ‘this magnificent district’.

We propose to vigorously continue, and amplify, the same progressive policy... It is a privilege any newspaper might well feel proud of to be the mouthpiece of a district so rich in natural wealth in so compact a form as we find it in the Mackay district.

The lack of a harbour had unquestionably retarded the progress of Mackay, Manning wrote. The great stream of traffic passing up and down the coast did not stop at Mackay because the obstacles at the mouth of the Pioneer River were ‘too many for busy men to encounter’.

The want of a harbour has cost the district far more than is imagined, and it will be our purpose to keep this subject prominently before the public until the difficult problem is satisfactorily solved.

The problem was so difficult that Mackay would not have its harbour till 1939, in the waning years of W.J. Manning’s life. In his introductory article, Manning referred also to the particular attraction of the district’s rich agricultural lands. He would come to be regarded as an expert on the sugar industry. His counsel on numerous aspects of the industry would be keenly sought, and his unsparing criticism of inefficient methods well founded.

Less than one year after his appointment as managing editor of the Daily Mercury at a salary of £400 a year, Manning became managing director. His appointment took effect from 28 March 1911. The Mercury had been in receivership when he arrived, and he had turned the business around. His grandson, Clarence Morcom Manning, who would also manage and edit the Daily Mercury, said W.J. Manning had succeeded because of a three-pronged plan: he modernised the plant; he put money into the newspaper; and he got
the right people. In early 1917, Manning became chairman of directors of the Daily Mercury and in late 1924 the proprietorship passed into the hands of the Manning family. When this occurred, Manning took steps to increase the volume of news in the Daily Mercury and he plunged all his savings and his faith into the Mercury and the Mackay district.

Through his editorials, he threw himself into the cause for a better, bigger and brighter Mackay. His patriotism to the city and district surpassed all other considerations.

Though his editorials were the preserve of clear, outspoken views, the news columns of his newspaper were balanced and straightforward, according to a contemporary. He would never permit news to be coloured by animosities. A cause could be berated in the editorial columns, but its protagonists had the democratic right to reply in the news columns. Manning’s vehemence in the editorial section was not favoured by personalities. It was based purely on policies. In 1918 Manning took leave of absence from the Mercury to stand, unsuccessfully, against the State Member for Mackay, William Forgan Smith (who would become Premier of a Queensland Labor Government from 1932-42). Forgan Smith would remark in 1943 that he had greatly valued Manning’s friendship and sterling qualities. Many of those upon whom Manning directed political criticism through his editorials were among his regular callers. They valued his friendship and appreciated, without sharing, his views.

One of W.J. Manning’s sons recalls him as “tall, very erect — straight as a pencil, one crony would say — right to the end”. He was a foundation member of Mackay Bowling Club and played very well. He was tremendously wrapped up in the Presbyterian Church and had been an elder in both Gladstone and Mackay. A very strict living man, he observed the Sabbath closely and put away all non-spiritual books on Sunday. W.J. did not talk about his work at home. As an older man he would dictate his editorials to his wife, or one of the children, and sometimes fall asleep during the process. Then he would have to ask them to repeat what he had dictated. “He was very, very exact and very interested in his editorials. Many were related to the progress of the town, or to sugar causes.” Among the sugar causes he fought was the retention of the sugar embargo in the 1920s.

When the so-called Love Scheme for an outer harbour at Mackay was put forward seriously, Manning opposed it through his Daily Mercury editorials. But when the Labor Member for Mackay, W. Forgan Smith, became Premier in 1932, things began to change. Forgan Smith took up the outer harbour scheme seriously and was soon able to provide a £250,000 grant and a £1 million loan at 5 per
cent over forty years. Manning reckoned an injection of Government money on this scale could not be refused, and he swung the Mercury behind the campaign for the outer harbour. One condition of the Government grant was that a poll of electors in the Mackay Harbour Board District had to be held and provided a favourable result. In the poll, 10,528 supported the outer harbour plan and 1,510 opposed it. H.A. Moore, who succeeded W.J. Manning as editor, wrote later:

I make no apologies in saying that the Love Scheme... would have had no chance of succeeding without the backing of W.J. Manning and the Mackay Mercury.

Despite the editorial, managerial and proprietorial demands at the Daily Mercury, W.J. Manning maintained a close and active interest in numerous organisations. He was a foundation member of the Queensland Country Press Association, an executive member of the Australian Provincial Press Association, a member of the Institute of International Affairs, a member of the Royal Geographic Society, and was the patron of numerous charitable and sporting organisations. He took an active interest in the Mackay Chamber of Commerce, the Red Cross, and patriotic institutions, and was “a pillar of the Presbyterian Church in Mackay”. Under his direction, the Mercury increased its capital in March 1921 and again in December 1934. It was registered as a private company in March 1932 and the name change to the Mackay Printing and Publishing Company (Pty.) Ltd. was finally approved at a meeting of shareholders on 27 July 1932. In 1937, the company bought a half interest in Radio 4MK, Mackay’s first broadcasting station. W.J. Manning became a director of Mackay Broadcasting Service Pty. Ltd., the licensee of 4MK, and so did his eldest son, Henry John. On the death of his wife Charlotte, on 10 October 1938, W.J. Manning relinquished editorial charge of the Mercury, and H.A. Moore was appointed editor. W.J. maintained a secretariat at the Mercury office still, and continued as chairman of directors and manager till his own death on 24 April 1943. He left an estate valued at £28,009.

H.J. Manning was immediately appointed to the posts previously held by his father, but never played the editorial role that W.J. had played at the Gladstone Observer and then the Daily Mercury. It was left to H.J.’s son, Clarence, to fill these dual roles again. Clarence, editor of the Daily Mercury from 27 August 1949, became managing editor from April 1968 and held that position till 31 December 1980 when he moved to Brisbane to become managing director of Provincial Newspapers (Qld.) Limited. He has been chairman of the PNQ board since 23 November 1970.
THE DUNN FAMILY

Andrew Dunn, the man who initiated the first chain of major provincial newspapers in Queensland, the patriarch of a newspaper dynasty which stretches down to today, did not fit the stereotype of the pioneer provincial pressman. He had not known the grim existence of an apprentice printer, the financial hardships of establishing a newspaper in a tiny country town. Dunn had tried his hand at a wide range of jobs before he demonstrated his skill as business manager of the Maryborough Chronicle. There he laid the foundations for a chain of newspapers which was to encompass, in succession, Rockhampton, Warwick and Toowoomba. Today the Dunn family is a substantial shareholder in PNQ.

Dunn was born at Greenock, Scotland, on 24 May 1854, the first son of Andrew and Ann Dunn. After attending school at Greenock, he went to sea, then became a clerk in a tea merchant’s office in Calcutta before returning to Scotland to serve as a cadet draughtsman in an architect’s office. In 1879, he married Kate McIntyre and they emigrated to Australia so that she could accept a teaching appointment with the Queensland Education Department. Mrs Dunn became head mistress of the Girls’ South State School, Toowoomba, and Andrew entered the building trade. Their first three children, all boys, were born in Toowoomba. In 1885 the family of five moved to Maryborough where Mrs Dunn was transferred to take charge of the Central Girls’ School there. She held that position until her death on 5 July 1889, aged thirty-four. Andrew and Kate had five sons, one of whom died in infancy, and the other four of whom played important roles later in the family’s newspapers.35

Andrew Dunn (1932 approx)
By chance, Andrew Dunn was offered an appointment as business manager of the Maryborough Chronicle and The Colonist, its weekly offshoot. The newspaper business became a limited liability company in January 1888. At the company’s adjourned half-yearly meeting on 9 August 1888, the directors decided to deduct a bonus of ten pounds per shareholder for “Mr A. Dunn, business manager of the company, for his sedulous attention to its affairs”. Within six months, Dunn had bought twenty-four shares at about forty-three pounds each and had become a director. By mid-1891, he was chairman of directors. His ascendency to a majority shareholding in the Maryborough Newspaper Company Limited coincided with a general economic slump. The company’s six-monthly profits dropped from 476 pounds for the second half of 1889 to fifty-four pounds for the second half of 1891. Losses of twenty-nine pounds and twenty-four pounds were recorded for the two halves of 1892. It was not until the final half of 1898, when a profit of 108 pounds was recorded, that Dunn could strike an optimistic note in reporting to his directors: “There is reason to hope that the next half year will be some what (sic) better.”

On 18 November 1891, Dunn remarried. His second wife was another teacher, Jane Cran, eldest daughter of Mr. James Cran, a pioneer canegrower, of Yengarie, near Maryborough. Jane bore Andrew two sons and two daughters, and was said to have been an astute adviser in business affairs as well as being able to keep to a tight budget on the home front. Jane’s brother, Leonard, would serve as business manager of the Morning Bulletin, Rockhampton, from 1927 till 1955, under the Dunn family ownership.

At the turn of the century, as the Maryborough Chronicle lifted itself out of the economic mire, Dunn raised his sights to the civic sphere and served Maryborough as its Mayor in 1903 and 1914 and as an alderman from 1904 to 1914 and again in 1915. As a Liberal, he served in the closing years of the Queensland Legislative Council, from 3 July 1914 until its abolition on 23 March 1922. Spurred on by the success of newspaper families such as the Buzacotts (of Maryborough, Rockhampton, Brisbane, etc.), the Grooms (of Toowoomba), and the Morgans (of Warwick), Dunn laid plans for his family. He was to have several of his sons trained in various departments of newspaper work and arranged that others who had taken up other occupations should be available if required. In fact, all six of the Dunn boys would play important roles in one or more of the family’s newspapers. And one of the daughters, Flora Margaret (Connal), would be chairman of directors of the Toowoomba Newspaper Co. Pty. Ltd. when the Toowoomba Chronicle celebrated its centenary in 1961.
In the emergence of the Dunn dynasty, 1911 was an important year. The profit for the first half year’s operations of the Maryborough Newspaper Co. Ltd. surpassed 1,000 pounds for the first time; and the family bought a controlling interest in the Morning Bulletin, Rockhampton, installing first-son Andrew as editor and third-son William Herbert Alan (‘Herbie’) as chief of staff. Andrew, junior, had been working on the Morning Bulletin for nearly six years when the death of editor and joint proprietor John Blair on 19 December 1910 gave the Dunn family the opening to buy a controlling interest. The other proprietor, the ageing William McIlwraith, was ready to sell, and the Dunn imprint appeared in the Morning Bulletin from 11 March 1911. After World War I, Andrew, senior, made his second son, James McIntyre, business manager of the Rockhampton paper. His fourth son, Hugh Hector Harold, served as company secretary and then chairman of directors of the Maryborough Newspaper Co. Pty. Ltd. 40

In 1914, the Dunn newspaper chain was extended from its base in Maryborough and its Rockhampton office to Warwick where it added a triweekly publication, the Argus. Sir Arthur Morgan, former Premier of Queensland, and chairman of the board of the Warwick Argus Ltd., persuaded his fellow directors to sell to the Dunn family. Herbie Dunn was transferred to Warwick as managing editor. The Dunns concluded that it was impossible to build strong, independent newspapers in towns within easy reach of the metropolitan press. So they set out on a program of amalgamation. On 1 February 1919 they merged the Warwick Argus with the Irwin family’s Examiner and Times, also a triweekly. The result was the Warwick Daily News, with Herbie Dunn as managing editor and chairman of directors of the new company. After the issue of the Wide Bay and Burnett News, Maryborough, on 29 November 1919, the Dunns bought the goodwill of that paper, in effect merging it with the Maryborough Chronicle. And, after buying the Groom family’s interest in the Toowoomba Chronicle on 27 June 1922, they merged it with the competing daily, the Darling Downs Gazette, on 2 October 1922. Rockhampton was not regarded as being “within easy reach of the metropolitan press” and so the Dunn family continued the Morning Bulletin and the Evening News as separate publications after buying the evening paper (formerly the Daily Record, the Daily Northern Argus and the Northern Argus) from the Purcell Trust on 12 July 1929. The economic stringencies of World War II closed the Evening News on 31 July 1941. 41
Andrew, senior, was a founder of the Queensland Country Press Association, formed in 1907; served several times as its president; was on its executive committee from its formation till his death; and was chairman of directors of the business operations, then known as the Queensland Country Press Ltd., for the three years before his death. He served in various capacities on the Maryborough Chamber of Commerce, the Maryborough Harbour Board, the School of Arts and the Technical College. He was an elder of St. Stephen's Presbyterian Church, Maryborough, for many years.42

The family enterprise began keeping minutes of its meetings in 1929. Although there was a semi-autonomous board in each of the four towns where the Dunns owned newspapers, Andrew, senior, co-ordinated them all. Family meetings discussed capital expenditure and the appointment of editors and other senior staff. The Dunn wills were written so that newspaper shares stayed within the family. A family bank account was opened in 1930, but it was only in 1957 that a family holding company was incorporated.43

Jane Dunn, second wife of Andrew, senior, died on 14 August 1930, aged fifty-nine. He stunned the family by marrying a third time, taking, at the age of seventy-seven, a wife aged about thirty-five. His new partner was the former Miss Marcella Heller Foote, who had been the head of the Sydney office of the Queensland Country Press Association. They honeymooned on an overseas trip, and Andrew had to catch a train from Melbourne to Adelaide to rejoin his bride on board ship after missing the boat while attending to business during its Melbourne call. The couple had no children. Andrew died in Brisbane on 29 April 1934, aged seventy-nine, and was buried in Maryborough cemetery. His estate, valued for probate at 36,286 pounds, was left to a family trust.44

Andrew Dunn junior was born at Toowoomba on 7 May 1880, and was educated at Maryborough at Christian Brothers College and the Maryborough Grammar School. He began an apprenticeship in the composing room of the Maryborough Chronicle, but when a vacancy arose on the literary staff, he filled it because he had shown ability as a writer. When Brisbane gained a new morning paper, the Daily Mail, in October 1903, Andrew junior joined it and won high praise as a reporter and writer of news commentaries. In 1905 he joined the Morning Bulletin, Rockhampton, and had risen to a senior post when the Dunn family bought a controlling interest in the paper in 1911. He served as managing editor of the Bulletin for forty-three years. In 1934, on his father’s death, Andrew junior succeeded him as chairman of directors of the Rockhampton, Maryborough and Toowoomba newspaper companies, and on the board of the Queensland Country Press Ltd. A clear and forceful
writer, with “a scrupulous sense of fairness and tolerance”, he wrote a weekly column under the pen name of “Lictor” and was a competent drama critic. He believed his primary function was to produce a good newspaper. “If you produce a good newspaper, you deserve some reward. If you use cheap, slapdash methods, then you don’t deserve to succeed. Don’t slant; don’t sensationalise; reserve comment for editorials; don’t blow a story up.”

Andrew junior married Ivy Adeline Lucas, the daughter of a Rockhampton department store founder, Edward Seymour Lucas, on 16 June 1909, and they had seven children. Their second son, Lex Seymour, qualified as a barrister, practised as a solicitor, and became general manager of the Morning Bulletin in 1955. In addition, he served as secretary of A. Dunn and Company from its incorporation in 1957 and became chief executive of the Provincial Newspaper (Qld.) Ltd. holding company when it was formed on 1 April 1968. He served as its managing director from August 1970 till 31 December 1980. Andrew junior’s first son, Andrew, made newspapers his life, too, and served as resident director of the Maryborough Chronicle from 1955-1966 and as a director of A. Dunn and Co. from 1957-1968. He was later appointed to the board of PNQ, retiring from it voluntarily in 1981. Andrew junior died at Maryborough on 31 January 1956, seventeen months after releasing the managerial and editorial reins at the Morning Bulletin. He was cremated at Rockhampton.

Herbie Dunn, Andrew senior’s third son, was born at Toowoomba on 11 September 1883 and was educated at Maryborough Grammar School. He joined the literary staff of the Maryborough Chronicle in 1901 and later worked on the Brisbane Courier and the Bundaberg Mail. After serving as chief of staff of the Morning Bulletin, and managing editor of the Warwick Argus and then the Warwick Daily News, he became managing editor of the Toowoomba Chronicle and Darling Downs Gazette, a position he held for twenty-nine years. He succeeded elder brother Andrew as chairman of directors of the Toowoomba Newspaper Co. Pty. Ltd. After visiting England in the late 1930s, Herbie Dunn strongly advocated installing teleprinters to link country newspapers with the Country Press Association news service in Brisbane. Earlier he had had dictaphones installed for ease of taking copy by telephone. A Toowoomba Chronicle editor, who had served under him, said Herbie was an expert shorthand writer, a fast, accurate typist, a witty paragraphist, a capable sub-editor and an editor who set high standards of writing, accuracy and fairness. He denied prominence to the trivial and sensational, and was “a kindly gracious man of immense generosity and integrity”.
Herbie married Agnes Jessie Hill, a Maryborough schoolteacher, at Bundaberg on 5 September 1908, and they had three sons and one daughter. One son, Rowland James (1911-1971), became managing director of the Toowoomba Newspaper Co. Pty. Ltd. and the first chairman of directors of PNQ. Herbie died at Sandgate, Brisbane, on 4 April 1961, leaving his estate, valued at 98,133 pounds, to his family.48

It was nearly twenty years after World War II before the Dunns made an expansionary move. They bought out the McFadden family interest in the weekly Nambour Chronicle. Bert and Victor McFadden, on the verge of retirement, offered the paper to the Dunns, ending fifty-eight years of McFadden family connection with the Chronicle. The Dunns immediately began examining how they could develop their new property. Soon they bought the free Caloundra weekly, the Advertiser, from Mr. and Mrs. Howard Whittle. Then they bought the Noosa News, and next the Caboolture paper, which was collapsing. The Dunns brought all these papers under the umbrella of Sunshine Coast Newspapers Pty. Ltd., Maroochydore.49 In 1980 they launched the Sunshine Coast Daily and have since closed down some of their weeklies now covered by the Daily’s circulation area.

The Dunn family newspapers have always supported free enterprise, and the liberty of the individual, where such principles are exercised within the law. The political leaning of the papers has been to the Right, but the Dunn editors were permitted to support Labor policy points on humanitarian grounds and for the furtherance of social justice, but not because they were Labor policy points. In other words, the papers were “non-Labor” rather than “anti-Labor”, at least in the family’s view. Andrew Dunn, a grandson of the patriarch of the Dunn newspaper dynasty, has provided further insight into the values passed on through the family as they built and maintained their newspaper chain. He told journalists gathered at a convention centre on the Sunshine Coast that the role of a newspaper in a community should be established by a conscientious awareness and practice of three principles: to inform; to protect; and to lead. Within the constraints of available space, legal limits and social sanctions, he saw a newspaper’s role as being to publish those items which it believed the community would be interested to know or which the paper believed it was in the community’s interest to make known. To protect its reading community, the newspaper had to be the champion of persons great and small. Readers had to be left in no doubt that they had been presented with both sides of the case, fairly, without colour, and to such an extent that the involved parties themselves could find no added comfort from the record. In leading,
Dunn said, a newspaper should not be over-hasty in declaring a point of view. "Better to allow a little time so that the pros and cons can be better defined... In the matter of leadership, the knowledge that the paper does not habitually go off half-cocked can temper the tone of controversy without damaging the vigor — something that certainly is not wanted, much less encouraged."^50

By the mid-1960s, the Dunn family newspapers and other privately owned Queensland provincial newspapers sensed increasing urgency about the need to be able to stave off takeover attempts. Investigations of the different possibilities for merger were being made by early 1966. Some of the principles being emphasised in memoranda circulating were:

1. That any organisation set up must ensure as far as possible that the present independence of the provincial press was maintained and consolidated.

2. That any organisation set up must as far as possible, consistent with other principles, preserve the status quo especially in regard to families.

3. That any organisation set up must be such that listing of at least part of the shares on the Stock Exchange was possible in the immediate future.

A. Dunn and Company became Provincial Newspapers (Qld.) Pty. Ltd. on 18 July 1966 and, on conversion to a public company on 25 March 1968, became Provincial Newspapers (Qld.) Ltd. The company already owned the newspapers at Maryborough, Rockhampton, Toowoomba and Nambour, and by merger on 1 April 1968 acquired all the issued shares of The Mackay Printing and Publishing Co. Pty. Ltd. (the Daily Mercury), The Queensland Times Pty. Ltd. and The Warwick Newspaper Pty. Ltd. (Warwick Daily News).^51 PNQ also had interests in the Bundaberg News-Mail. To a large extent, the merger represented a banding together of the Dunn, Manning, Irwin and various Ipswich newspaper families. It ensured the continuation of traditions which had developed in Queensland provincial newspapers over more than a century. The stated desire was "to preserve the independence of Queensland provincial dailies". The merger represented "the amalgamation of interests of newspapers which wielded a strong influence in widely diversified fields of activity throughout Queensland". Seven of the twelve directors were members of the Dunn family, two were Mannings, and one was an Irwin. PNQ has since increased its shareholding in the Bundaberg News-Mail, has bought the Gladstone Observer from News Ltd. (taking control on 1 January 1975), and has launched the Sunshine Coast Daily. In
October 1979, PNQ bought the Express group of Brisbane suburban newspapers and closed them down a year later, sacking about seventy-five journalists, photographers, artists and office and clerical staff because of a "lack of response in the market place". PNQ issued a prospectus on 27 October 1976 and was listed publicly on 9 December 1976. It reduced the size of its board to eight directors, including Keith H. McDonald, the chief executive officer of Queensland Newspapers Pty. Ltd. (which has had an interest of about 33 per cent in PNQ since 1971). Today it has seven directors, including four Dunns, a Manning, an Irwin and Keith McDonald.

**FOOTNOTES**

1. H. McQueen, Australian Media Monopolies, Camberwell, Vic.: Widescope, 1977, p. 35.
5. Warwick Examiner and Times, 28 December 1878 (advert.).
7. Darling Downs Gazette, 10 January 1883, p. 2, c. 7 (extract from Allora Farmer).
8. Sterne was editor till April 1917 when he became shire clerk of Rosenthal, holding that position till October 1952.
10. Warwick Examiner and Times, 31 December 1900 and 3 January 1901.
13. On 1 April 1968, The Warwick Newspaper Pty. Ltd. became a subsidiary company of Provincial Newspapers (Qld.) Limited. Irwin family members have shares in the holding company and Edwin Hollingworth is a director.
15. Ibid.

18. C.W.B. Macfarlan was editor of the Gladstone Observer from 1917, and proprietor from 1922, till his death in 1947; his second wife, Margaret, ran the paper from his death till she sold it in 1968.


29. Interview with Noel Manning at Toowoomba, 14 October 1978.


33. Queensland State Archives, SCT/P635, 24/07.

34. Interviews with and letters from C.M. Manning; The Chronicle (Toowoomba), 30 July 1980, p. 7.


36. Minutes of the Maryborough Newspaper Company Limited.

37. Interview with L.S. Dunn, Brisbane, 21 July 1978; Maryborough Chronicle, 3 December 1891, p. 2.


39. Its centenary was on 4 July 1961, but the newspaper had believed for years that the paper’s anniversary was 16 July and that is the date which was incorrectly observed as the centenary.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Interview with L.S. Dunn, Brisbane, 16 March 1977.
50. A. Dunn, address to Sunshine Coast Newspapers Pty. Ltd. seminar on journalism, Alexandra Headlands, 6 August 1977.
52. Courier-Mail, 1 November 1979, p. 8; B & T Weekly, 27 November 1980.
53. Andrew Dunn retired from the PNQ board in 1981 and was not replaced.