

What you need to know

The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore Building on South Campus of the university, access can be gained via College Avenue or Hely Avenue. Members of the public are welcome to visit the search room, where professional archival staff can assist with inquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straight-forward inquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour including copying and postage. For further information, phone 6925 3666, email archive@csu.edu.au, or visit our website at www.csu.edu.au/research/archives for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.



LEFT: Colleen's Novelty Club was a popular part of the Channel 2 Children's Club. Can anyone identify any of the performers standing with the presenter Ms Colleen Schoff?

BELOW: This image shows the RVN 2 station under construction in September 1963. Two things of note are the empty paddocks behind the houses in Lake Albert Road and the workman riding the crane hook.



Welcome to television

at the archives
Wayne Doubleday



The first official television broadcast in Australia occurred at 7pm on September 16, 1956 when Bruce Gyngell uttered that now famous phrase "good evening and welcome to television".

While residents of Wagga were, no doubt, very excited about this development, it would be almost eight years before they were to have a television station their own.

To avoid simultaneous demand for equipment and staff, the Postmaster General (PMG) introduced television across Australia in various stages. Stage one was in Sydney and Melbourne where, within six months of the first broadcast, both cities were to have three television stations each. Stage two saw Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth with stations by 1959. Stage three covered the major provincial areas, while stage four included smaller regional areas such as the Riverina.

In 1962, the PMG called for tenders to establish a television service in the Riverina and South West Slopes area of NSW.

Competition for the licenses was intense. Not only were local businesses in the region bidding against each other, they were also in direct competition with the capital city networks, who wanted to set up relay transmitters to direct their city-based broadcasts out into the region.

A consortium consisting of the 2WG and 2LF radio stations along with *The Daily Advertiser* resulted in the formation of Riverina Television Limited. The newly formed board agreed to allocate 2LF 10 per cent of shares, with 2WG and *The Daily Advertiser* holding 20 per cent and 15 per cent respectively. The remaining 55 per cent of

shares were to be floated for subscription by residents of the future viewing area.

The consortium was successful in its bid and was awarded the broadcasting licence by the Postmaster General in November 1963.

Mount Ulandra, near Bethunga, was selected as the site for the transmitter as it was high enough to effectively serve the proposed viewing area of the Riverina and the South West Slopes. A repeater station was installed at Brucedale to transmit the signal from the Studio to Mount Ulandra.

Tenders for the design and construction of the studio facilities on Lake Albert Road were awarded to Wagga architect Gordon Trafford-Walker and builder HC Buckman and Sons Pty Ltd.

Construction of the studio, which measured a modest 60x40 foot, began on the July 31, 1963.

Studio equipment such as cameras and lighting apparatus, the Mount Ulandra transmitter and its accompanying microwave repeater located at Brucedale were all supplied by AWA Ltd.

Television was already available in the Riverina and South West Slopes, with the transmission signal from GMV 6 Shepparton, CBN 8 Orange and CTC 7 Canberra reaching as far as Wagga as well as the government broadcaster ABC (ABMN 0). Television sets and aerial installation services had been marketed in Wagga for at least two years before RVN 2 began.

Opening night

RVN 2 officially began transmission at 7pm on the night of June 19, 1964.

The broadcast commenced with the playing of the National Anthem by the Royal Australian Engineer's Band Kapooka on the studio grounds.

The station's first newsreader, Paul Griffiths, then officially welcomed viewers before introducing the Chairman of Riverina Television Limited, WJ Hucker.

Following an address by Mr Hucker, the then Minister for National Development and Member for Farrer David Fairbairn officially opened the station with the signing of the visitor's book.

The opening proceedings included a

documentary, filmed and produced by RVN 2 staff, showing the construction of the RVN 2 studio and facilities. Station manager at the time Bill Marsden recounted that "In editing, we had found we hadn't taken any film between the foundations and the installation at the studio building. The mast and transmitter site we covered. I filled in the gap by taking the camera to the new tech college being built and took shots close up of framework, people hammering, plumbing etc, which faked the missing bits splendidly".

The opening ceremony, which concluded at 7.30pm, was followed by *The Frank Ifield Show* and then a documentary entitled *Hollywood: The Golden Years*. At 9pm, RVN 2's first local news bulletin and weather report were presented by Paul Griffiths. The five-minute bulletin was very short by today's standards and consisted primarily of 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 the *Jack Benny Special* at 11pm.

For the next two years, RVN 2 was limited to no more than six hours of broadcasting a night. This compared unfavourably with other regional stations and the ABC, who could have up to 12-hour programming schedules. RVN 2's broadcast day began at 5pm with news, weather and evening program highlights, generally concluding before 11pm.

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

— Compiled by Paul O'Donnell

References: *The Daily Advertiser*, 01/12/1961, 17/5/1963, 6/11/1963, 11/05/1964, 16/6/1964, 19/6/1964, 20/6/1964; Marsden, WJ *The Origins of Riverina Television Pty Ltd*; Ly, M. *RVN2 - Riverina's Own Television*; CSU Regional Archives RW1574/356 and RW1574/1548.

Saturday opening

THE CSU Regional Archives is extending its opening hours to include the first Saturday of the month. This initiative has been put in place to cater for those researchers who are unable to visit the archives on weekdays during normal business hours.

The next Saturday opening is November 2, from 10am to 3pm.

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