

Dinner with a journalist

By Peta Michael-Gomory
Berwick Evening VIEW Club
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Danielle Kutchel, journalist with the community Star News Group, was Berwick Evening VIEW Club's after dinner speaker on Monday, 21 June 2021.

Danielle's previous positions include: working as a freelance journalist for global education publisher EducationHQ; being Content Developer for The Australian Disability House on Education and Training (ADCET); and volunteering as an advocate with the I CAN Network which focusses on school inclusive cultures for students with autism.

In addition to reporting, she is currently completing an honours degree in communication examining how journalists record individuals with disabilities. Ms Kutchel is passionate about writing, education and disability.

Her interest in becoming a member of the fourth estate makes for an interesting story. She confided that she wanted to be a journalist before she knew what a journalist was.

"My English teacher, Fran Gibbs, told me at age 11, that my writing was creative and I should be a journalist. Subsequent year teachers also encouraged this vocation so I researched the meaning of journalist. This confirmed my preferred career."

Ms Kutchel's generation is part of the 24 hour news cycle, pioneered by CNN, and the digital age. Fact finding has to be expeditious for "fact checkers" are only a lap top, smart phone, or social media comment away from a "gotcha moment."

"I believe that it is the absolute responsibility of journalists to get to the heart of stories and report the truth," Ms Kutchel declared.

Ita Buttrose, media legend and ABC Chair, captured the evolution of reporting when she observed, "In the space of a decade newspapers and magazines have had to make the transition from Gutenberg to Zuckerberg technology."

Technological advances have seen the significant tightening, perhaps even the blurring of deadlines, as journalists compete for a share of the 24/7 audience. Ms Kutchel believes flexible work skills are the keys to successful journalism today plus research, research and research.

Ms Kutchel nominated several of her favourite journalists. With only slight hesitation, she said Helen Razer, Australian author, radio presenter and columnist with The Age and The Big Issue plus English food writer Nigel Slater.

"He creates pictures with words," she said.

In reference to the future of local newspapers, Danielle predicted, "There will always be a place for paper and ink but in diminishing numbers. Like many local papers we now publish

online, despite healthy circulation numbers, before distributing print runs. It's just a sign of the times."

Her views on the importance of community newspapers are echoed on the homepage of the Star News Group which states: "The community newspaper is the heart of the community... reflecting the opinions, lifestyles, aspirations, concerns and personalities of the community."

The community newspaper, with an emphasis on the "local village", is also currently acting as a balm in the troubling times of Covid 19.

The evening finished on a behavioural note when several Berwick Evening VIEW Club members lamented dog walkers who permit their hounds to pollute pathways. A canine rather than a carbon footprint? Danielle Kutchel listened intently and agreed to look into the matter.

That's what community newshounds do!

New members at Berwick Evening VIEW Club are always welcome. For enquiries, contact president Jan Whitaker on 9705 9009.

Ita Buttrose will be a guest speaker at the VIEW National Convention, Adelaide, 10-12 September, 2021.