



JANE DEMPSTER
Anthony Albanese, left,
and Lachlan Murdoch at
The Australian's 60th event

Real news at heart of society: Murdoch

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News Corporation chairman Lachlan Murdoch has delivered an impassioned paean to "real journalism" and its importance in a democratic society, as he warned of the serious challenges — such as the wild spread of fake news and the algorithmic biases of social media — confronting the industry.

Speaking at a gala dinner in Sydney on Thursday night to mark 60 years of The Australian, Mr Murdoch said that, while the media company was optimistic about the future, rapid technological change posed "threats as well as opportunities to us".

"Journalists first and foremost report the news, accurately and without bias," Mr Murdoch said. "We report the facts. We ask questions. We seek the truth."

"The Wall Street Journal

Real news must be preserved at heart of society: Murdoch



From top, singer Budjerah and former Queensland Ballet artistic director Li Cunxin; Fortescue Metals Group executive chairman Andrew Forrest; and, below, AFL chief executive Andrew Dillon with his predecessor Gillon McLachlan



News Corp Australia executive chairman Michael Miller, Governor-General Samantha Mostyn, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and The Australian's editor-in-chief Michelle Gunn, above; below, former Liberal prime ministers Tony Abbott and John Howard with the latter's wife, Janette; Opposition Leader Peter Dutton and his wife Kirilly; Year 12 student Tremaine Baxter-Edwards with AIEF founder Andrew Penfold and his wife Michelle; Country Liberal Party senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price and husband Colin Lillie; businessman Solomon Lew and his wife Roza



Sky News presenter Cheng Lei, who was detained in China for almost three years, above; Anthony Albanese and News Corp chairman Lachlan Murdoch in conversation, below



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Solomon Lew, Atlasian co-founder Scott Farquhar, Merivale boss Justin Hennes and Olivia Wirth, the executive chair of Myer.

AFL chief executive Andrew Dillon attended, as did his predecessor Gillon McLachlan, who was recently appointed CEO of Tabcorp. Peter Vandy, chairman of the Australian Rugby League Commission and CEO of Racing NSW; and Larry Kestelman, the owner of the National Basketball League.

Mr Murdoch spoke of the birth of The Australian on "the wintry night of July 14, 1964", and how his father Rupert had "bet his nascent and somewhat fragile company" on launching the masthead.

"Why bet so much on one endeavour? One newspaper?" he

said. "Well, my father's ambition for The Australian has never been a secret. In fact, he published it on the front page that first day. In that single left-hand column the paper declared its guide was 'faith in Australia and the country's future'. It was fundamentally about optimism and ambition for our country. It would contain 'impartial information' and 'independent thinking'."

"Not tied to any party or state, the paper promised to speak fearlessly and not be influenced when there is a public need to be outspoken. It would equally critique and praise. That single column set the core principles, and the high standards, that The Australian has lived by ever since."

The Australian's editor-in-chief, Michelle Gunn, said the event was about celebrating jour-

nalism. "Because there is no doubt the world needs quality journalism more than ever."

"But tonight is also a celebration of the power of good ideas, a clarion call for Australians to discover the art of persuasion, and an entreaty to the thinking men and women of Australia to engage in thoughtful, vigorous debate about the things that matter."

Gunn said The Australian had "never been shy about expressing a view", citing strong editorial positions on Australia's involvement in the war in Vietnam (against) and Iraq (for), its push for Australia to become a republic, its backing of Gough Whitlam in 1972 followed by his resounding rejection of his government three years later. "What has defined our newspaper since its birth in a chilly



Canberra winter 60 years ago is its willingness to challenge the status quo — no matter who is in power," Gunn said.

Indigenous musician Matthew Doyle opened the event with a performance on the didgeridoo, followed by an acknowledgement of country by Year 12 student Tremaine Baxter-Edwards, who is studying at Perth's Aquinas College with assistance from the Australian Indigenous Education

Foundation, a charity that has enjoyed a close relationship with The Australian over the past 15 years.

A tribute to The Australian's late, great cartoonist Bill Leak and his son Johannes — the masthead's current cartoonist — was played before six prominent Australians spoke about "the power of ideas" and how they can shape the future. Journalist Chris Uhlmann said: "We need to reject shallow nationalism and redeem the idea of patriotism. If we are to stand firm in this data storm, we need to find a firm foothold. That demands having a clear idea of who we are."

Holocaust survivor Nina Bas-sat said "courage is core to keeping that which we value."

"The failure to rein in anti-semitism behaviour, to call out anti-semitism from the start, the lack of courage in leaders at all levels

means our democracy is being eroded," she said. "The rights of the majority are becoming subsumed by the loud minority."

Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price observed that "the true lesson of our history is that while we are not perfect, a bunch of imperfect people from different cultures have formed a truly great and prosperous nation."

Novelist Shankari Chandran spoke of her Tamil culture and how her community ties went back generations. "Wherever we are in the world, somehow we know each other, we belong to each other, and we help each other," she said. "I am never alone. My children will never be alone."

The Australian's editor-at-large, Paul Kelly, said the "epic political challenge" of the 21st century was to keep democracy alive.

And broadcaster Cheng Lei, who was detained in a Chinese prison for 1184 days, said: "If we don't speak up in defence of personal freedom, within Australia and outside its borders, one day we'll be so comfortable in our virtual cells we won't even feel it; we'll forget what freedom feels like."

Mr Albanese, who delivered a toast to Australia, said: "It was Edmund Barton who gave the Federation movement the catch cry 'a nation for a continent, and a continent for a nation'."

"Tonight we're marking 60 years since Rupert Murdoch willed into being a newspaper whose very name encompasses that continent."

"An act of audacity, of ambition and of optimism that reflects the qualities and the story of our great nation."

Mr Albanese encouraged those present to be proud of Australia's past, and be confident in its future.

"We have achieved so much and, with the confidence that is underwritten by our past, we can look together to the future with optimism," he said.

"A future that can be every bit as extraordinary as our great country Australia."

His speech was followed by a "vote of thanks" by Michael Miller, executive chairman of News Corp Australasia. "We have an enduring commitment to be Australia's storytellers, to record our modern history, and to advance our country," he said.

The evening concluded with special musical performances from artists Missy Higgins and Budjerah.



reported last week that Elon Musk's Grok artificial intelligence, which aggregates content from all X accounts, is automatically producing what can only be called "fake" news. What Musk has touted as — and I quote, "the new model of news" — is in fact so riddled with errors and made-up stories that it can't be trusted. Just last week it told its millions of users that it was Kamala Harris, not Donald Trump, who was shot in Pennsylvania. This is very dangerous. And this is why journalism, real journalism with real journalists, is so important."

Prime ministers past and present joined influential leaders from the spheres of business, sport, arts and media at the black-tie dinner at The Australian Museum to celebrate six decades of the national masthead. The 250 guests were treated to a showcase of The Australian's editorial content from the past 60 years.

Anthony Albanese was joined by predecessors John Howard and Tony Abbott, as well as Opposition Leader Peter Dutton, NSW Premier Chris Minns and Governor-General Samantha Mostyn.

Business leaders included Commonwealth Bank chief executive Matt Comyn, Fortescue Metals Group executive chairman Andrew Forrest, Premier Investments chairman

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