

Viewer figures for the threatened local ABC 7.30 Report

(Excerpt from article by Myriam Robin, *Crikey* media reporter: 20.11.14)

'The loss of the local editions of 7.30, which used to be called *Stateline*, have prompted a fierce reaction, and a look at the ratings helps reveal why. Last week, the Friday-night state shows were more popular than the national edition fronted by Leigh Sales in three of the five cities measured by OzTAM ratings data. The national version out-rated the local show in Sydney and Melbourne, where most of the news in the daily version of the show takes place anyway.

'The state-based 7.30 shows were more popular than the national one in cities with a single daily local newspaper, like Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide.

'In the past week, the Monday-to-Thursday episodes of 7.30 averaged 92,500 viewers a night in Brisbane, with a high of 102,000 viewers on Tuesday night, which dropped to 80,000 on the Thursday night. The Friday-night state version, hosted by Matt Wordsworth, rated better than the average -- 97,000 viewers. In Adelaide, 7.30's average viewership was 71,000 (with a high on Monday and Tuesday night of 75,000 dropping to 65,000 by Friday). South Australia's 7.30, fronted by Simon Royal, had 76,000 viewers. In Perth there were on average 73,250 viewers of 7.30 Monday to Thursday, and 73,000 for the Friday local version, hosted by Andrew O'Connor.

'In Sydney and Melbourne -- cities served with two daily local papers and a range of alternative and independent media outlets -- the national edition trumped the state one. In Sydney, Australia's most competitive media market, the Monday-to-Thursday 7.30 averaged 223,750 viewers last week -- which is significantly higher than the Friday local program, which had only 130,000 viewers despite being fronted by journalistic heavyweight Quentin Dempster. In Melbourne, 7.30 had an average of 240,000 viewers Monday to Thursday, while last Friday's version of the show, hosted by Josie Taylor, had 177,000 viewers.

'Friday nights rate poorly across the board. They're the second-weakest night of the week at most broadcasters, and the audience skews old. So the state-based 7.30 shows' strong ratings are all the more remarkable -- and they pick up a few more thousand viewers as well on News 24 on Friday nights and over the weekend when they are repeated (The figures above are for ABC 1 Friday night ratings and don't include the repeats. They also don't include regional ratings or those of Canberra and Hobart). Of course, this isn't a perfect comparison of like and like. But the fact that the more poorly resourced, local alternative rates so well says something about the demand for ABC TV coverage of local affairs, particularly in cities where there are not many media alternatives.'