

parliament to think of a multi-party capacity whereby this could be done effectively. If I were to make a prediction about where our communities will be in a couple of years time, I'd say that they will be screaming out for local news. So, whether we are Liberal or Labor or Green, we are going to hear this across the board. So the sooner we are in this space to protect the interests of our local communities to have access to fair and balanced local news reporting, the better.

CHAIR: Senator Van?

Senator VAN: Mr Rudd, welcome back to Parliament House and thank you for appearing today. I've got a few questions for you. I was listening from my office to your opening statement. You talk about Murdoch being conservative media. What media do you think sit on the Left side of the spectrum?

Mr Rudd: That is a fair question, Senator, because you are right: I do describe the Murdoch media beast as no longer on the Right but on the far Right. If I go through the current Australian media print landscape, if that is the scope of the question—

Senator VAN: No; it could be across all platforms.

Mr Rudd: Let me start with print. I think it's fair to say that from what is now nine newspapers, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age* and certainly *The Financial Review* I would put in a centre-Right category. How do you reach that is a barometer of judgement? Simply trace the editorial opinion line on critical questions—for example, on industrial relations and other such issues. The editorial position of *The Australian Financial Review* is a pretty hard-Right position, but it's not out there with this complete conflation of news and opinion which we see regularly from the far Right, with Murdoch. Then, of course, you go to the other non-physical paper, which is *The Guardian*, which would range between Centre and Centre Left, would be my view. You smile at that, Senator. So you think it's Centre Right, do you?

Senator VAN: No, not at all.

Mr Rudd: No; that's true. I'm being quite candid with you. It depends on what you follow. There's certain of the questions which are followed by *The Guardian* which belong more to the Centre, but I think the bulk of it would fall within the remit of the Centre Left constituency that *The Guardian* in the UK has traditionally pursued as well as its natural marketplace. So that would be the spectrum of print that I would see in this country.

Senator VAN: As a former Labor Prime Minister, I'd think that would be your assessment, and we will take that on record. Can you confirm for me if I heard you correctly that, during your opening statement, you mentioned that you believe Murdoch does character assassinations of politicians?

Mr Rudd: That's correct.

Senator VAN: You also mentioned that he wants taxpayer funds.

Mr Rudd: No, Senator; I said he gets it. He gets \$40 million at the moment for covering women's and alternative sport.

Senator VAN: Thank you for clarifying that. Do you believe his privately-owned business is the only media organisation that assassinates the characters of politicians?

Mr Rudd: No, but they've taken the art to science—and it's not simply restricted to our side of politics. When you have Malcolm Turnbull appear before you, I am sure Malcolm will be able to give you chapter and verse on his experience of these questions as well.

Senator VAN: Have you seen, either on the night or since, the ABC *Four Corners* episode about two Morrison government ministers?

Mr Rudd: I've seen the reporting of it. I actually haven't seen the program, to be quite honest.

Senator VAN: I'd be keen to hear your views on whether you thought that was a political character assassination or not.

Mr Rudd: To be honest, I don't know sufficient detail about the allegations made in the print reports that I've seen to make a substantive comment on it.

Senator VAN: Do you believe that it's part of the ABC's role to balance out the Murdoch media?

Mr Rudd: No; I see its role is to provide a fair and balanced platform for news reporting across the country, and, therefore, on certain issues of the day, it may lean in one direction or the other. Senator, what state are you from?

Senator VAN: Victoria.

Mr Rudd: Okay. I'm from the people's republic of Queensland.