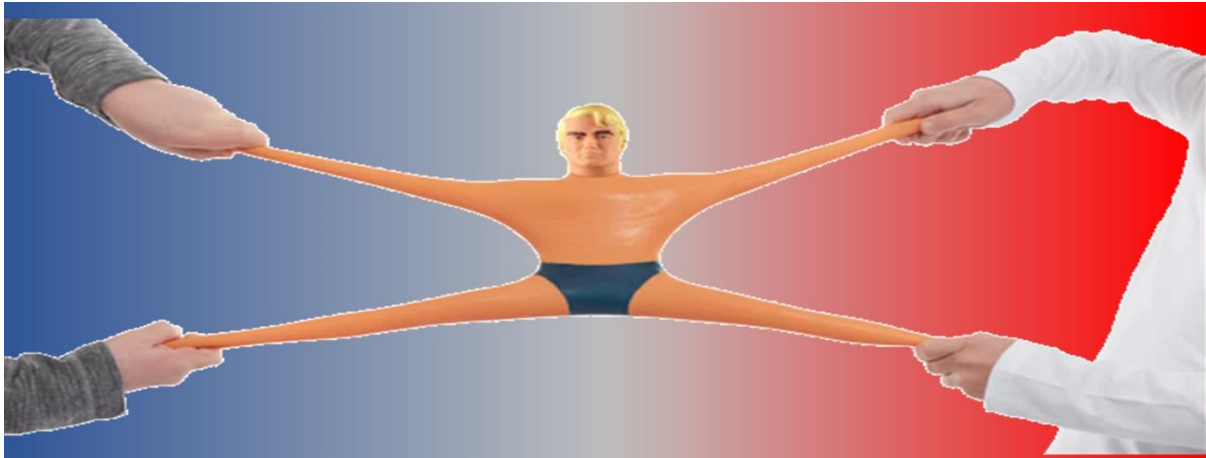


## Stretch Your Boundaries Where You Get Your News From

*Shôn Ellerton, January 6, 2020*

*We often refrain from reading the news from a source we don't align ourselves with, but it's really worth doing so to get a balanced opinion.*



Just how easy is it to read up or listen to the news! No need to buy newspapers, magazines or wait until nine o'clock to listen to the evening news. Some still do, but most do not. The Internet has everything one needs to pick up what's going on in the world. The abundance of information out there makes picking the *right* news a little more difficult of course. We tend to favour our usual outlets, whether it be an official national news website, independent news website, social media feed, stream-on-demand service or a combination of any of them. The trick for many is to ingest coverage of the news in question from a variety of sources, some of which should be in opposition to each other. Many of us; however, don't wish to read from the side which we don't relate to. We seem to automatically gravitate to our comfort zones. I'm guilty of falling into that trap because it's just too easy to hear what we *want* to hear. I know. I know. I think it's called [confirmation bias](#). In the days of commuters unfurling their hefty newspapers in the train on their way to work, seldom one would find one reading a left-leaning newspaper and then the next day, reading a newspaper from the right.

We have the luxury of reading just about anything we want on the Internet and with immediate ease. Sure, there are paywalled sites which require a subscription from loyal users, but, in general, it does not take much in the way of searching to find what you want. We can even use the clever online software in our browsers to translate news from different countries. Reading international news from a Russian website, for example, often has a very different spin

compared with the same news sourced from the United States. Yet, many of us seldom venture out of our comfort zones. We form bonds with our editors, writers, newscasters and formats of the news program we love so much.

## Social media, the lazy way...

All too worryingly, too many of us rely on the headline content and comments from social media feeds. They are quick to read and easy to comment on. Twitter, in my opinion, has turned into a massive cesspit of abuse. The only way to grow your crowd of followers is to either be already famous or be so incredibly opinionated and debased and then tweet comments just to get a rise out of trolls and evangelistic followers. It's a diabolical mess.

Never fear, there are plenty of good websites out there offering a fine selection of articles and reading material. I have my personal favourites, some of which, tend to host articles with over 3,000 words, which, by today's standards, constitutes a fairly lengthy article. Others include short punchy and witty articles about current affairs which require a little more reference through other sources to get a bigger picture.

## On books

For those who love reading books in the non-fiction genre, getting trapped on one side of the story can be easy as well.

As an example, I recently read two books about the history of Aboriginals in Australia with respect to how they grew food on the land, fished in the sea and rivers and how they housed themselves and survived in the Australian climate without any of the modern conveniences we take for granted these days.

One book, called *Dark Emu* by [Bruce Pascoe](#), claims that Aboriginals were not the hunter gatherers many of us are raised up to believe, but rather a sophisticated agricultural society leading sedentary lifestyles in complex townships of thousands of people. I was impressed by the extensive bibliography of sources but was a little unconvinced with the veracity of the book. Another author by the name of Peter O' Brien, although not as well known, wrote *Bitter Harvest*, and wrote an entire book after reading *Dark Emu* generally disproving practically everything written in Pascoe's as sheer fantasy. The clever ploy put on by Pascoe was to carefully omit those passages from the original references and add a couple of words here and there. I read *Bitter*

*Harvest* as well and was not at all surprised to learn that much of *Dark Emu* is fictional and made-up. I do wish to give Pascoe credit in providing a lovely insight into the native flora and vision of how we could live off the land in a more ecological way with respect to choosing native fauna for food rather than the introduced European livestock which we are so used to.

The point I'm trying to illustrate here is that it is often necessary to read multiple sources of information relating to a specific subject to get a truer reflection of reality and the truth. Reading a subject based on one author alone will not give you the diversification of thought, experience and expertise needed to get that grounding.

## Moderators and live debates

I take interest in observing a well-seasoned experienced moderator on a live debate or question panel; particularly on a session which is prone to generate much controversy. It would be naïve to suggest that any moderator would have a totally indifferent view as to what unfolds during a heated discussion. Body language can be easily discerned by the audience and it is an art for a well-experienced moderator to 'neutralise' their movements trying to be visually impartial. Don't get me wrong, there are various TV personalities out there who have extremely strong opinions, for example, [Andrew Bolt](#), [Piers Morgan](#), and to a lesser extent, [Jeremy Paxman](#). Their intention is to draw in as much audience as they can and in no way, can they be considered as impartial moderators but more as 'opinionated news entertainers'.

Unfortunately, it makes no difference how good the moderator is if the debate in question is highly controversial and everyone on the panel shares a similar view without having a proper debate with an opposing view. This happened towards the end of last year on Australia's [Q&A show](#) on the subject of extreme feminism which generated much outrage and [news](#) after its airing.

## Maybe not watch the news at all!

I walked across the road to visit a neighbour and, as we often do, we start talking about the world's problems. A lot of us do, especially after a beer or two, but his comment was equally valid. Why watch the news at all? Does it really make a difference to you if a massacre took place in South Africa? If you took to living in off the wilderness, [Henry David Thoreau](#)-style, and cut

yourself from all communication bar a telephone, does reading the news matter at all? Probably not. For many of us, it could be hard to get used to the idea of living a life without knowing what's going on in the outside world. Perhaps it's a good thing. I've yet to try it!