

SIGNALS



FOR PEOPLE WHO LOVE TO LISTEN!



Barry Melville - relaxed, good humoured and very experienced

Our New General Manager FROM CRYSTAL SET RADIOS TO PODCASTS AND AUDIOBOOKS

The radio was the source of almost everything informative, fun and distracting during Barry Melville's formative years.

Perhaps that's why he's settled in as our new General Manager so fast. Barry knows that he has inherited the leadership of 2RPH at a critical time – audio technology is experiencing exponential innovation and growth and so is our audience.

But an upbringing in the bush could account for a certain relaxed and good humoured management style that is already proving a hallmark of his tenure.

Barry sat down for an interview with SIGNALS to discuss growing up with no television but plenty to think about, his new role and plans for the future.



FAREWELL SANCHA

*2RPH Board Chair,
Di Collins, pays
tribute to our outgoing
GM see page 3*

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Our New Content Manager

Meet Gemma

As a baby, Gemma Purves spent a lot of time in a bassinet under her Dad's desk in the ABC's old William Street studios. He was a journalist working in radio and studying law at night.

By her teens he had become a barrister and Gemma was seated behind the accused during much of the trial of Ivan Milat. She vividly recalls listening to the cross questioning in the closed court between her father and a police sergeant. "I was fascinated," she says. "The defence was so dodgy."

It's not surprising that her father's passion for politics, governance and radio have recently merged in her own career choices after a decade spent travelling and working in London in business media.

Despite the fact that she absolutely loved living in London – "it's an incredibly diverse city and you can always get a cheap theatre ticket, a cheap meal and a ride home on the tube" - Gemma returned to Sydney in 2013 to support her father through an illness that ultimately claimed his life. "I thought I'd be off in 6 months but he was a lot sicker than I had imagined."

As a distraction Gemma started volunteering for the local community radio station, Eastside 89.7fm. Today Gemma is her mother's primary carer, and has recently taken up the position of Content Manager at 2RPH.

She is also Secretary of the Board at Eastside where she presents a local council news round-up called From The Chamber, which was inspired in part by the documentary film Rats In The Ranks.

It's the perfect mix of personal and professional



Gemma Purves, 2RPH's new Content Manager

"I'm passionate about building a diversity of voices"

experience to bring rich content to her role at 2RPH.

"There is so much great writing emerging from the western suburbs," she says. "I'd like to hear a lot more Sydney based fiction and non-fiction on 2RPH. Programs like New Voices, Ablequest and the Antiques Radio Show are terrific because they expand on our excellent core of published readings with real creative input from the presenters."

You'll find that Gemma has a lot of ideas and a great sense of humour. She has a cat called Monster and constantly struggles with her hair – "it's so bouffy!"

But her priority is "keeping our volunteers engaged and supporting them to develop their skill set. It's not about – you've got to agree with me or go to hell. That's not journalism. I'm passionate about building a diversity of voices."

"If anyone has an idea for a show or a change of role," she says, rushing to conclude as Monster begins jumping around her desk, "I'm all ears!"

You can contact Gemma at gpurves@2rph.org.au

NEW GM

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"We didn't even have electricity," Barry recalls as he takes a few minutes from the demands of his new position at 2RPH to hark back to the remote farm in cattle and cane country where he spent his early childhood.

"It was kerosene lamps, wood fires and crystal set radios." It all sounds quite romantic now, but the rigours of country life proved a test of his ingenuity when the family moved from Northern Queensland to an even more remote mountain in the Western highlands of Papua and New Guinea. Barry spent his teens without television, and even newspapers and magazines typically arrived weeks out of date.

"I followed the first Apollo moon landing via international short-wave services," he remembers. "That's also how I learned about the assassination of Martin Luther King. We kept up with local events by listening to a regional ABC service which broadcast in both English and Tok Pisin."

The limitations imposed by this colourful upbringing did two wonderful things for the young Melville.

"I became a prodigious reader – devouring everything from Edgar Allen Poe to Robert Louis Stevenson, and I developed a great passion for radio."

Radio has proven a recurring motif across a career which began with a degree in Media and Communication at Griffith University in Brisbane. From there and a brief stint as a stage manager in local theatre, he moved into television production, but by the mid 1980s Canberra had beckoned. The Hawke-era government was reforming "public" radio and expanding the ABC and SBS. He wanted to be there.

"It was an exciting time," he recalls with some relish. "Under Paul Keating as Treasurer and Michael Duffy as Communications Minister, we worked on media ownership de-regulation and cross-media diversity."



"I'm a listener - I'll be taking advice from volunteers and staff and respecting the traditions "

From there a stint with the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal in Sydney switched his focus to content standards, compliance and licensing. In 1993 he shifted again into consumer advocacy and the community sector.

"Everything I had done up till then had been theoretical," he explains. "I was eager to roll up my sleeves. I wanted to make programs and develop presentation skills, so I began to volunteer for Radio 2SER in my spare time."

It's significant that Barry had started as a volunteer. Producing and presenting the Razor's Edge program for 2RES, which is still running today, satisfied his appetite for news and current affairs. But he was soon recruited to CBAA, first as Policy Manager and then as General Manager in 2001. It was here that his prior experience in Canberra proved a real boon.

"I was privileged to be part of the sector team that ushered in digital technologies and I was the CBAA's GM during the peak period of sector growth and diversification in the late 1990s and early 2000s."

Barry believes the way community radio has evolved across the course of his career has had a lot to do with its role as a counterpoint

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From the Chair

Di Collins pays tribute to Sancha Donald

It's always sad to say farewell to someone who has been such an influence and who has drawn a large following of admirers. Such a person is Sancha Donald. Sancha joined 2RPH in March 2017, as General Manager, at a time when the station needed substantial change, in terms of direction, outlook and energy. Sancha was on her own as the only person fully responsible for the station and the myriad of tasks and problems that can, and do, beset a broadcaster.

In the time Sancha has been with us she has contributed so much to the station, to our listeners, to the broader community and to those who have worked closely with her. Her knowledge and experience of the disability sector has been enlightening and she has brought this into the day-to-day thinking of 2RPH. Her deep understanding of disability, and the opportunities for 2RPH to be more fully involved in helping meet the needs of people with disability, has had an enduring impact on the strategy, direction and financial security of 2RPH.

All who have worked closely with Sancha have not only benefitted from her knowledge and experience but have come to respect her and more importantly come to like and admire her. Among the many tributes paid to Sancha the following comments from volunteers reflect just some of the impact Sancha has had.

It's very clear: Sancha leaves 2RPH with our heartfelt thanks and very best wishes for her next adventure.



Sancha with volunteers on her last day

Grateful words from 2RPH volunteers

"Thanks for all the support, the smiles, the careful listening, the encouragement, the enthusiasm and the commitment."

"I have enjoyed volunteering at 2RPH with you at the helm and seeing this station grow and move forward to new adventures and eventually to its future home."

"You have managed to set a new standard for the station in improving the environment for our volunteers while maintaining the high standard expected by our listeners."

"You arrived just as the 2RPH ship needed a steady captain, and I believe you can be proud of the results. From a deck-hand's point of view, thank you for always having a listening ear and a smile of friendship. "

"It has been a great pleasure for me to work with you over the last five years and I wish you all the best for the future."

"Thanks for all your work to ensure that 2RPH continues to provide a sterling service to its listeners, Sancha. All the best for your next venture!"

"Thank you for your respectful, professional and caring leadership."

New PROGRAM

Granta - readings for lovers of poetry and fiction by one of our most erudite presenters

Tomas Drevikovsky admits that his bedside table is groaning with tomes. "I'll read just about anything," he says cheerfully. "I don't really like speculative or sci-fi but I'm up for everything else, from crime fiction to historical."

At the moment he's working his way through Virginia Woolf.

"She can be a bit of a struggle," he admits. "But I've found it very interesting. I've read all her books bar two now.

"Flush: A Biography" which she wrote about her dog arrived just the other day. She leaves a lot of work to the reader. And she gives you overwhelming amounts of detail. But she's very very good on botany. Her books are filled with flowers and plants." Apart from reading, to which he devotes 3 or 4 hours a day, Tomas enjoys playing chamber music when there is no lockdown, particularly sonatas with violinists, piano trios and quartets.

"I've also discovered late in life a love of Bach's keyboard music."

The idea to present his own program struck him after 3 years of volunteering at 2RPH. "I didn't like reading the newspapers," he says candidly. "I found it much too stressful.



Tomas has been reading Granta for years

"I tried reading books, but the commercial versions are often so good with wonderful actors. I wanted to do something that wasn't already available."

In September Tomas got his wish with the launch of his monthly readings from his favourite the literary magazine, Granta. "I've always read Granta, although it got a bit expensive, so now I read it online. It's a wonderful mix of fiction and poetry, and each issue covers so many subjects, from ecology and climate change to memoir."

The child of European parents who immigrated after WW2, Tomas has a degree in poetry and taught French, German, Italian, English (to non-native speakers) and a little Latin until his retirement. In a way he's still teaching.

"I don't know who listens to my program," he confides. "But I hope it's the Iraqi taxi driver who needs help with his English!"

Granta goes to air at 5:30pm on Mondays in Week 1 and is repeated at 1:30 on the following Sunday afternoon.

Station News

Refurb of the Reverb

Peter Worthington, our Technology Manager, reports on the continuing upgrade of 2RPH studio technology

The installation of a new digital desk in Studio 2, and similar equipment in studios 1 and 3 shortly, are part of the ongoing technology upgrades 2RPH has been involved in throughout 2021.

Announcers and program recorders will know that the existing studio panels were starting to get a bit noisy and exhibiting other annoying faults such as indicator lights malfunctioning making life difficult for announcers. We'd also been finding it difficult to source replacement parts.

The new equipment assures quieter and more reliable operation as well as more streamlined connection to our recently installed Master Control facilities.

Announcers and recorders will also find the new desks more intuitive to operate.

NEW GM

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to the big corporate interests of commercial media.

"It was the diversity that attracted me to community radio – the democratic principles of access and participation which had bipartisan political support. The three-tiered model we adopted under successive governments from Keating to Fraser remains the best in the world." But what Barry really loves about community radio is the collaborative vibe.

"It's a unique and very strong platform for community and regional voices of which I'm immensely proud," he says. "When the opportunity presented itself for me to join 2RPH, where the great passion is inclusivity, it felt like the logical next step."

He sees the strengths of 2RPH include our adept and talented volunteer base, and the focus on supporting the needs and interests of the loyal listening community that has been built over almost 40 years.

"There are so many opportunities ahead for 2RPH – developing and curating our podcasts



and audiobooks services, growing our training and production capacity, and expanding our audience into new regions such as the Illawarra." But he is quick to reassure that he will hasten slowly with any "change" agenda.

"I doff my cap to my predecessor Sancha Donald for bringing stability, renewal and growth to the station across 4 and half years. My role is to keep the ball rolling."

Leaning back in his chair with the ease of someone who is quite comfortable in his own skin, Barry reveals what is possibly the key to his success so far.

"I'm a listener! I'll be taking advice from the staff and volunteers, respecting the traditions and striving for incremental improvements. Ultimately The aim is make some real change for the good." After a pause he adds, with the deprecating laugh he employs during most of his encounters with his new constituency, "I think if we all work together we can aim for more of the same, but better!"

That goal is not as modest as he makes it sound..

More Station News

VIEW FROM THE TOP

John Martin, Deputy Chair, 2RPH Board, offers a short history of 2RPH from Kings Cross to Broker's Nose

With the expansion of our coverage to Wollongong and the Illawarra region 2RPH is about to welcome listeners from Corrimal to Kiama to our listening community. We started broadcasting to the Sydney Metropolitan area on AM radio back in 1983. Those transmissions were on the Marine Band. We moved to the main AM band in February 1991, broadcasting throughout most of Sydney on 1224 kilohertz from a transmitter out at Prospect.



Broker's Nose -a stunning panorama

Some areas, especially in the Eastern Suburbs and Northern Beaches had difficulty picking up the signal. That was resolved in 2009 through an additional FM signal on 100.5 MHz, transmitting from the top of the Elan Building at Kings Cross. Combined with the AM signal, that allowed us to cover all of the greater Sydney area.

In 2008 2RPH extended its service to the Newcastle and Lower Hunter region, again with an FM transmitter located on Mt Sugarloaf, using the same frequency 100.5 MHz. Readings from the Newcastle Herald provided a measure of local content for that region.

The next leap forward in our transmission network came in May 2011, when 2RPH joined the other Sydney-wide community radio stations launching the DAB+ digital radio service. While the quality of FM transmission is much better than AM radio, the best sound is achieved by using digital audio, available in around half of all households in Australia. The Gold Coast is expected to be the next region to go digital.

In regards to people living in Wollongong and the Illawarra region, despite delays due to Covid, we have signed an agreement with Broadcasting Australia to provide a transmission service from their site at Broker's Nose. This spot has a great view to the south, and FM radio signals are line-of-sight. Unfortunately, we can't use the same frequency as Sydney and Newcastle so Wollongong we will be using a frequency of 93.3 MHz.

The transmitter for Wollongong should be up and running in the next couple of months. We expect to comfortably reach South to Kiama and beyond.

As part of the incursion to the South the 2RPH Chair and GM have made recent visits to meet with the Mayor of Wollongong City Council and his staff, as well as disability and community organisations in the Illawarra. These discussions are vital to the development of local programming content that will best serve the Wollongong and Illawarra communities.

Presenter Profile

Natalie Shea - Reading Spectrum

Natalie Shea rings bells in her spare time – usually at St Mary’s cathedral.

“It’s not as deafening as you might think,” she assures me. “The ringing chamber is separated by two floors of solid timber.”

Putting her program together for 2RPH is a much quieter affair. It’s her other careers as a musician who works for ABC Classic and a translator of French that really inform her presenting style, not so much the bell ringing.

Natalie reads from the SMH cultural supplement Spectrum every week and chooses which stories to cover carefully.

“The WordPlay column is difficult – puns just don’t work when you read them out loud. And certain subjects and themes can be too dense. You can go back over the statistics when you’re reading, but listening and absorbing them is much more difficult.”

A keen concert and theatre goer, Spectrum has proved a perfect match for Natalie after ten years with 2RPH where she started of course as a reader of the morning papers. She also reads for Parish Pump and Green Advocate.

Why does such a busy woman give so much time to



community radio? “I guess I just need to feel useful in the world,” she says. “In high school I stopped wearing jewellery and makeup when I realised there were people who didn’t have enough to eat. I’ve always been very aware of how fortunate I am.”

why does such a busy woman volunteer for Radio 2RPH?

A passionate environmentalist, Natalie has trained in permaculture with Milkwood and works in a community garden every weekend.

“Global warming is overwhelming. But I always think you start where you are. We’re all connected and it helps to balance that big picture with practical actions like recycling.”

And of course, presenting for 2RPH.

Spectrum broadcasts every Tuesday at 8.30pm and repeats on Wednesdays at 1.30pm

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