An Australian Guide to Researching Corporations

The Basics…

'The earth is not dying, it is being killed. And those that are killing it have names and addresses.'

Utah Phillips

But sometimes it's difficult to find out exactly which company is responsible for a particularly detrimental operation… or it's tricky to expose the links between parent companies and subsidiaries, or their institutional investors.

This guide is designed for all people interested in finding out more about specific corporations or specific industry sectors, in the hope that that information will be useful to help win campaigns to stop environmental and human rights abuses perpetrated by multinationals in the name of corporate profits.

Some tips to help navigate this guide:

To find out **basic information on a company**, including their former names, address, board of directors, key shareholders, AGM dates and locations, main operations see the section on **Company Profiles**.

To find out about a **specific Industry Sector**, i.e. coal mining, agribusiness, textiles etc, and to find out who some of the key corporate players in that industry are and general statistics about the industry see the **Industry Profiles** section.

To find out about a company's relationship to government, look at the **government section**. There is info on political donations, parliamentary transcripts, freedom of information and general government websites.

To really start **digging the dirt** on a company and find out more about their corporate crimes and environmental and human rights abuses look at the sections on NGOs, media, alternative media, government regulators such as Environmental Protection Agencies, court cases and of course the web – look at the tips on how to use search engines most effectively, and the list of useful websites.

Funding of research – Universities and Corporate Links
Universities and supposedly independent research institutions are becoming more and more dependent on industry finance to fund research projects. This threatens both academic integrity and the reliability of information coming from supposedly neutral sources. There are also increasing reports that research unfavorable to the funding body is being suppressed. Moreover, this leads to worrying broader trends in higher education where areas of study, which are not commercially marketable, receive less funding for research. The recently released University of Melbourne strategic plan, 'Growing Esteem' has at its heart a commitment to greater corporate sponsorship of research. These trends are accelerating.

Finding out what research a company is funding can be quite tricky. For example, there is no comprehensive register of the funding sources for university research. However, corporate funding of research and corporate partnerships is mentioned in academic journals and on university websites. Also universities budgets (available on most university websites) have general figures about research funding sources.

Introduction

Digging up dirt is actually easier than most people think. For example, people often want to know a company's sites in their area, but they hadn't thought of looking in their phone book! So this basic guide on how to research a company is an attempt to break down the mystique surrounding research. Anyone can find out about a company with just a little time and imagination.

This guide relates to researching Australian companies. The directories, media and libraries are all Australian. However, some of the techniques may be transferable to other countries, and of course the web is international.

Much of the material in the Guide is taken from the UK version prepared by Corporate Watch (www.corporatewatch.org). Corporate Watch Australia is grateful for their permission to reproduce sections of their guide and adapt them for the Australian context.

We assume that you have access to the Internet. Many of the sources here are available by traditional means (and we give those too), but the web makes research both easier and more comprehensive. Even if you don't have access to the web, you probably know someone who does, or can access it in a library or cyber-café. We also assume that you know basically how to use the web (if not, there are countless people, companies and books that would love to tell you!), so we only explain how to apply this to research.

Unfortunately, many of the extremely useful databases that are listed in this guide are only available at some institutions and libraries. However, we have always tried to include various options, so that hopefully most researchers will have access to at least one through a local library or university or school library, or at least through a friend who has access to university or local library resources!

Golden rules of research

There are 4 things we suggest you keep in mind while doing your research. They will all save you time and frustration in the long run:

1) Know what you want

Before you start, be very clear about what kind of information you need. Beware of information addiction – if you don't know exactly what you want, you can spend hours picking up reams of 'information', which is all very interesting, but in the end of no real use.

2) Ask someone else

At the start of your research, you should check what other researchers and campaigners have already done that could be helpful, to avoid duplication of work. Always ask your contacts whether they can produce or suggest written sources, or other people to speak to.

3) Look for leads

Throughout your research, look not just for information itself but also for potential further sources, whether publications, websites, contacts etc. So ask interviewees for any contacts they've got; follow all links from useful websites; always look through bibliographies and reference lists in publications. Look at the source of all your information and follow it (e.g. if the source was a newspaper or magazine article, talk to the journalists, find out where they got their information.) A lot of good stories begin with a rumour - 'Have you heard that does this?'. Always follow these rumours - 'Where did you hear that?'.

4) Note all references

This really is essential, however much of a drag it may seem. This means that if later in your investigations you come to doubt some of your information (e.g. if you get conflicting facts), you can check out its reliability. Also, being able to go back to your sources may give you new leads. Many good researchers go so far as to log everything they do during a research project, including all names, phone numbers, and details of where they get each piece of information. This diligence generally pays off. It is also a good idea to keep photocopies of all useful paper sources and printouts or saved versions of web pages.

5) Keep a critical mind

Remember to always look critically at all the information your gather. Check a bit about your source and how reliable they are and what their hidden agenda is. Don't just accept at face value everything that is written. And always, always keep questioning and think creatively!

Structuring your research

It is good to get as far as you can with research before letting your target company know that you're looking into it - that way you know you're asking the most effective questions, you have a good idea of how to

extract information, and you can tell when your subject is lying. In other words, aim to
interview the company last. Start by setting out exactly what you want to know. List all the **possible sources** you can think of. At this stage, search library catalogues and the web, and ask any contacts you've got. Brainstorm research approaches with your colleagues. When you've got a good list of sources, then **prioritise**, and decide how much time you're prepared to spend on each. Throughout your research, you must **evaluate** how effective you're being, and be prepared to be flexible.

Backing up your research

When making allegations of environmental or human rights abuses against corporations make sure you always back up your claims. This is partly to avoid allegations of libel or threats to sue for defamation from the corporations you targeted (See also the section on Libel) and also to help you sound more creditable and authoritative to your audience. Making sure you cite all your sources and footnote any quotes, statistics and information drawn directly from other sources is a really important practice to get into.

For information put up onto the site please cite all sources consistently using the format described in the Australian Guide to Legal Citation (AGLC) put out by the Melbourne University Law Review. The AGLC is available at www.law.unimelb.edu.au/mulr. For some of the main citation guidelines see the section on Libel.

The Web

The Web is becoming an increasingly powerful source, as more and more information is uploaded onto it. It's the most obvious and most useful starting point for any research! But beware that it is not a static resource. Information you found on the web can move about, or even vanish completely. For this reason, you should print off useful pages, or save them onto your hard drive, making sure you record the URL (site address). The main danger with using the web is getting swamped with information. It is very easy to spend many hours surfing unproductively. Keep in mind exactly what you are looking for and try not to get distracted.

The key to good use of the web is of course search engines. Note that search engines all use search terms slightly differently, and you should always read the search tips/help page before using them. Bear in mind that different search engines 'think' differently, and so rank pages in different orders. It is therefore often worth trying more than one. We recommend www.google.com. To maximize the potential this search engine offers, choose the "advanced search" function (located on the right side of the main page). This option allows you to filter and specify your search further, and to search for certain key words or phrases in some particular web pages only.

Google has an amazing search capacity, however, it has recently agreed to help the Chinese government filter the net in China to stop information about pro-democracy movements. www.scruggle.com taps into google's capacity but does not support it's profits.

Some of the best known search engines only trawl English language databases. Our favourite search engine **Google** however can search webpages in a variety of different languages. If yours is not one of them **www.searchenginecolossus** lists more than 1000 search engines organised by country.

Again – always we skeptical and critical of information found on the web. The democratic nature of the web means that anyone can post anything, so make sure you always check the reliability and credibility of your sources and be disconcerting in what information you accept!

Tips

Try to focus your search by the careful use of keywords and by using Boolean operators ('and,' 'or,' 'not'). If you are looking for a specific report you can use a search engine that allows you to search for phrases and enter the title of the report - usually done by putting the specific phrase you want to search for in double quotes " ".

Some search engines such as **Google** (use the advanced search) let you search specific websites or domains for particular words or phrases. This can be extremely useful when a site's built-in search engine isn't very good. Another useful feature of Google is that it holds a 'cache' of each page it has registered. In other words, if a web page has changed (as they often do), Google will show you how the page looked when it indexed it.

Following links - Most sites have a links page. These are often worth following, although be selective.
Bookmarking - Some sites are repeatedly useful, such as financial sites, media sites or search engines and you'll want to keep returning to them. Keep a well-organised set of bookmarks for these.

Libraries

Local libraries

Most major local libraries have a **business section**, which will contain business directories, annual reports of large companies (including foreign ones), and lots of other useful information.
You should also be able to find back issues of newspapers and magazines (including trade journals) and indexes to them. If your target company is based locally, local history books and newspapers may be useful.

Start by asking library assistants which book is best for your purposes. Or search the **catalogue** - using subject keywords or publisher (for example, a company or trade association may publish many useful reports). There may be books about the company, or its industry. Browsing can result in some interesting discoveries - but beware of getting side-tracked.

If you can't find a particular directory or other reference book in your local public library, ask the librarian to get a copy through the interlibrary loan service.

To find a local library close to you, or a specialised library search the Australian Libraries Gateway at http://www.nla.gov.au/apps/libraries

University libraries

If your public library doesn't have what you need, try a university library, especially the business studies section, or other relevant sections (e.g. for a chemicals company, look in the chemistry section). University libraries also provide good general reference sources, good media coverage (including trade journals) and abstracts databases – if they let you use them. Universities vary in how willing they are to give access to non-university members. In some libraries you can just walk in, whereas in others you may have to register and even pay a fee.

Company Profiles

Company Websites

As a starting point check out the official company website. Be aware that company websites are generally put together with the support of PR professionals and present the company the way it *wants* to be seen. So make sure you look through these sites with a critical mind!

However, useful information can often be found on these sites, information about office locations, shareholders, directors, annual reports, where mines, plants, factories etc are located, which brands are identified with the company etc.

It's also useful to understand how the company is trying to position and market itself and to be prepared to tackle their spin head on!

Annual Reports

Under the Corporations Act 2001 (Commonwealth) each company must provide Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC) with a copy of its annual report.
The Annual Report includes basic background information on the company including:
- financial statements, incomes, losses, liabilities, profits
- directors
- joint ventures entered into
- controlled entities
- top 20 shareholders
- office locations

These are generally available to the public. Look either:
- on the company's website
- on the databases listed above
- by phoning the company and asking that a copy be sent to you. Companies are obliged to provide a copy to anyone who requests one.

Environment Reports

Many companies now produce annual environmental reports. However, they rarely commit companies to anything radical and usually amount to little more than a cynical PR exercise.

Nevertheless, they are useful sources of quotes and policy statements that can be used to argue against, say, a company's involvement in an environmentally destructive project. These reports are sometimes downloadable from the company's website or you can phone up and ask for a copy. *Tomorrow* magazine also has a directory of on-line environmental reports for many major companies at **www.enviroreporting.com**.

Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC)

All registered Australian companies, including unlisted companies, have a responsibility to supply certain information to the Australian Securities & Investment Commission (ASIC).
It is possible to search the ASIC website http://www.asc.gov.au/asic/asic.nsf for a list of documents lodged by individual public or private companies. From the information listed it is possible to find out some basic information about a company: e.g. previous names, if a company is up to date in lodging its annual return, ABN etc. Consult the ASIC Information Sheets listing for facts, definitions and issues relating to Australian companies.

Australian Stock Exchange

This website is aimed more at corporate investors and stockbrokers than activists, but still has a variety of information including: share price, company details, company announcements for all the companies listed on the ASX (www.asx.com.au).

Databases

Insider industry databases are a great starting point to get the statistics and basic details for the company.

Many university libraries and some local libraries have subscriptions to a wide variety of useful databases.   Check whether your (or a friend's!) library gives you access to any of the following:

DatAnalysis (Australia)
An online database that includes comprehensive company reports for all companies listed and delisted on the Australian Stock Exchange since 1990. These reports are updated daily from relevant ASX announcements. Provides:
• Full corporate details, including contact information, incorporation details, name changes, accounts, AGM dates, industry classification, and principal activity.
• Company history, operational history, capital history.
• Shareholder information, including substantial shareholders, share distribution, top 20 shareholders, directors' interests.
• Financial data, including profit and loss statements, balance sheets and cash flow statements for ten years.
• Annual reports, in PDF format, for all companies from 1995

FinAnalysis (Australia)
An online database that provides a 12-year financial history for all companies listed on the Australian Stock Exchange. Results can be viewed in table or chart format and can be downloaded into spreadsheet format.

Dun & Bradstreet Jobson's Online (Australia & New Zealand)
Information on Australian and New Zealand listed companies, including directors and key personnel, shareholder information, financial tables and history, main activities and operations.

Lexis Nexis News (International)
Select the 'Business Search Form' to access international company profiles and directories, analysts' and brokerage reports, financial and corporate filings, information on mergers and acquisitions, and global business news and newswires.

Worldscope (International)
International company profiles. Each record includes a description of the business, selected financials, key ratios, and officers.

Business Directories

In the reference section of most city libraries, and certainly in any business library, you can find various directories giving facts and figures on companies. (NB Many directories and specialist publications start with a guide to using them - reading this guide can save a lot of time). Unfortunately, none of these directories are entirely comprehensive in their company coverage as there are just too many companies!

Kompass Australia
Directory of private and publicly listed Australian companies, including detailed breakdown, by product, of company activities. Volume 1 of this directory covers products and services.
Volume 2 covers over 20,000 Australian companies, including many smaller companies. Sometimes this refers to the whole company and sometimes just to that specific site. Most usefully, it lists product codes which refer to **Vol. I, Products & Services.** Look up a major category number, and the index at the start of it will tell you which subcategories the company comes in. In each of those, it tells you the precise (ish) products and services the company supplies. There is also a Kompass website: **www.kompass.com** that contains a searchable database of company information and details the company's publications world-wide.
a research guide
Huntley's Shareholder
Provides information on the top 500 Australian companies. Information includes: company profile, balance sheets, and profit and loss statements.

Major Companies of the Far East and Australasia
v. 1: South East Asia
v. 2: East Asia.
Provides company data on the most important companies in the region. Includes a business activity index which lists companies by their various activities. The same company also produces guides to **Major Companies of Europe** and **Major Companies of South West Asia.**

Business Who's Who of Australia
Includes profiles of over 19,000 companies. Companies can be located by; company name, directors, company owners, international trade, industry or location. Published in 2 volumes.

Who Owns Whom –
This tells you how a company is legally structured, as corporate family trees. The first volume gives a parent company and its address and registration number etc, then its direct subsidiaries (the companies it owns completely), then the subsidiaries of each of those, and which country each subsidiary is registered in. This will tell you whether a company has operations in a particular country. The second volume is an index of all the subsidiary companies, and tells you what their parent is. Unfortunately, the directory is not comprehensive. Volumes includes: **Who owns whom - Australasia, Asia, Middle East & Africa, Who owns whom - Continental Europe, Who owns whom - North & South America, Who owns whom - United Kingdom & Ireland.**

International directory of company histories
Use the index of the latest volume to search for up-to-date entries. Provides histories of companies
that prominent in a particular industry or geographic region. Entries provide information on founders, expansions and losses, labour/management actions, key dates, principal subsidiaries, main competitors and other significant milestones.

Hoover's Handbook of American Business
2 volumes. Profiles 750 major U.S companies including detailed overview, financials, key
competitors and stock price history.

Hoover's Handbook of Private Companies
Provides profiles of major American private companies including overview, financials, stock
price history, key competitors and products and services.

Hoover's Handbook of World Business
Contains profiles of major global enterprises including some leading Australian private companies. Provides: overview, history, locations, competitors, products, operations, share price
and historical financial performance.

FT Major Companies Guide, FT Smaller Companies Guide, MacMillan's Stock Exchange Yearbook, HemScott Company Guide -
between these four directories, you can get summary financial data (turnover, profit, employees etc), and names of the company's bankers, lawyers, brokers and financial advisers.

Directory of Directors - in two parts, organised by director's name and by company name. Lists directors and some cases their role.

Directory of Multinationals - 2-3 pages on each of the biggest multinationals, taken largely from annual reports. Useful if you can't get the annual report.

If you want more, have a look round the business section of your library, to see what's available, or ask a librarian's advice.

Business Website Coverage

There are various websites which contain information similar to that in business directories. These include:

www.asianbusinesswatch.com Asia
www.corporateinformation.com World
http://globalbusiness.about.com Latin America
www.globalregister.co.nz New Zealand
www.hemscott.net World
www.hoovers.com/uk World
www.investext.com World
www.mbendi.co.za Africa
www.quicken.com World
http://finance.yahoo.com World

If you are new to business research, and unfamiliar with the language of annual reports, the **Yahoo Financ**e site (**http://finance.yahoo.com/li**) provides excellent explanations of key business terms. **www.askjeeves.com** is another useful site.

Analysts' Reports

Analysts advise investors on whether to buy or sell a company. They generally specialise in one industrial sector and have a detailed knowledge of the companies within that sector and their financial performance. However, the reports are generally only available for a firm's clients. Unless you know a sympathetic insider you will have to pay a lot of money to get hold of them.

Some reports are available on the web for a price. **Investext** (**www.investext.com**) and **Dialog** (**www.dialog.com**) are worth checking out. Both offer a free trial period – or allow you to buy reports on a one-off basis.

The **Yahoo Finance** website (http://yahoo.multexinvestor.com) offers some cheaper (and therefore less detailed) reports. There are some very brief free ones and others ranging from $5 to $50. You'll need to register (this is free), then click research and enter the company's 'ticker symbol.' If you don't know this you can find the company through 'company lookup.'

Finding out about an investment company's investments

This is extremely tricky. The big companies usually won't tell you their investments. However, many big investment companies have unit trusts. Every three months, fund managers produce a report on their investments and if you phone an investment company and ask about one of their trusts they will send you a copy of this report. This report may give a picture of how the other trusts within that company are invested. Finding out what companies a financial institution is investing in is more thoroughly discussed in *The Campaigners' Guide to Financial Markets* (see **Further reading**).

Find out about a company's strategy and prospects

Company strategy is generally explained in the company's **annual report** It tends to be described in much more detail in a company's quarterly presentation of financial results, and other strategy presentations to the financial markets. These presentations will be reported in the financial press. They can also often be found on a company's website in the 'investor relations' section. You should always look at this section of the company's website, since the company doesn't expect people who aren't interested in investing to look at it. You can therefore find out things that you wouldn't otherwise come across.

If you really want the low-down on a company's strategy and financial prospects however, you'll need to look at some analysts' reports. Reading relevant market research and trade journals can also give you a good idea of the company's place in its sector and its future prospects.

Industry Profiles

Databases

IBISWorld
IBISWorld is an online Australian database that provides industry and market research information, company information and business environment information. It's reports are outrageously expensive (unless you have access to a library which has a subscription or limited subscription). However, on the publicly available site, it still allows you to find list of who the key corporate players in all imaginable industry sector are.
http://www.ibisworld.com.au/

Trade Associations and Professional Institutes

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) is the peak council of Australian business associations. (http://www.acci.asn.au/). Affiliated to it are Chamber of Commerce in each State and Territory and a nationwide network of industry associations. The role of these bodies is to represent the interests of business at a national level as well as internationally. They work on developing business policy and strategies, as well as lobby government in the interests of business and promote various industry positions to the public.

These organisations often have information services, which you can phone up for statistics, market data or other information they have to hand. However, they will generally charge you if you need more of their time than just speaking on the phone. Perhaps most usefully you can ask these information departments for advice on how to do your research, pointers to good websites, directories, journals and libraries. You can find the trade association and professional institute for the industry you're tracking in relevant websites and directories.

State and Territory Chambers of Commerce
The contact details for all these are listed on the ACCI website.

ACT and Region Chamber of Commerce & Industry
www.actchamber.com.au

Australian Business Limited (NSW)
www.australianbusiness.com.au

Business SA
www.business-sa.com

Chamber of Commerce & Industry of Western Australia (Inc)
www.cciwa.com

Chamber of Commerce Northern Territory
www.chambernt.com.au

National Industry Associations

ACCORD - advocate for the consumer, cosmetic, hygiene and specialty products industry
www.acspa.asn.au

Agribusiness Employers' Federation
www.aef.net.au

Air Conditioning and Mechanical Contractors' Association
www.amca.com.au/vic

Association of Consulting Engineers Australia (The)
www.acea.com.au

Australian Beverages Council Ltd
www.australianbeverages.org

Australian Entertainment Industry Association
www.aeia.org.au

Commerce Queensland
www.commerceqld.com.au

Employers First ™ (NSW)
www.employersfirst.org.au

State Chamber of Commerce (NSW)
www.thechamber.com.au

Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce & Industry Ltd
www.tcci.com.au

Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce & Industry
www.vecci.org.au

Australian Hotels Association
www.aha.org.au

Australian International Airlines Operations Group

Australian Made Campaign Limited
www.australianmade.com.au

Australian Mines and Metals Association
www.amma.org.au

Australian Paint Manufacturers' Federation Inc
www.apmf.asn.au

Australian Retailers' Association
www.ara.com.au

Housing Industry Association
www.buildingonline.com.au

Insurance Council of Australia
www.ica.com.au

Investment & Financial Services Association Ltd
www.ifsa.com.au

Master Builders Australia Inc.
www.masterbuilders.com.au

Master Plumbers' and Mechanical Services Association of Australia (The)
www.plumber.com.au

National Electrical and Communications Association
www.neca.asn.au

National Retail Association Ltd
www.nationalretailassociation.com.au

NSW Farmers Industrial Association
www.iressentials.com

Oil Industry Industrial Association
c/- Shell Australia
GPO Box 872K
MELBOURNE VIC 3001
Telephone: 03 9666 5444
Facsimile: 03 9666 5008

Pharmacy Guild of Australia
www.guild.org.au

Plastics And Chemicals Industries Association Inc
www.pacia.org.au

Printing Industries Association of Australia
www.printnet.com.au

Restaurant & Catering Australia
www.restaurantcater.asn.au

Standards Australia
www.standards.org.au

Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce
www.vacc.motor.net.au

International Industry Bodies

Gale Group, 27500 Drake Road, Farmington Hills, MI, USA. In 3 volumes
World Guide to Trade Associations
KG Saur, Ortlerstrasse 8, D-81373 Munich, Germany.
Directory of European Industry and Trade Associations
CBD Research, Chancery House, 15 Wickham Road, Beckenham, Kent.

Government Industry Bodies

AusTrade (http://www.austrade.gov.au)

In their own words: "The Australian Trade Commission (Austrade) is the Australian Government agency that helps Australian companies win overseas business for their products and services by reducing the time, cost and risk involved in selecting, entering and developing international markets."
The section on "Industry and Country Profiles" gives a background to key Australian export industries.

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) (http://www.accc.gov.au)

The ACCC is a national agency dealing with competition matters (ie approving mergers and acquisitions) and responsibility for enforcing the Trade Practices Act and the state/territory application legislation. It monitors prices and "anti-competitive behaviour." Their "Merger and Acquisition Register" (under the "Public Registers" tab) lists all proposed corporate mergers.

Australian Government Productivity Commission (http://www.pc.gov.au)

Completes reports on various industry and how certain regulations, changes and developments will impact on productivity. Useful when considering the interrelation between industry and government regulation and subsidies.

Some other government bodies which might be useful depending on the specific research you are doing include:
Australian Dept of Employment and Workplace Relations (http://www.dewr.gov.au/), **Australian Dept of** Foreign Affairs and Trade (http://www.dfat.gov.au/) and the **Australian Dept of** Industry, Tourism and Resources **(http://www.industry.gov.au/)**

Trade Journals and Databases

If you are following a particular company or industry, you should certainly be monitoring the relevant trade journals. The best bit tends to be the news section, though there may be some decent feature articles. If you're doing quite major research, it may be worth flicking through the last year or two's back issues. Trade journals often have an index in the first issue of the year, covering the previous year, or one is inserted when old editions are bound.

Alternatively, see if you have separates means of accessing some of these titles. Key titles such as The Economist, Fortune are available in hardcopy in many local libraries.

Try looking for relevant titles in *Ulrich's* directory of periodicals around the world (in the reference section of your local library). The directory is also available to subscribers on the web at **www.ulrichsweb.com**. A free trial period is offered.

There really are more trade journals available than you could shake several sticks at.

SmartBIX (Australian Business Index)
Australian indexing and abstracting service which covers newspapers and journal articles on business intelligence, market research, company, industry and trade information. Also covers related areas including advertising, industrial relations, etc. Formally known as *ABIX*.

ProQuest
ProQuest is a collection of international multidisciplinary databases. The databases index more than 7,000 international journals and newspapers, from which some 3,500 provide full-text articles. The whole collection may be searched simultaneously or individual databases may be selected. Some of the particularly useful databases include:

- *ABI/Inform Global*: indexes 1800 worldwide business periodicals.
- *ABI/Inform Trade & Industry*: covers 750+ business periodicals and newsletters with a trade or industry focus.
- *Academic Research Library*: multidisciplinary.
- *Accounting & Tax*: comprehensive coverage of accounting and tax topics appearing in key industry publications and newspapers.
- *Banking Information Source*: covers banking industry publications providing information about the financial services industry, banking and industry trends.
- *ProQuest Asian Business*: covers Asian business and financial information from key international publications including Far Eastern Economic Review and Asiaweek.
- *ProQuest European Business*: covers European business and financial information from key international publications including: The Economist, Fortune, European Business Journal.
- *ProQuest Telecommunications*: telecommunications industry publications.

The following sites cover both international markets and markets within individual countries.
Market Research Europe - www.marketresearch.com
Market Research International - http://db2-rev.ecnext.com
Euromonitor - www.euromonitor.com

Media

Studies have shown that most of the content in the mainstream media comes directly from media releases (often copied almost word for word) the overwhelming majority (80% of more) of which come from large PR firms working for corporate clients, a smaller proportion (approx 20%) from government media releases, a handful from NGO and other community groups media releases and then there may be the occasional article of frank and fearless independent investigative journalism – but don't bet on it!

So its no surprise that that the crimes committed against people and planet by large corporations are often not reported in newspaper. Moreover, many of these abuses happen everyday, all the time, by the media's definition they don't qualify as news – because they are not *new* – but rather systematic, entrenched and ongoing.

But some stories are covered by the media and the press is often a useful starting point for research. Do bear in mind that the media is not totally reliable, and if you need to be completely watertight with your facts, you should back up all media sources. However, it does provide a fantastically wide information resource.

Probably the most useful Australian newspaper is the **Financial Review**, for keeping broadly up to date. It's worth reading regularly if you're involved in corporate campaigning.

Newspapers

Most major newspapers have websites which you can search using Advanced Google (see **The Web** section). Major Australian newspapers include:

The Age: http://www.theage.com.au
The Australian: http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/
The Sydney Morning Herald: www.smh.com.au
The Herald Sun: http://www.heraldsun.news.com.au/
Australian Financial Review: http://afr.com/

International Papers
JournalismNet site at http://www.journalismnet.com both provide useful links to media sites throughout the world, as does the Oxford University's Bodleian library site - www.bodley.ox.ac.uk.
Some key papers are:
UK:
The Guardian www.guardian.co.uk
The Independent www.independent.co.uk
Financial Times http://search.ft.com/search/index.html
Daily Telegraph www.telegraph.co.uk
The Times www.thetimes.co.uk

US:
New York Times: http://www.journalismnet.com
Washington Post: http://www.washingtonpost.com/

Christian Science Monitor: <http://www.csmonitor.com/>
Financial Times (US edition): http://news.ft.com/home/us

Local papers are also useful when looking at specifically local issues and impacts. However, they generally don't tend to produce indexes, CD-ROMs or websites. You could try asking a journalist or the editor. If you have good contacts there, they might look through their own records for you.

Databases

News databases allow you to search for articles on a company found over a larger time period and over various different news sources. Again, look at the web tips about searching for ideas on how to narrow your search – if you simply tip 'BHP' into the search function you will be overwhelmed with thousands of articles, most of unlikely to be relevant for your purposes.

A good online database is **Reuters Business Briefing** at www.briefing.reuters.com. It covers over 6,000 publications in 10 different languages, including all major national press from around the world, some local press and an excellent selection of trade press. The downside is that it is very expensive, however they do give a two-week free trial. There is also a danger of information overload so you need to chose your search terms well.

The UK *Financial Times* website has recently been upgraded, and allows you to search over 2,000 publications, including newspapers from around the world and a good selection of trade journals. It is probably one of the best free online press databases available.

Check whether your library gives you access to any of the following.

Lexis Nexis News
An online full-text international newspaper database. Search for news on specific companies or industries. It indexes some Australian newspapers, but not Fairfax publications.

Factiva
This is an online index with full-text which covers both current and archived news.
An international database with a comprehensive collection of domestic and international news and business information sources. Will provide indexing and full-text for Fairfax Australian publications)
Newswires include: Dow Jones, Reuters, and The Associated Press.
To get more industry related information search this database under *Australian Financial Review*, *The Age*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *BRW: Business Review Weekly*, and other Fairfax publications. Limited to 5 simultaneous users.

SmartBIX
Australian index covering newspaper and journal articles on industry and trade information, business intelligence, market research, and companies. Previously known as ABIX.

Many libraries (e.g. city libraries and university libraries) now have CD-ROMs of various media sources. If you're based near such a library, these may be better than the web, as you can search several publications at once.

Independent Media

'Don't attack the media, be the media' – Indymedia slogan

Indymedia aims to provide alternative media covering grassroots campaigns against corporate control and government power and are often a useful source for information. As Indymedia is about participatory democracy everyone can immediately submit stories. Therefore, also aim to double check the information provides or the reliability of the source to ensure that your information is accurate.

The international Indymedia site is www.indymedia.org, which has links to all the local indymedia sites globally.

Alternative Media

If you want the 'dirt' on a company, the alternative media may be of use.

In the UK, the *Corporate Watch* newsletter covers various topics of corporate power and its social and environmental impacts – plus campaigns against corporations. All the back issues of the newsletter are on their website: www.corporatewatch.org.uk.

From the US, there's *Multinational Monitor* (http://multinationalmonitor.org/) and *CorpWatch US* (www.corpwatch.org).

If you have the money, the best way to search the alternative media is through *Ethical Consumer*'s online database, **Corporate Critic** - see **www.ethicalconsumer.org/corp_critic.htm**. *EC* monitors a huge range of alternative media, and records references and abstracts of articles critical of companies on this database.

Government Sources

If the company has any interaction with government (e.g. in regulation, procurement or just plain lobbying), there will be some records there. Government and public sector bodies are generally more co-operative in interview than private sector – as they are supposed, in theory at least, to exist in the public interest. You can find your way into the Australian government **department websites** through the Australian Parliament House website
www.aph.gov.au. State government websites are also a great source of info:
VIC: www.vic.gov.au
NSW: www.nsw.gov.au
QLD: www.qld.gov.au
NT: www.nt.gov.au
ACT: www.act.gov.au
SA: www.sa.gov.au
WA: www.wa.gov.au
TAS: www.tas.gov.au

Sometimes the Government issues press releases relating to an industry. All UK **Government press releases** are available on the relevant website.

Government departments which work closely with industry can be used much like trade associations for advice, information and publications. Obvious examples are the government departments covering agriculture, energy, finance and health. Individual staff members in these departments can be extremely informative and it can be well worth giving them a ring.

Ask your local MP: Listing of all Federal MP and Senators are available on the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) site: http://www.aec.gov.au.

Political donations

Australian law requires that all donations over $10,000. This information can be found on the Australian Electoral Commission website (http://www.aec.gov.au/), particularly on the Annual returns Locator Service at: http://fadar.aec.gov.au/arwdefault.asp?submissionid=6

Note there is also the Democracy Watch website, (http://www.democracywatch.com.au/about.html) which is a non-profit, non-partisan, citizens' group committed to achieving sweeping reforms to dramatically curb the excessive influence of 'big interest' money on our elections and government decisions at the federal, state, and local levels, who have an analysis of these figures.

Freedom of Information (FoI)

Freedom of Information laws have been enacted federally and at state and territory level. The aim is to give the general public access to government information. However, there are many exceptions to this legislated right to information, particularly commercial in confidence.

However, this is still a useful tool. For use of FoI to be effective you need to have a very clear idea of exactly what document you are after. Keep your request specific or you may end up wading through enormous amounts of irrelevant information. Specify a particular phrase and the time period which you are referring to, eg. Bayer BT10 contamination 12/2004 to current.

The is a fee attached to all FoI requests, which varies from state to state, but is approximately $20.

VIC: http://www.foi.vic.gov.au/
NSW: http://www.premiers.nsw.gov.au/NSWCommunity/FreedomOfInformation/FOIGuidelines.htm
WA: http://www.foi.wa.gov.au/
SA: http://www.archives.sa.gov.au/foi/intro.html

QLD: http://www.justice.qld.gov.au/dept/foi.htm
TAS: http://www.justice.tas.gov.au/
NT: http://www.infocomm.nt.gov.au/

Federal: go to the Attorney-General's site (www.ag.gov.au) then search for Freedom of Information.

Parliament Transcripts

The debates in all Australian parliament's (Commonwealth and States and Territories) are all recorded in the relevant Hansards.

These are all available on line. Some might also be available in hard copy in your library.

Australian Parliament - House of Representatives: http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/index.htm

Australia. Parliament - Senate: http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/index.htm

Victorian Hansard: http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/hans.html

NSW: http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/web/common.nsf/V3HHBHome

SA: http://www.parliament.sa.gov.au/han/6_hansard.shtm

WA:
http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/web/newwebparl.nsf/iframewebpages/Hansard+-+Advanced+Search

Tassie: http://www.hansard.parliament.tas.gov.au/

QLD: http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/hansard

NT: http://www.nt.gov.au/lant/hansard/hansard.shtml

ACT: http://www.hansard.act.gov.au/

Government Gazettes

Government gazettes announce department decisions, requirements arising from acts or regulations and other types of information. Sections in government gazettes where you will find these official government notices are: *Public Service Government Notes*, *Business*, *Special Tariff Concessions*, and *Periodic*. These are available in print in some local and university libraries.

Environmental Protection Authorities (EPAs)

EPAs are government departments set up in various states and federally to monitor environmental compliance. They may be able to provide you with information about environmental breaches:

VIC: http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/

NSW: http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/index.htm

SA: http://www.epa.sa.gov.au/

QLD: http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/

WA: http://www.epa.wa.gov.au/

Federal:
http://www.business.gov.au/Business+Entry+Point/GB+Directory/Environment+Protection+Authority+(EPA).htm

ACT: http://www.environment.act.gov.au/airandwater/envprotectact97/enprotectauth

Statistics

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is Australia's official statistical organisation. (http://www.abs.gov.au/). Its main function is to provide government and the community with a national statistical service. If your library gives you access to the *AusStats* database, you can also search this database for further information. ABS publications are also often found in the reference Section of university and local libraries.

Other sources for statistics
For statistics for other countries, or for comparisons of Australia with other countries, the following databases are useful

- World Development Indicators Online (WDI) (from the World Bank)
- EIU Country Data (from the Economist Intelligence Unit)
- Source OECD (from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development)
- International Financial Statistics Online (IFS) (from the International Monetary Fund)

Legal Info

Legislation

AustLII is a site produced by the Australasian Legal Information Institute, a joint facility of UTS and UNSW faculties of law. It provides links to legislation for all Australian jurisdictions. It includes caselaw, and also links to other Australian and international legislation and government sites and a search function.
http://www.austlii.edu.au/

Here you can select (on the toolbar on the left hand side) what jurisdiction you are looking for and then browse for the piece of legislation by name alphabetically. Most Acts can be downloaded in either word/RTF or PDF form.

If you don't know the name of the legislation use the search function on the top of the page. Make sure you make your search quite specific.

SCALEplus, provided by the Australian Attorney-General's Department, is best for Federal material. It includes links to other Australian and international legislation and government sites and a search function. It does not contain State Legislation or Commonwealth and State case law databases.
http://scaletext.law.gov.au/

Case Law

A particular company might have been involved in cases which threw around or even substantiated allegations of its abuses.
Search AustLII (www.austlii.edu.au) for relevant cases. Sometimes, going to the website of the court which decided the case will also allow you to access court transcribts and other evidence documents.

Useful Web Sites

A good start is to search web super-sites such as **www.essential.org** (a website hosting about 30 US anti-corporate NGOs - especially the Multinational Monitor at www.essential.org/monitor) and **www.oneworld.net** (which includes over 500 organisations from around the world, both North and South, focused on development, environment and human rights). OneWorld also functions as a magazine, and provides profiles on particular issues, plus campaigning guides.

So particularly useful anti-corporate sites include:
www.corporatewatch.org.uk – excellent company profiles
www.corpwatch.org - **CorpWatch US** (unrelated to Corporate Watch UK)
www.irrc.org/ - **Investor Research & Responsibility Centre** (US)
www.citizen.org - Public Citizen (US)
www.xs4all.nl/~ceo - Corporate Europe Observatory
www.endgame.org/ - Endgame Research Services

Websites on individual companies:
www.mcspotlight.org - everything you could ever want to know about **McDonalds**, plus basic information on a few other companies
www.essentialaction.org/shell/ - on **Shell**
www.saigon.com/~nike - on **Nike**
www.sprawl-busters.com and
www.walmartsucks.com - on **WalMart**
www.bayerhazard.com/ - on **Bayer**

Websites on particular industries:
www.moles.org (**Project Underground**) - on oil and mining
www.prwatch.org - on public relations
www.sourcewatch.org **–** on PR companies
www.ran.org (**Rainforest Action Network**) - on logging and other rainforest industries
www.irn.org (International Rivers Network) - on dam building and other river industries
www.foe.co.uk/camps/ foodbio/index.htm and

www.genewatch.org/ - on genetic engineering
www.infact.org/helpstop.html - on tobacco
www.adbusters.org - Canadian subvertisers
www.gn.apc.org/pesticidestrust/ - on pesticides
www.caat.org.uk/ (**Campaign Against the Arms Trade**)
www.nosweat.org.uk/ - on sweatshops
www.nologo.org - **Naomi Klein's** website on Clothing, sweatshops, casualisation etc

NGOs (Non-governmental organisations)

NGOs working on particular campaigns and issues are a rich resource of information and passion. More often then not they are delighted to help out and even more delighted that someone is doing research on an area related to their campaigns. Grassroots campaigns groups have an amazing wealth of knowledge, and it never ceases to amaze how such over-stretched and under-resourced groups still often manage to provide such amazing support to other campaigners and researchers. Even if completely under-funded and understaffed campaigner in NGOs will often have useful tips and useful industry overviews to help pick up useful leads for your research. Often too they have information dating back decades.

See Corporate Watch Australia (**www.corporatewatch.org.au**) for list of different NGOs working on campaigns relating to different industries.

Interviews

Interviewing your target company, either directly or by telephone, should usually be *saved until the end of your research*. At this stage you will have a much clearer idea of what you still need to know, and how to find it out. It will also be easier for you to pick up on any 'economies with the truth.' When conducting interviews, the following guidelines may be helpful:

· Prepare for your interviews
Brush up on your jargon and background knowledge. Work out three or four different ways in which you can squeeze out the information you require, and anticipate possible responses. Decide beforehand whether you're going to leave your source friendly or hostile to you after the interview.

· Bear in mind that companies contain many people
If one is unhelpful, you can always try someone else, possibly with a different alias. Looking at the company's website beforehand, or even talking to a receptionist, may give you an idea of how the company's structured, and therefore who you want to speak to. Getting direct line numbers is always useful. On the other hand, if you ask two different people in a company for the same information, they might both go to the same colleague for it. So be careful here.

· Be polite and friendly
You should aim to put the person you're questioning at ease, rather than making them nervous and cautious about telling you anything. Throwing in a few dummy questions to cover your real interests can help with this.

· Document your interviews
Always document your interviews, including time, place, who you spoke to and their position, any alias you used, major points and important quotes. Do this during or immediately after your interviews - things can be forgotten extremely quickly.

· Make your questions open-ended
Open-ended questions allow the subject to tell you more - and you may get some unexpected answers. Look for leads (e.g. other people to talk to) as well as answers. What the subject doesn't want to talk about is often as important as what they do want to discuss.

· Know when to stop
If your subject offers to send you a useful document then end the interview there. It's best to
wait until you've actually received what they send. You can then telephone them again with more questions.

· Respect 'off the record' comments
Respect 'off the record' comments (use them only as leads) - otherwise you're damaging your and other people's chances of getting them in the future, and also your reputation! However, convention is that 'off the record' must be said before the comments are made, rather than afterwards when the subject realises what he/she has said. Don't

offer to keep something off the record - leave this to your subject. Check whether 'off the record' just means 'not for attribution.'

It's up to you whether you tell the company who you really are. Being honest may lead to them seeing you as an enemy and not helping. If however, you have good credibility and the company thinks you will publicise your findings, they may help you for fear that you will publish anyway, and their non-co-operation will make them look worse. If you tell them you're someone else, adopt an identity of someone they actively want to talk to (i.e. it's in their interests) - a potential customer, client, supplier, employee, journalist, local historian etc. It often helps to flatter the company or the person you're talking to, to make them feel good and relaxed and give them an opportunity to boast (e.g. 'I know your company is one of the most efficient in the sector' - 'yes we've massively streamlined our workforce'; or 'your company has an excellent relationship with government…' etc).

Generally it's easier to be someone of low rank - this is less threatening, and gives you an excuse for not knowing the answer to all their questions ('I'll have to ask my boss/client'). If you can throw in chatty comments, that helps too ('sorry about my voice, I've got this throat bug', 'I can't find my notes, our office is just being re-decorated', 'when I took my daughter to school this morning…', etc).

When using an alias, try to keep a grain of truth in it, so that you can talk about yourself if pushed. It's probably worth keeping a note of who you are somewhere - forgetting your own name, for instance, can be highly embarrassing! If you're meeting subjects in person, remember that people tend to be remembered by their most prominent features (e.g. red hair / round glasses / lapel badge / stammer). You should therefore cover any memorable features of yourself, and create some that you don't usually have. If you normally smoke, don't. If you don't wear glasses, do etc.

Consider getting a postbox (register as 'no fixed abode'); make phone calls from a callbox, and not the one just outside your house or office. You want to learn about the company, not make it easy for them to learn about you.

Reliability of information

Beware of libel! Note that for example you can be sued for using something from a newspaper which was libellous if you did not take reasonable steps to ensure its reliability. Certainly any campaign literature should be checked before use. Unless your source is either a document signed or published by the subject, or a public record (i.e. from the government), or something you've directly seen or heard and documented carefully, try to back it up with another source. The less reliable your sources, the more corroborating further sources you need.

Use of devices such as 'according to ...' and 'allegedly' help with libel-dodging, but you may still be found liable if an incorrect inference can be drawn from what you write. Another useful tactic is to surround any potentially libellous comments with very critical comments which you can definitely back up. That way, when the company states which bits of your publication it considers libellous, it is implicitly admitting the truth of those bits which it doesn't challenge.

To protect a source who might lose their job or get in other kinds of trouble for revealing information to the public, bring a witness (who can testify) to the interview, who doesn't know the source's name.

Below is a brief description of how to cite key resources. Please refer to the AGLC for more detailed information or for a guide on how to cite other sources.

Signed newspaper articles

Author(s), 'Title', *Newspaper* (Place of Publication), Full date, pinpoint reference.

Unsigned newspaper articles

'Title', *Newspaper* (Place of Publication), Full date, pinpoint reference.

Untitled newspaper articles

Authors(s), Description of piece, *Newspaper* (Place of Publication), Full date, pinpoint reference.

Television and Radio Transcripts

Broadcaster, 'Title', *Name of Program*, Full date, Pinpoint reference.

Press releases

Author, 'Title' (Press Release, Full date) Pinpoint reference.

Speeches

Speakers, 'Title' (Speech delivered at the Name of Forum, Location, Fulldate).

Interviews conducted by the Author

Interview with name of interviewee (Location or form of interview, Full date).

NGO reports

NGO, 'Title' (Year) <www……> Pinpoint.

Internet sites

Website name <www…….>, date of retrieval.

Internet materials

Author, *Document title* (Year) website name <www…..>.

Cases (Australian Courts) – please see the AGLC for how to cite cases from other jurisdictions

Case name (Year) Volume Report Series Starting Page, Pinpoint.

Legislation (again Australian)

Title Year (Jurisdiction) section.

Journal Articles

Author (first name then surname), 'Title' (Year) Volume *Journal* Starting Page, Pinpoint.

Books

Author (first name then surname), *Title* (edition number, publication year) Pinpoint

Company Annual Reports

Company Name, *Annual Report* (Year).

Further reading

This booklet is intended as an introduction to researching companies. Some of the information in this guide is based on the *DIY Guide to Researching Corporates* put out by Corporate Watch (UK), many thanks to the campaigners and activists there who supported us in putting this Guide together.

Parts of the Guide also draw heavily on chapter 5 and 6 of Nicholas Hildyard and Mark Mansley's excellent publication **The Campaigners Guide to Financial Markets**. This goes into far more detail than we have here and is an invaluable tool for serious researchers. It is available from **Cornerhouse**: email: **cornerhouse@gn.apc.org**

And finally…

If you know of any research techniques or sources that you think should be included in this guide, please tell us about them. Don't forget to use your imagination. And good luck with your research.

Put together by Corporate Watch Australia, based on the *DIY Guide to Researching Corporates* produced by Corporate Watch UK. Updated by Julia Dehm, with assistance from Louise Sales.