

Australia's Fairfax says editorial integrity key

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA: Australian media giant Fairfax Wednesday said editorial independence was at the core of the company, as mining magnate Gina Rinehart pushes for greater influence at the respected newspaper firm.

Journalists at Fairfax Media, in the throes of a sweeping restructure set to cost 1900 jobs, have called on its biggest shareholder Rinehart to respect its charter of independence amid fears about editorial integrity.

Fairfax chief executive Greg Hywood said the firm's approach was unchanged.

"There's been a lot of speculation around editorial independence in relation to Fairfax. That will always stay. That is the core of this company," he told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

Hywood's comments come after Rinehart told the ABC that she hoped to be considered a "white knight" by Fairfax which is facing falling advertising revenues and circulation as readers switch to online platforms.

The Western Australia-based iron ore tycoon has said she may sell her stake if she is not given seats on the board of Fairfax, which owns *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* newspapers and has digital and radio assets.

"Unless director positions are offered without unsuitable conditions, Rinehart is unable to assist Fairfax at this time," a statement to the ABC said, adding that her company Hancock Prospecting could sell its interest.

Hywood said board positions were a matter for the board, but members could not tell journalists what to write.

"If you're a board member editorial discussions are always held within board meetings," he said.

"What doesn't happen is it doesn't translate into board members telling journalists what they should or shouldn't write, and that's our practice."

The Australian media sector is enduring a turbulent period, with the two major newspaper groups Fairfax and Rupert Murdoch's News Limited both flagging large job cuts as they grapple with the challenges of the digital transition.

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge