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'Bloodletting' starts at News Limited

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The heads have allegedly begun to roll at News Limited a day after the generally positive message from chief executive Kim Williams.

Sources have told *AdNews* that the redundancies have begun across the board, with the publisher's soon-to-be-defunct digital arm News Digital Media among the affected.

Despite Williams' positive words yesterday and the insistence News Limited would make 'significantly less' redundancies than the 1,900 rival publisher Fairfax Media announced on Monday, the lay-offs have already begun.

"The blood-letting at News Limited has started this morning and quite ferociously," an inside source told *AdNews*. "The message yesterday [from Kim Williams] was so positive and we were all expecting them to follow through that everyone would be treated fairly because Fairfax made such a cock-up of it."

While the total number of redundancies News Limited will make in its restructure is still unknown, the employees laid off today are not the first.

Another source told *AdNews* that lay-offs swept through the junior and middle ranks at NewsLifeMedia in the weeks leading up to Williams' public announcement, with employees receiving emails stating they had been booked in for meetings at 9am the following Monday. When staff arrived for these meetings, they were told they had been made redundant.

"News [Limited] was clear yesterday that it is investing and transforming its business for the future," a company spokesman told *AdNews*. "This includes investing \$60 million in Eidos Methode (a new publishing system), as well as investing in *Business Spectator* and *The Eureka Report*. We have also made a conditional proposal to acquire Consolidated Media Holding's subscription television assets."

Williams said yesterday: "As part of transforming the



News Limited chief executive Kim Williams.

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company we announced yesterday that as we roll-out the organisational model we will make a variety of positions redundant and that some positions would be retired through natural attrition. We will also hire people with new skills that we require going forward.”

This latest round of redundancies follow from the recent round of hirings and firings at NewsLifeMedia, under new chief executive Nicole Sheffield. Among the departures were *Vogue* editor-in-chief Kirstie Clements, lifestyle group publisher Mark Kelly and *Inside Out* editor Richard Waller. Commercial director Zara Curtis, who begins a new role with FremantleMedia next month, resigned last week.

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