

[Public
Interest
Journalism
Initiative]

Australian News Data Report

Monthly issue |
February 2023

Australian News Data Report: February 2023

Author: Gary Dickson

Research assistance: James Costa, Sasha Gattermayr and Maia Germano

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For more information about the Australian News Data Project, please visit:

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Correspondence

To discuss this report, please email research@piji.com.au.

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AUSTRALIAN NEWS DATA REPORT

Monthly issue | February 2023

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Overview

The [Australian News Data Report](#) is a monthly collection and analysis of information about news production in Australia drawn from three ongoing projects:

- **Australian News Mapping Project (ANMP)** plots news producers according to their locations, coverage geographies and the characteristics of each business;
- **Australian News Sampling Project (ANSP)** assesses news output by specific geographic location/s to understand the local character and quantity of public interest journalism production and produces each as a case study; and,
- **Australian News Index (ANI)** is the national database of newsrooms and changes to news production. The ANI supplies the data for the ANMP visualisations.

In this issue, we present monthly results as at 31 February 2023. Content sampling was conducted in the Sunshine Coast, Queensland, and across the Eyre Peninsula, South Australia.

This report is part of PIJI's continued commitment to ensuring an evidence-based approach to building sustainable public interest journalism production in Australia. PIJI's data gathering and monitoring have expanded substantially since our first dynamic project – the Australian Newsroom Mapping Project – launched back in 2020. Our research now consists of multiple related efforts – including but not limited to mapping newsrooms – to build understanding of the news market and inform policy, industry and research.

Every month we also provide an exportable version of the Australian News Index data.

The catalogue of PIJI's previous reports and data remains available [on our website](#).

As always, our research is made more rigorous with contributions from industry and the public. We welcome your feedback. To submit or correct data in this report, please [complete this online form](#) or email research@piji.com.au.

[Australian News Mapping Project]

Monthly results: February 2023

1 Australian News Mapping Project

The [Australian News Mapping Project](#) (ANMP) provides a geographic view of the health of public interest journalism in Australia.

The project was first launched in April 2020 to [track changes](#) in news production during COVID-19. In those first three months, we observed a dramatic contraction in production as newspapers suspended their production, ended print editions and, in some cases, companies closed entirely.

This mapping has since expanded to include public interest journalism production by distribution format - print, digital, radio and television - and by scale: community, local, metropolitan, state/territory and national levels.

Baseline data is [visualised by local government areas](#).

Further detail about the project, including eligibility, definitions and a methodology for categorising changes, can be found in Section 3: Data eligibility.

ANMP data is publicly available for the community, industry and government to engage with and to form an evidence base for media policy and reform.

We do not presume that this is complete data, but we do believe that this is the most comprehensive record of its kind.

1.1 Monthly results: February 2023

As of 28 February 2023, the Australian News Index lists 1180 print, digital, radio and television news outlets of community, local, metropolitan, state/territory or national primary coverage. Table 1 provides the breakdown of outlets according to their primary format and scale.

	Community	Local	Metro	State	National	Total
Print	72	468	8	3	8	559
Digital	6	163	3	6	42	220
Radio	96	248	3	0	1	348
Television	0	51	0	0	2	53
Total	174	930	14	9	53	1180

Table 1: Active news outlets, 28 February 2023.

1.1.1 Changes in the database

The following changes were recorded in the database this month following new assessments or information.

#	Outlet		Description of change	Effective date
1	Adelaide Hills Herald	SA	● Masthead closure	17/02/2023
2	Along the Grapevine	SA	● Masthead closure	18/12/2022
3	Eyre Peninsula Advocate	SA	○ Changed coverage area	30/09/2021
4	Moreton Bay Sentinel	QLD	● New masthead due to a demerger	24/11/2022
5	New England Times	NSW	● New masthead	23/02/2023
6	On the Up	NSW	● Masthead closure	02/01/2023
7	Port Lincoln Times	SA	○ Changed coverage area	31/12/2018
8	Sentinel News	QLD	○ Title demerged into two separate editions	24/11/2022
9	Somerset Sentinel	QLD	● New masthead due to a demerger	24/11/2022
10	The Terrier	VIC	○ Outlet reopened	16/02/2023
11	Kowree Advocate	VIC	● Masthead closure	16/02/2023

Table 2: Changed records, February 2023.

Eleven changes were made in the database in February 2023, including four closures, three new mastheads, and four other changes.

The Adelaide Hills Herald was closed by owner Taylor Group Media on 17 February due to what the company described in a Facebook post as “tough economic times”.¹ Taylor Group purchased the title, along with stablemate Adelaide East Herald, after its publisher Peere Straker died in April 2022.² The Adelaide East Herald was closed in November 2022.³ Both titles were members of Country Press Australia.

Another Adelaide Hills title, Along the Grapevine, closed in December 2022. In a post to the website, editor Samuel Burford, wrote that the advertising and public event downturn associated with the outbreak of COVID-19 caused long-term sustainability problems for the paper:

¹ Adelaide Hills Herald 2023. Unfortunately we’ve had to make the decision to cease publishing the Adelaide Hills Herald. Facebook. 17 February.

<<https://www.facebook.com/AdelaideHillsHerald/posts/pfbid0NWQQcSmbxmA7NQVNDyMPaBCQf9Bk4C2ooXkHrcK9CXDyX2kkT8Qm pAaoCkASWAnvI>>

² Kellner L. 2022. Adelaide East and Adelaide Hills Heralds to discontinue after death of editor Peere Straker. *Adelaide Hills Messenger*. 6 April. <<https://www.adelaidenow.com.au/messenger/adelaide-hills/adelaide-east-and-adelaide-hills-heralds-to-discontinue-after-death-of-editor-peere-straker/news-story/27d30b508618016ee1990028a4c2c3fb>>

³ Dickson G. 2022. *Australian News Data Report: November 2022*. Melbourne: Public Interest Journalism Initiative. <<https://piji.com.au/research-and-inquiries/our-research/anmp/>>

In 2020 we had a reduced year, missing out on 7 editions and publishing an online edition. [Along the Grapevine] never really recovered from this. That being said, Along the Grapevine has never been about making a lot of money. God has truly blessed us in the fact that most years we made a small profit, but over the past 3-4 years with Covid and other factors, it has declined to the point it just isn't financially viable.⁴

Along the Grapevine was founded by Roger Burford, Samuel's father, in 1997.

In November 2022 the Kilcoy Sentinel, also known as Sentinel News, was split into two new, separate editions, each covering a neighbouring region: the Moreton Bay Sentinel and the Somerset Sentinel. In an email, the company confirmed that the print editions of the new titles commenced on 24 November 2022. Both titles are still operating on the existing Sentinel News website⁵ but domains have been registered for both.⁶ The Sentinel News outlet has been retired in the database and new outlets for each of the new editions have been created. Both titles are members of the Queensland Country Press Association⁷ and Country Press Australia.⁸

The New England Times⁹ launched in February to cover the New England region of New South Wales. The digital title has dedicated local news sections for Armidale Regional Council, where it is based, as well as the local government areas of Glen Innes Severn, Gunnedah, Gwydir, Inverell, Liverpool Plains, Moree Plains, Narrabri, Uralla and Walcha. The Times is published by Kore Communication Strategy Research Pty Ltd and is a member of the Local & Independent News Association.¹⁰ It soft launched in November 2022 and officially commenced on 23 February.

On the Up was launched in October 2022 as a community title covering the Upper Central Coast, NSW.¹¹ On 2 January 2023 in a post to Facebook, editor Nichola Riches stated that the title would "be going offline for a while".¹² The title's website went down at the same time.¹³ An email sent to the editor in February was not returned, and we have listed it as at least temporarily closed. We will continue to monitor. On the Up was a member of the Local & Independent News Association.¹⁴

The Terrier¹⁵ returned in February 2023 after suspending publication in August 2022. The Terrier is an independent investigative news website run by Carol Altmann in Warrnambool, Victoria. It was suspended during Altmann's unsuccessful run as an independent candidate for the South-West Coast electorate in the November 2022 Victorian state election.¹⁶

⁴ Burford S. 2022. Goodbye from Along the Grapevine. Along the Grapevine. 18 December.

<<https://www.alongthegrapevine.com/goodbye-from-along-the-grapevine/#more-1830>>

⁵ Sentinel News. <<https://www.sentinelnews.com.au/>>

⁶ Moreton Bay Sentinel. <<http://moretonbaysentinel.com.au/>>; Somerset Sentinel. <<http://somersetsentinel.com.au/>>

⁷ Queensland Country Press Association. Members. <<https://www.qcpa.com.au/members>>

⁸ Country Press Australia. Members Newspapers. <<https://countrypressaustralia.com.au/members-newspapers/>>

⁹ New England Times. <<https://www.netimes.com.au/>>

¹⁰ Local & Independent News Association. Members. <<https://lina.org.au/members/>>

¹¹ Dickson G. 2022. *Australian News Data Report: October 2022*. Melbourne: Public Interest Journalism Initiative.

<<https://piji.com.au/research-and-inquiries/our-research/anmp/>>

¹² On the Up. 2023. On The Up will be going offline for a while. Check back for updates soon. Facebook.

<<https://www.facebook.com/OnTheUpperCentralCoast/posts/pfbid02tncQ2KmDe6hy55emgg7qcRdz2bNDmLqVRcNhP6z6hmFncrPo8HCA4v5brthsUhHCl>>

¹³ On the Up. <<https://www.ontheup.com.au/>>

¹⁴ Local & Independent News Association. Members. <<https://lina.org.au/members/>>

¹⁵ The Terrier. <<https://www.the-terrier.com.au/>>

¹⁶ Dickson G. 2022. *Australian News Data Report: October 2022*. Melbourne: Public Interest Journalism Initiative.

<<https://piji.com.au/research-and-inquiries/our-research/anmp/>>; Altmann C. 2022. A new voice: standing as Independent for South-West Coast. *The Terrier*. 18 August. <<https://www.the-terrier.com.au/a-new-voice-standing-as-independent-for-south-west-coast/>>

The Kowree Advocate, which covered the West Wimmera region of Victoria, appears to have closed in February. A Facebook post¹⁷ stated that the 16 February edition would be the final under editor Toni Domaschenz, who oversaw the paper for the past eight years. It is yet not clear whether the title will continue under a new editor. The Advocate is still listed as a member of the Victorian Country Press Association¹⁸ and Country Press Australia¹⁹ which may indicate that it will continue under new management.

Two other changes were made this month as result of findings from the Australian News Sampling Project.

The Eyre Peninsula Advocate was previously listed as only covering the District Council of Cleve. This has been changed, with the local government areas of Ceduna, Elliston, Franklin Harbour, Kimba, Lower Eyre Peninsula, Port Lincoln, Streaky Bay, Tumby Bay and Wudinna being added. The sampling project found that the title regularly provides coverage across the entire region.

Australian Community Media's Port Lincoln Times has also been adjusted to remove the local government areas of Ceduna, Elliston and Wudinna from its coverage area. We found that the Times is heavily focussed on Port Lincoln and provided no coverage of these three places across February.

¹⁷ Kowree Advocate. 2023. 16.2.23 The final Kowree Advocate under Toni has hit the shelves -32 jam packed pages. Facebook. <<https://www.facebook.com/wwadvocate/posts/pfbid02oqprDMU9aoVMpeLrVL9WoiYzhmu5Znvr1LnvohT2g1dPUiBEyCbcZyi3rdG1JipZl>>

¹⁸ Regional Media Connect. Edenhope Kowree Advocate. <<https://www.regionalmediaconnect.com.au/publication/edenhope-west-wimmera-advocate/>>

¹⁹ Country Press Australia. Members Newspapers. <<https://countrypressaustralia.com.au/members-newspapers/>>

[Australian News Sampling Project]

Case studies, February 2023:

**Sunshine Coast Region, Queensland &
Eyre Peninsula, South Australia**

2 Australian News Sampling Project

The results presented here are from a February 2023 survey of the Sunshine Coast Region, Queensland and, for the first time, a group of local government areas as a single region with a similar news ecosystem: the Eyre Peninsula, South Australia.

In this project we analyse samples of news coverage in a given month against two benchmarks:

- the amount of public interest journalism produced, and
- the relative localism of the stories to the audience.

For this project, public interest journalism is defined as:

original content that records, reports or investigates issues of public significance for Australians; issues relevant to engaging Australians in public debate and in informing democratic decision making, or content which relates to community and local events.

In practice, this means news relating to the functioning of government at all levels, including their agencies, foreign policy, the economy and significant public expenditure; crime and the courts; social services such as health and education; emergency services including police and fire; and community individuals and events, including local sport.

The localism of a story is both whether the story is local in nature – that is, affects a small and identifiable geographic community, such as a single town or local government area – and whether it is local specifically to the local government area being sampled, to a nearby LGA, or to a distant LGA. An article about a community event in Brisbane that is published in a newspaper in Adelaide might be a local story in its content, but it is not local to a South Australian audience.

The target sample size for each outlet is at least 200 news articles. In practice, we have observed that many digital publishers do not reach this level of output; while many print newspapers easily exceed it. Where an outlet does not reach 200, we instead sample everything sampled across the month.

We sample outlets identified as being of metropolitan scale, meaning they cover an entire city; local scale, meaning they cover a town or small region; and community scale; meaning non-professional news sheets covering events and individuals within a local community.

With this work, we seek to expand the amount of information about local news around Australia. This project fills a data gap in the existing ANMP work through its focus on the content output, testing the underlying assumption that newspapers and websites are providing public interest journalism for their local communities.

Radio and television are not surveyed in this project. We can remotely audit print and digital news content, but it is much more difficult to reliably access radio or television news programming from outside of its broadcast area. In almost all cases that we have found, there are no public digital archives of broadcast news content available, meaning that assessments must be done by live stream, which is extremely resource intensive. This is a significant barrier to independent scrutiny, and not one that PIJI is resourced to overcome.

The ABC's digital local content is included in samples in this project, but not radio and television journalism. Digital local content may be different from that which is broadcast on ABC Local Radio or on television, and digital news results presented here may not be consistent with radio and television content.

2.1 Sunshine Coast Region, Queensland

The Sunshine Coast Region is a local government area in coastal South East Queensland..



Local government area

Seats	Caloundra, Nambour
Remoteness	Major Cities
Land area	225 385.2 ha

Population data (2021)

Residents	346 648
Density	153.8km ²
Median age	43.1

News outlets (Feb 2023)

Print	5
Digital	2
Radio	7
Television	6

2.1.1 Local news producers

Outlet	Format	Ownership	Scale	Total
104.9 Sunshine FM (4SFM)	Radio	Sunshine FM Radio Association Incorporation	Community	0
91.9 Sea FM	Radio	Great Southern Land Media Group	Local	0
92.7 Mix FM	Radio	Great Southern Land Media Group	Local	0
ABC Sunshine Coast	Radio	Australian Broadcasting Corporation	Local	42
Coolool Advertiser	Print	Box, Michelle D'Arne	Local	34
Glasshouse Country & Maleny News	Print	Seven of Clubs Media Pty Ltd	Local	128
Hinterland Times	Print	White Gold Salon Pty Ltd	Local	19
Hot 91.1 FM (4MCY)	Radio	Australian Radio Network Pty Ltd	Local	0
Mary Valley Voice	Print	Mary Valley Community News Association Inc	Community	13
Nine Brisbane (QTQ)	Television	Nine Entertainment Co. Pty Ltd	Local	0
Nine Regional Queensland (RTQ)	Television	WIN Corporation Pty Ltd	Local	0
Radio 4GY Gympie (4GY)	Radio	Broadcast Operations Pty Ltd	Local	0
Salt 106.5 (4CLG)	Radio	Sunshine Coast Christian Broadcasters Association Inc	Community	0
Seven Brisbane (BTQ)	Television	Seven West Media Limited	Local	0
Seven Regional Queensland (STQ)	Television	Seven West Media Limited	Local	0
Sunshine Coast Daily	Digital	News Corp Australia	Local	208
Sunshine Coast News	Digital	The Media Trust	Local	168
Sunshine Valley Gazette	Print	Sunshine Valley Gazette	Local	66
Ten Brisbane (TVQ)	Television	Network Ten (Brisbane) Pty Ltd	Local	0
Ten Regional Queensland (TNQ)	Television	Southern Cross Austereo Pty Ltd	Local	0
Total				678

Table 3: News producers in Sunshine Coast Region and the total number of articles assessed.

Sunshine Coast has a dense news ecosystem, with at least five print and two digital outlets, and seven radio stations. Six television stations are listed as it is bisected by two broadcast license areas: most of the LGA is part of the Regional Queensland TV1 area, and the northern edge of the Brisbane TV1 footprint includes Caloundra and Maleny.

Ten changes have been observed since PIJI began monitoring the region in 2019.

In May 2020, News Corp announced that it would close five newspapers in the region: the Buderim Chronicle, Caloundra Weekly, Coolum News, Nambour Weekly and Maroochy and Kawana Weekly. The Sunshine Coast Daily ended its print edition at the same time, only to relaunch it a year later.

Date	Change observed
28/05/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Buderim Chronicle closed ● Caloundra Weekly closed ● Coolum News closed ● Nambour Weekly closed ● Maroochy and Kawana Weekly closed ● Sunshine Coast Daily ended print edition
01/07/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sunny Coast Times opened
24/11/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sunshine Coast News opened
04/03/2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● View News closed
10/05/2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sunshine Coast Daily started print edition
01/07/2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● WIN Sunshine Coast ended local news bulletin
15/05/2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sunny Coast Times closed

Table 4: Changes observed in the Sunshine Coast Region since 1 January 2019.

Separately, View News was closed in 2021. WIN News ended an existing local news bulletin in the

Sunshine Coast when commencing a new affiliation agreement with the Nine Network in July 2021.

Two titles have launched: the Sunshine Coast News, which is included in the sample; and the Sunny Coast Times, which was published for two years by Sunny Coast Media before ceasing in 2022.

2.1.2 Sample

Of the 20 outlets in the local government area, the digital output of the seven publishers and the public broadcaster was assessed between 1 – 28 February 2023. For most outlets, this represented the total of their digital output across that period. Digital content published to the Sunshine Coast Daily’s website were assessed rather than the print edition. A total of 678 articles are in the sample. The ABC sample only includes articles published to the ABC Local website and may not be representative of news content on local radio.

Due to the unavailability of content for analysis, radio and television were not assessed.

Two outlets, the Hinterland Times and Mary Valley Voice, are monthly titles and had low output during the sample month. The results are presented here for completeness but due to this very small sample size, no percentages or commentary have been provided for these titles.

Overall, we found moderate levels of public interest journalism output at the ABC and high levels at other outlets. At most titles this coverage was particularly weighted toward community stories, followed by government and public services. Court and crime coverage was almost entirely absent from all outlets except the Sunshine Coast Daily, which featured it heavily. All outlets were highly local in their coverage, though not always local to the Sunshine Coast Region specifically. Syndication was low at most outlets, though both the ABC and News Corp, as the only two network titles in the sample, shared content from other internal sources more readily.

2.1.3 Public interest journalism results

Stories are defined as containing public interest journalism if they are, on balance, focussed on an issue relating to government, crime and courts, community individuals, events and sport, or other public services such as health and education.

Outlet	Reported stories					Excluded	Total
	PIJ		Other		Subtotal		
	n	%	n	%	n		
ABC Sunshine Coast	27	69	12	31	39	3	42
Coolum Advertiser	20	91	2	9	22	12	34
Glasshouse & Maleny News	67	79	18	21	85	43	128
Hinterland Times	12	-	3	-	15	4	19
Mary Valley Voice	5	-	0	-	5	8	13
Sunshine Coast Daily	167	88	22	12	189	19	208
Sunshine Coast News	114	88	15	12	129	39	168
Sunshine Valley Gazette	44	96	2	4	46	20	66
Total	456	86	74	14	530	148	678

Table 5: Stories by whether they are public interest journalism, other journalism, or excluded from the sample.

Table 5 provides detail of how the total sample breaks down into public interest journalism, other journalism and exclusions.

Articles are generally included if they appear to have broad news value, appear to be reported, and are not promotional. They may be excluded if they are opinion or analysis pieces or if they are (or appear to be) advertising or press releases. Stories contributed by people who have an interest in the content – such as a community member writing about a recent event held by their group, or an elected official about their achievements – will also be excluded. Excluded stories are removed from further analysis.

We found moderate-high levels of public interest journalism across all outlets, with the lowest volume at the public broadcaster and highest at the Sunshine Valley Gazette.

Outlet	Public interest journalism											
	Government			Courts and crime			Community			Public services		
	All	U	% U	All	U	% U	All	U	% U	All	U	% U
ABC Sunshine Coast	11	10	26	1	1	3	9	7	18	14	14	36
Coolum Advertiser	10	7	32	0	0	0	23	18	82	2	2	9
Glasshouse & Maleny News	58	30	35	0	0	0	65	53	62	19	15	18
Hinterland Times	3	2	-	0	0	-	14	12	-	2	2	-
Mary Valley Voice	1	1	-	0	0	-	5	5	-	1	1	-
Sunshine Coast Daily	63	46	24	117	63	33	108	87	46	41	38	20
Sunshine Coast News	53	37	29	8	7	5	95	70	54	30	26	20
Sunshine Valley Gazette	13	8	17	4	4	9	49	36	78	3	3	7
Total	212	141	27	130	75	14	368	288	54	112	101	19

Table 6: Breakdown of public interest journalism.

Stories can be allocated up to four subjects each. As such, Table 6 provides both the total number of subjects coded within each category (All) and the number of unique stories identified within each group (U), as well as the number of unique stories coded to that category as a percentage of all reported stories sampled from that outlet (% U).

At all outlets except the ABC Sunshine Coast, community stories were the largest category of coverage.

The Coolum Advertiser focussed on stories about local history, community events and individuals. The Daily, Gazette, and the Glasshouse Country & Maleny News had a tendency to cover small business and community organisations rather than individuals. Small business coverage in these titles tended to appear promotional, covering a local business and providing news about their menus, upcoming events and opening hours.

The ABC's limited community coverage was focussed on individuals, with stories about a man in neighbouring Gympie who bought a pub and refused to install pokie machines and the reaction of a Sunshine Coast local to the end of an investigation into the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine in 2014.

Local sport was common across most outlets, though more limited at the Daily, which published stories about larger sporting events – such as a water polo tournament and a surf lifesaving event – rather than provide individual match results. Despite this, the Daily had the highest overall output of local sport.

The Sunshine Valley Gazette's sport coverage was sporadic and not contained within its own section. The ABC did not cover local sport, and the Sunshine Coast News published more state and national sport results than local.

Government was the next most common category of coverage. Most outlets had a mix of local and state government coverage, with federal government stories being less common. Sunshine Coast News, Coolum Advertiser, and the Gazette covered more local government stories than state, and the Daily, ABC and Glasshouse Country & Maleny News the opposite.

Crime was a common focus among state government stories as it consulted on new youth justice laws. These stories tended to also be tagged as police stories.

The Glasshouse Country & Maleny News used its government coverage to focus on economy, infrastructure, planning, zoning and development - particularly upgrades, disputes between council and citizens, and detours or other interruptions. It also proactively highlighted missing infrastructure and community priorities in its coverage of development issues, suggesting readers 'ask council to build a bridge', and asking 'a park is coming when?'

The Coolum Advertiser published no stories about the state or federal governments, instead focussing on council consultations and grant schemes.

The public broadcaster published few government stories overall, with a near even split between local (3) and state (4) and no federal government stories. At the state level, an environmental protection dispute between departments and flood modelling of the Gold Coast were covered; while local government articles included low compliance with an Airbnb registration scheme and fines issued by the Sunshine Coast Region for late pet registration.

The services category includes education, health and care, police, fire and other services. Services were the largest proportion of public interest journalism output at the public broadcaster in February, with reporting on inadequate access to health services, lifesavers at a Caloundra beach raising safety concerns and a wildlife hospital being gifted air conditioning by a local business. In

education-adjacent news, the broadcaster also covered the difficulty university students face securing a rental property in Brisbane.

The highest overall coverage of services was by the Daily. Health was the largest of these (11), followed by education, police and other services such as life-saving. Health stories included emergency room shortfalls at Gympie Hospital, an increase in the tax burden on GPs and ongoing coverage of the worst performing hospitals in the state.

Education coverage at the Daily included multiple articles looking at attrition rates among teachers, the demolition of a Woombye State School block which was contaminated with lead and an upgrade to a Coolum school.

Like other outlets, the Sunshine Coast News' coverage of the health sector also focussed on inadequate service availability, as well as advances and new initiatives in the field: trials of new needle technology, a skin cancer awareness campaign, and a new mental health program for young people.

The Gazette only published three services stories across the month: a long-time worker at an aged care facility becoming a resident; an early childhood education graduate receiving a Student of the Year award from the local TAFE, and a front page story celebrating an ambulance driver awarded Senior Citizen of the Year by the local council.

Court and crime stories were a big focus of the Daily, but were a negligible part of or entirely absent from other outlets' output. In broad terms, a third of all public interest journalism stories published by the Daily related to courts and crime. Of these, 38 were coded as violent crime and 18 as non-violent. More than half (37) of all crime stories were reports from court proceedings; the majority of these proceedings (24) took place in lower courts.

2.1.4 Local news results

Every article is coded against up to three story scales: whether a story concerns local issues, issues relevant to a wider region, an entire state or territory, or the country as a whole. International and not applicable options are also available, but very few stories fall into these categories and they have been excluded from this table and commentary.

Outlet	Local		Regional		State		National	
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %
ABC Sunshine Coast	30	77	1	3	8	21	6	15
Coolum Advertiser	22	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Glasshouse & Maleny News	68	80	2	2	8	9	9	11
Hinterland Times	12	-	0	-	2	-	2	-
Mary Valley Voice	5	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Sunshine Coast Daily	158	84	8	4	50	27	17	9
Sunshine Coast News	117	91	1	1	23	18	5	4
Sunshine Valley Gazette	46	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	458	86	12	2	91	17	39	7

Table 7: Scale of coverage of reported stories.

All outlets were overwhelmingly focussed on local issues, though state and national stories also featured. At both the ABC and News Corp, this particularly involved internal syndication from other parts of the business.

Stories were also coded for their localism – not only whether they concerned a local issue, but whether the issue was local to the sampled community, or local to somewhere else, whether nearby or in another part of the state or country. Each story may be simultaneously in multiple categories.

Outlet	This LGA		Nearby LGA		Other LGA	
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %
ABC Sunshine Coast	20	51	7	18	8	21
Coolum Advertiser	22	100	0	0	0	0
Glasshouse & Maleny News	67	79	0	0	1	1
Hinterland Times	12	-	0	-	0	-
Mary Valley Voice	5	-	2	-	1	-
Sunshine Coast Daily	117	62	29	15	43	23
Sunshine Coast News	107	83	12	9	4	3
Sunshine Valley Gazette	46	100	0	0	0	0
Total	396	75				

Table 8: Localism of coverage of reported stories.

The localism of each story is presented in Table 8.

Localism was highest at the independent newspapers: the Advertiser and Gazette, followed by the Sunshine Coast News and Glasshouse Country & Maleny News. At both the ABC and Sunshine Coast Daily it was considerably lower, likely due to both of these titles existing within broader news operations with ready access to content produced in other parts of the state and country. Though the Daily has one of the lower percentages of direct localism in our findings, across the month it produced the highest number of stories about the Sunshine Coast overall. For both it and the ABC, it is likely that lower localism as a proportion of output reflects an editorial intention to provide full-service coverage both within and beyond the region.

As well as local coverage, we also sought to draw a distinction between local government areas which are not the sampled LGA, and those which are not but which are ‘nearby’, either because they border it or are commonly understood as part of the same sub-region.

Nearby LGAs for Sunshine Coast Region were set as Noosa Shire, Somerset Region, Moreton Bay Region and Gympie Region. Coverage of these LGAs was reasonably low across all outlets, with Noosa accounting for the highest coverage (17 stories across all outlets), followed by Gympie (11). Only two and one stories were published about Moreton Bay and Somerset, respectively.

The ‘Other LGA’ category represents stories that are neither the sample area nor part of the same region. Brisbane and Gold Coast were the focus of most of these, with small amounts of coverage of Fraser Coast and Ipswich.

The ABC sample may be affecting these localism results. As we are coding stories which are published in text on the website, rather than the content broadcast on local radio, it could be that stories published online are inherently less localised than what is broadcast in the limited geographic area of the radio license. That is, for a story to be worth putting online to a much larger and more nationalised audience, the editorial incentive is that it should be appealing to a wider audience.

2.1.5 Syndication

Content has been assessed for whether it is syndicated from another source. Sources of syndication can be internal from another outlet at the same news business, from a wire service such as Australian Associated Press, News Corp Newswire or another agency, creative commons material from The Conversation, 360Info or another, or content from other news websites.

This may underestimate the amount of syndicated content appearing in each publication, as it is not always clear where content has originated somewhere else. This is particularly true for internally syndicated content, where a company may not disclose the fact of republishing.

The ABC declares the origin of content published online, making it very easy to identify whether a story has been internally syndicated. Other news outlets are not all similarly transparent. This difference in transparency means that syndication data at the ABC is more robust than at other outlets. The ABC may appear to syndicate more frequently – and may do, given the incomparable scale of the public broadcaster’s news production and geographic reach – but caution should be taken with comparisons to other outlets due to this difference in data quality. Separately, where the ABC lists the news team as the generic ‘ABC News’ rather than the name of the local newsroom, it is not marked as internally syndicated.

Outlet	Syndication						Original	
	Internal		Wire		Other		n	All %
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %		
ABC Sunshine Coast	9	23	0	0	0	0	30	77
Coolum Advertiser	0	0	0	0	0	0	22	100
Glasshouse & Maleny News	0	0	1	1	0	0	83	99
Hinterland Times	0	-	0	-	0	-	15	-
Mary Valley Voice	0	-	0	-	0	-	5	-
Sunshine Coast Daily ²⁰	81	43	0	-	0	-	108	57
Sunshine Coast News	0	0	1	1	0	0	128	99
Sunshine Valley Gazette	0	0	0	0	0	0	46	100
Total	88	17	2	< 1	0	0	437	83

Table 9: Syndication of reported stories.

Syndication from external sources was very uncommon at all outlets. Two stories were identified from the AAP: coverage of learner driver fee changes republished by the Glasshouse Country & Maleny News, and a story about a state government plan to recruit foreign police republished by the Sunshine Coast News.

Internal syndication was far more common at the Sunshine Coast Daily, being part of the larger News Corp network of outlets in Queensland. The majority of these were from the Courier Mail, though some came from other parts of News Corp’s stable of local newspapers: the Rockhampton Morning Bulletin and Noosa News particularly featured, as did the South Burnett Times, Townsville Bulletin, Daily Mercury (Mackay), Warwick Daily News and Gympie Times.

ABC Sunshine Coast republished material from newsrooms in Brisbane, Gold Coast, Southern Queensland, North Queensland, Eyre Peninsula and Capricornia, as well as ABC Rural and Double J.

²⁰ Content sourced from the NCA Newswire has been coded as ‘Syndicated, internal’ for the purpose of the Sunshine Coast Daily, a News Corp-owned outlet, rather than as wire content.

2.2 Eyre Peninsula, South Australia

The Eyre Peninsula is a large region of South Australia, stretching from the Spencer Gulf to the Great Australian Bight.



Region

Land area	4 435 277.1 ha
Residents	36 060 (2021) ²¹

Population centres

Port Lincoln	Ceduna
Tumbly Bay	Streaky Bay
Cowell	Cummins
Cleve	

News outlets (Feb 2023)

Print	2
Digital	1
Radio	5
Television	3

2.2.1 Local news producers

Outlet	Format	Ownership	Scale	Total
5CC 93.9 FM (5CC)	Radio	Australian Radio Network Pty Ltd	Community	0
ABC Eyre Peninsula	Radio	Australian Broadcasting Corporation	Local	27
ABC North and West SA	Radio	Australian Broadcasting Corporation	Local	39
CAAMA Radio (8KIN)	Radio	Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association	Local	0
Eyre Peninsula Advocate	Print	Papers & Publications Pty Ltd	Local	239
Magic 89.9 (5CCC)	Radio	Australian Radio Network Pty Ltd	Community	0
Nine Spencer Gulf (GDS)	Television	Southern Cross Austereo	Local	0
The Port Lincoln News	Digital	News Corp Australia	Local	9
Port Lincoln Times	Print	Rural Press Pty Ltd	Local	81
Seven Spencer Gulf (GTS)	Television	Southern Cross Austereo	Local	0
Ten Network Spencer Gulf (SGS)	Television	Southern Cross Austereo	Local	0
Total				421

Table 10: News producers in the Eyre Peninsula and the total number of articles assessed.

Ten of the local government areas that form Eyre Peninsula – Ceduna, Streaky Bay, Elliston, Lower Eyre Peninsula, Port Lincoln, Tumbly Bay, Cleve, Franklin Harbour, Kimba and Wudinna – share a relatively homogenous local media market. For that reason, they have been jointly assessed for this study.

²¹ Excluding the City of Whyalla, which has not been included in this study. Including Whyalla, the estimate resident population of the Eyre Peninsula is 58 020.

Two major newspapers serve the region: the Port Lincoln Times, published by Australian Community Media (ACM)²², and the Eyre Peninsula Advocate, operated by Country Press Australia President Andrew Manuel, who also publishes the Fleurieu Sun, Two Wells & District Echo, and the Plains Producer. News Corp operates a digital hyperlocal title, the Port Lincoln News, and though the peninsula sits most directly within the broadcast area of ABC Eyre Peninsula, ABC North and West SA also intersects it at Franklin Harbour.

The City of Whyalla is part of the Eyre Peninsula but has been excluded from this sample, as it exists in its own digital and print media market.

Ten changes have been observed since PIJ began monitoring the region in 2019.

Date	Change observed
20/04/2020	○ Eyre Peninsula Tribune temporarily closed ○ West Coast Sentinel temporarily closed ○ Port Lincoln Times temporarily closed
23/06/2020	○ Eyre Peninsula Tribune reopened ○ West Coast Sentinel reopened ○ Port Lincoln Times reopened
09/08/2020	● The Port Lincoln News opened
31/03/2021	● Eyre Peninsula Tribune closed ● West Coast Sentinel closed
30/09/2021	● Eyre Peninsula Advocate opened

Table 11: Changes observed in the Eyre Peninsula since 1 January 2019.

ACM temporarily suspended most of its non-daily newspapers in April 2020 due to the onset of COVID-19, including the Eyre Peninsula Tribune (Cleve), West Coast Sentinel (Ceduna) and Port Lincoln Times. These returned to service in June of the same year, though both the Tribune and Sentinel were permanently closed the following April. News Corp opened the Port Lincoln News in August of 2020, and the Eyre Peninsula Advocate began in September of 2021.

2.2.2 Sample

Of the 11 outlets across the region, the digital output of the two publishers and two ABC newsrooms were assessed between 1 – 28 February 2023. For each outlet, this represented the total of their digital output across that period. A total of 421 articles are in the sample. The ABC sample only includes articles published to the ABC Local website and may not be representative of news content on local radio.

Due to the unavailability of content for analysis, radio and television were not assessed.

The Port Lincoln News had low output during the sample month. The results are presented here for completeness but due to this very small sample size, no percentages or commentary has been provided for this title.

The month coincided with a bushfire outside of Port Lincoln which affected the results, increasing the overall coverage of fire services.

Overall, we found very high levels of public interest journalism output across the region, with a strong focus on community coverage, followed by government and health services. Court and crime coverage was very low at all outlets. Though all titles were predominantly local in their focus, both ABC outlets were less focussed on the Eyre Peninsula itself than the newspapers, and only the Advocate provided coverage across the entire region. Syndication was low at all outlets.

²² In December 2022 it was reported that ACM would sell its South Australian and Queensland titles to Star News Group, effective February 2023. At the time of writing this report, this sale does not appear to have completed. North West Star. 2022. Publisher ACM announces proposed sale of South Australian, Queensland regional community newspapers to Star News Group. 21 December. <<https://www.northweststar.com.au/story/8026594/acm-to-sell-sa-queensland-regional-community-newspapers/?cs=191>>

2.2.3 Public interest journalism results

Stories are defined as containing public interest journalism if they are, on balance, focussed on an issue relating to government, crime and courts, community individuals, events and sport, or other public services such as health and education.

Outlet	Reported stories					Excluded	Total
	PIJ		Other		Subtotal		
	n	%	n	%	n	n	n
ABC Eyre Peninsula	22	88	3	12	25	2	27
ABC North and West SA	31	84	6	16	37	2	39
Eyre Peninsula Advocate	210	97	7	3	217	22	239
The Port Lincoln News	9	-	0	-	9	0	9
Port Lincoln Times	71	95	4	5	75	6	81
Total	343	95	20	5	363	31	394

Table 12: Stories by whether they are public interest journalism, other journalism, or excluded from the sample.

Table 5 provides detail of how the total sample breaks down into public interest journalism, other journalism and exclusions. We found very high levels of public interest journalism output at all outlets, with the highest focus at the two publishers and a greater mix of other content at the public broadcaster newsrooms.

Articles are generally included if they appear to have broad news value, appear to be reported, and are not promotional. They may be excluded if they are opinion or analysis pieces or if they are (or appear to be) advertising or press releases. Excluded stories are removed from further analysis. The Advocate had the largest number of excluded stories, though proportionate to their output it is broadly in line with others in the sample. The newspaper publishes some community-contributed stories, particularly around local sport, which are included in the sample; as well as advertorial content, which is clearly labelled to distinguish it from editorial content and is not included.

Outlet	Public interest journalism											
	Government			Courts and crime			Community			Public services		
	All	U	% U	All	U	% U	All	U	% U	All	U	% U
ABC Eyre Peninsula	18	10	40	3	2	8	8	6	24	9	8	32
ABC North and West SA	23	14	38	7	5	14	7	6	16	17	14	38
Eyre Peninsula Advocate	86	54	25	5	5	2	209	178	82	18	17	8
The Port Lincoln News	1	1	-	9	3	-	2	2	-	4	4	-
Port Lincoln Times	26	16	21	0	0	0	63	51	68	18	16	21
Total	154	95	26	24	15	4	289	243	67	66	59	16

Table 13: Breakdown of public interest journalism.

Stories can be allocated up to four subjects each. As such, Table 6 provides both the total number of subjects coded within each category (All) and the number of unique stories identified within each group (U), as well as the number of unique stories coded to that category as a percentage of all reported stories sampled from that outlet (% U).

Community was the highest category of coverage at most outlets except the public broadcaster, which focussed more on government and public services.

The Advocate devoted the greatest proportion of its coverage to community stories of any outlet, and published the highest total number of stories of any outlet. Members of the community were the largest focus in this category, with profiles of local athletes and coverage of the achievements of individuals, including a local farmer who won a trip; a local artist's new exhibit and a couple celebrating 70 years of marriage.

Events were the second largest category of coverage. At the beginning of the month there were multiple stories covering community events from late January, including four articles on the Tunarama Tuna Toss and 16 on Australia Day events and awards held by councils across the region.

Local sport is a heavy focus of the Advocate, with at least 20 stories published in each edition. This content was a mix of athlete profiles, match coverage by the newspaper's journalists, and some community-contributed results.

Like the Advocate, the Times focussed on individuals, events and local sport, contained within dedicated sections for 'Our Places', 'Our People' and 'Our History'. Sport coverage is focussed on match results from across the region, as well as recreational fishing reports and horse racing. Local events included acts from the Adelaide Fringe Festival performing in Port Lincoln and an opportunity for locals to meet with Ukrainian refugees and learn about the war.

Community coverage at the ABC included a Port Lincoln man trying to salvage a sunken fishing boat which had been in service since the 1960s, and a Coffin Bay hobby farmer who grew a 1kg elephant garlic, setting a new record.

Government was a moderate focus across all outlets, with local (49 stories) and state (29) governments receiving the most attention, and the federal government the least (7).

At both the Advocate and the Times local government coverage tended to focus on development and planning issues, particularly the redevelopment of community parks and facilities, as well as general updates about council activities and meetings.

February also saw two local government election stories: the ABC and Advocate reported on the possibility that as many as 45 members of local government from across the state, including some in the Eyre Peninsula, would lose their positions over failing to disclose gifts to the Electoral Commission of South Australia. Late in the month, those removed from office were then restored by a decision of the state government.

Separately, a supplementary election in the District Council of Tumby Bay was held in March, with mail-in voting beginning during the February sampling period. This election was covered by the Advocate.

The state government received a moderate amount of attention. The same local government disclosures story received attention, as did shortfalls in mental and physical health service provision for regional communities, the need for new water infrastructure in Coober Pedy and a desalination plant in Port Lincoln, as well as highway upgrades.

Among the few federal government stories was coverage of rural bank closures in Coober Pedy, ongoing nation-wide problems with funding for GPs and new funding for the Royal Flying Doctor Service to expand into William Creek.

The services category includes education, health and care, police, fire and other services. Health (16 stories) and fire (15) were the biggest focus this month.

As previously noted, the theme in health coverage was the lack of available services: regional patients waiting days for transfer to hospital; the loss of a local GP from the Peninsula as well as doctor shortages across the broader region; a One Nation MP calling for greater investment in

mental health services; the acute cost of healthcare in Streaky Bay. There were some positive stories too – a new program to encourage junior doctors to the regions; volunteer pilots transferring patients – but far fewer than the coverage of different problems.

Fire coverage was high largely due to a bushfire that started outside of Port Lincoln in the middle of the month. Fire services coverage has been uncommon in the sampling project so far, and we observed a much higher rate of it due to this fire, which all outlets covered. The Advocate also covered Australia Day award for Country Fire Service volunteers in Streaky Bay, and the ABC and Times reported that extra water bombers were called in later in the month in preparation for another high fire risk period.

Court and crime coverage was uncommon at all outlets. We observed only 15 unique stories in this category across all outlets for the month, making only 4 per cent of total output. The Port Lincoln Times was not found to have published any court or crime stories; and at least half of those published by ABC North and West SA were incidents that occurred in the Adelaide suburbs with no clear connection to the Eyre Peninsula.

2.2.4 Local news results

Every article is coded against up to three story scales: whether a story concerns local issues, issues relevant to a wider region, an entire state or territory, or the country as a whole. International and not applicable options are also available, but very few stories fall into these categories and they have been excluded from this table and commentary.

Outlet	Local		Regional		State		National	
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %
ABC Eyre Peninsula	23	92	1	4	5	20	3	12
ABC North and West SA	33	90	0	0	11	30	6	16
Eyre Peninsula Advocate	184	85	82	38	18	8	1	1
The Port Lincoln News	9	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Port Lincoln Times	55	73	19	25	3	4	3	4
Total	304	84	102	28	37	10	13	4

Table 14: Scale of coverage of reported stories.

Most of the stories published by all titles covered local issues, with the percentage higher at the public broadcaster and lower at the two local newspapers. This is the inverse of normal findings across this sampling project, where the ABC tends to be broader than any newspapers in a local market. We also observed a larger number of stories coded as ‘regional’ – that is, concerning the Eyre Peninsula as a whole – than is usual for these samples. This may be confirmation of the hypothesis that the Peninsula shares a common media market, but may also reflect unintentional bias from the coders in interpreting more stories as being regionally-focused due to this being a sample of a region.

Stories were also coded for their localism – not only whether they concerned a local issue, but whether the issue was local to the sampled community, or local to somewhere else, whether nearby or in another part of the state or country. Each story may be simultaneously in multiple categories.

Outlet	Eyre Peninsula		City of Whyalla		Other	
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %
ABC Eyre Peninsula	14	56	8	32	5	20
ABC North and West SA	4	11	10	27	20	54
Eyre Peninsula Advocate	190	87	1	1	1	1
The Port Lincoln News	9	-	0	-	2	-
Port Lincoln Times	54	72	0	0	0	0
Total	271	75	19	5	28	8

Table 15: Localism of coverage of reported stories.

The localism of each story is presented in Table 15. As this sample covers the region, we have elected to review results against the region as a whole; the neighbouring City of Whyalla, which was excluded from this sample, and other LGAs not included in either.

We found high levels of coverage of the region at ABC Eyre Peninsula, the Eyre Peninsula Advocate and the Port Lincoln Times. Coverage at ABC North and West SA was low.

These results confirmed the assumption that the City of Whyalla exists in its own print and digital media market, as we almost no coverage of it at either the Advocate or the Times. This was less true at the ABC: though still low, between a quarter and a third of stories published online by the broader in February were about Whyalla.

The 'Other LGA' category represents stories that are neither the sample area nor part of the same region. Unsurprisingly on other results, we observed moderate coverage of other LGAs at the ABC Eyre Peninsula and moderate at ABC North and West SA and almost nothing from outside the region at either newspaper.

LGA	ABC Eyre		ABC N&W SA		Advocate		Times	
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %
Ceduna	0	0	0	0	23	11	0	0
Cleve	0	0	0	0	14	7	1	1
Elliston	2	8	0	0	8	4	0	0
Franklin Harbour	0	0	0	0	9	4	0	0
Kimba	0	0	0	0	13	6	1	1
Lower Eyre	1	4	0	0	22	10	5	7
Port Lincoln	7	28	1	3	64	30	44	59
Streaky Bay	2	8	1	3	12	6	2	3
Tumby Bay	0	0	0	0	15	7	1	1
Wudinna	0	0	0	0	9	4	0	0

Table 16: LGA coverage of reported stories.

Isolating coverage to the local government areas within the region (Table 16), we found that only the Advocate reported from the entire Eyre Peninsula. Like other outlets, its coverage was centred around the major population centre in Port Lincoln, but we found that it consistently provided some level of coverage from even the very remote surrounds.

The sample obtained for the ABC may be affecting its localism results. As we are coding stories which are published in text on the website, rather than the content broadcast on local radio, it could be that stories published online are inherently less localised than what is broadcast in the limited geographic area of the radio license. That is, for a story to be worth putting online to a much larger

and more nationalised audience, the editorial incentive is that it should be appealing to a wider audience.

2.2.5 Syndication

Content has been assessed for whether it is syndicated from another source. Sources of syndication can be internal from another outlet at the same news business, from a wire service such as Australian Associated Press, News Corp Newswire or another agency, creative commons material from The Conversation, 360Info or another, or content from other news websites.

This may underestimate the amount of syndicated content appearing in each publication, as it is not always clear where content has originated somewhere else. This is particularly true for internally syndicated content, where a company may not disclose the fact of republishing.

The ABC declares the origin of content published online, making it very easy to identify whether a story has been internally syndicated. Other news outlets are not all similarly transparent. This difference in transparency means that syndication data at the ABC is more robust than at other outlets. The ABC may appear to syndicate more frequently – and may do, given the incomparable scale of the public broadcaster’s news production and geographic reach – but caution should be taken with comparisons to other outlets due to this difference in data quality. Separately, where the ABC lists the news team as the generic ‘ABC News’ rather than the name of the local newsroom, it is not marked as internally syndicated.

Outlet	Syndication						Original	
	Internal		Wire		Other		n	All %
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %		
ABC Eyre Peninsula	6	24	0	0	0	0	19	76
ABC North and West SA	5	14	0	0	0	0	32	87
Eyre Peninsula Advocate	0	0	0	0	0	0	216	99
The Port Lincoln News	0	-	0	-	0	-	9	-
Port Lincoln Times	0	0	1	1	0	0	73	97
Total	11	3	1	< 1	0	0	349	96

Table 17: Syndication of reported stories.

We found low to moderate levels of internal syndication at the ABC, but no evidence of syndication from outside the company. This was mostly the two outlets sharing stories between each other, though other stories came from ABC Rural (2), ABC South East SA (1) and ABC Capricornia (1) in Queensland.

Only one other instance of syndication was identified: the Times republished an Australian Associated Press report on the inflation rate.

3 Data eligibility

The *Australian News Data Report* is an ongoing effort to collect, generate and provide information on the Australian news media landscape. Data is actively maintained and reported on a monthly basis.

Eligibility criteria

For inclusion in these projects, a news outlet should primarily and regularly produce: (i) original public interest journalism for (ii) a local, metropolitan, state or national (iii) public audience, and (iv) adhere to identifiable professional and ethical standards. Each of these expectations are discussed below.

i. Public interest journalism

The definition of public interest journalism which we have adopted for these projects is:

original content that records, reports or investigates issues of public significance for Australians; issues relevant to engaging Australians in public debate and in informing democratic decision making, or content which relates to community and local events.

These criteria align closely to earlier definitions of public interest journalism, such as that developed by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission in the [Digital Platforms Inquiry](#). It reflects the importance of community news as reflected in the definition of core news legislated through the [News Media Bargaining Code](#).

ii. Local, metropolitan, state or national

News outlets provide coverage for geographic areas of different sizes. Every news outlet in this project assigned one of the below 'primary coverage scales':

- Local: primarily cover a small geographic area, from a single town or local government area up to a sub-state region.
- Metropolitan: have a coverage area which includes an entire capital city. News outlets in this category tend to cover news over a large geographic area and provide irregular attention to any single place, unlike local news outlets. Some companies have outlets in both this category and related outlets at the local scale, reflecting both the city-wide and dedicated local coverage produced by the relationship of these outlets to each other.
- State/territory: primarily cover news from across an entire state or territory. Any local news tends to be reactive or illustrative of a larger issue facing the state or territory.
- National: tend to focus on news which affects the entire country, such as federal politics or the economy.

Some outlets are recorded as having a community primary coverage scale. See below for more detail on the eligibility criteria of community news.

iii. A public audience

To be eligible, news content should be published to a public audience, meaning that it is readily available to any person who wishes to access it. This does not preclude a company from charging a fee for access to the content, but it should not otherwise be limited through, for example, requiring a person to be a member of an association or industry.

iv. Professional and ethical standards

Journalism is a process of finding out information, verifying it and applying editorial judgment. It is characterised by professional values including independence and fairness. News outlets must adhere to identifiable professional and ethical standards.

An outlet will satisfy this test if it is subject to the rules of the is subject to the rules of one of:

- The [Australian Press Council](#) or the [Independent Media Council](#)
- The [Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice](#)
- The [Commercial Radio Code of Practice](#)
- The [Subscription Broadcast Television Codes of Practice](#) or,
- Is publicly committed to substantially equivalent editorial standards relating to the provision of quality journalism.

An important ethical standard is that news outlets have editorial independence from the subjects of their news coverage. This means that they are not owned or controlled by a political advocacy organisation (such as a political party, lobby group or union); and not owned or controlled by a party that has a commercial interest in the coverage being produced (for example, a publication that covers a sport that is owned or controlled by the sport's governing body).

This does not include the inherent commercial interests a news company may have in the production of content. It describes where such coverage may give rise to a conflict of interest which disadvantages or misleads the public audience.

Community news organisations

Some outlets are tagged as community scale news producers, rather than local. These outlets have different characteristics to other news producers, but nevertheless can fill an important role in a local news ecosystem.

These outlets tend to be non-commercial and produced by volunteers, sometimes without journalistic training, and covering hyperlocal issues such as social events, profiles of individuals in town, and local history. They are often produced by a local institution such as community centre or civic organisation.

The community scale option is intended to reflect these outlets, which do not provide the depth, consistency or professionalism of local news outlets, but which are important parts of community news provision. We do not apply the requirement to adhere to professional and ethical standards to these outlets, though we do require that they be independent of local government or other interests like chambers of commerce or tourism boards.

Local coverage geographies

News outlet geographies are determined differently depending on the type of outlet.

Print and digital outlets are represented according to the local government areas that they report on. Upon adding each outlet, PIJI undertakes a basic assessment of the content output in order to determine this.

Radio and television outlets are represented according to the local government areas where they are licensed to broadcast. ACMA publishes a public registry of callsigns, their operators, and the broadcast licence areas in which they transmit, including maps of these areas. Using this information, PIJI has added each radio and television station to those local government areas that overlap with their broadcast licence areas.

Each approach has its strengths and weaknesses.

For publishers, assessing content output is a resource-intensive process, as is maintaining this data. Errors in coverage geographies may be introduced where the initial assessment is not representative of longer-term production, or where changes occur in the output over time.

A strength of the approach to mapping broadcasters is that the geographies are likely to remain comparatively stable. On the other hand, broadcast licence areas and local government areas rarely align, leading to situations where an LGA may have two or more overlapping broadcast areas within it. This would cause that LGA to be misrepresented as having a very high news density. This approach also creates a false equivalency between a news station being licensed to broadcast in an area, and actually transmitting in that area. Transmitting in a place also does not inherently suggest that local news is produced about that place.

The research reason for this distinction in how we map publishers and broadcasters is that we are not able to independently verify news production for the latter group. While we can remotely audit print and digital news content relatively easily, it is much more difficult for us to reliably access radio or television news programming from outside of their broadcast areas. In almost all cases that we have found, there are no public digital archives of news content available, meaning that assessments must also be done on live streams. This is a significant barrier to independent scrutiny, and not one that PIJI is resourced to overcome.

Determining local geographies by the content produced by an outlet is a strongly preferred approach, despite the challenges. The founding purpose of PIJI is to support public interest journalism in part by identifying where there may be undersupply. Content assessments are stronger evidence of this than availability.

Data collection and maintenance

News outlet and business data is assembled by the Public Interest Journalism Initiative from public sources. Analysis of news outlets for compliance with eligibility standards for inclusion in the project is undertaken independently and relies on public access to relevant policies and content.

Data for the Australian News Mapping Project is actively maintained. It is updated monthly with new assessments and to reflect incoming information about changes to news outlets and their operations. However, due to the volume and complexity of the data being maintained, it is not possible to reverify every record every month. Therefore, there may be inconsistencies and errors in the data, particularly where things change over time.

Tracking changes

Part of the project is to monitor a broader set of changes in the Australian news market beyond just the opening and closing of individual outlets. These changes are categorised as different 'change types'.

The change types that we collect, listed in terms of the hierarchy, are:

- i. Masthead or station opening / closing; meaning an entire news outlet opening or closing.
- ii. Newsroom closure / opening; meaning a news company removing or adding a base from which to conduct news production, that having an impact on its coverage area. This change type only captures instances where there is an assumed change to the amount of localised news production (such as AAP opening a new bureau in Darwin); it does not include an outlet moving into new premises without a probable reduction in content (for example, when The Age's Melbourne CBD newsroom moved into Nine Entertainment's Melbourne CBD studios).

- iii. Decrease / increase in service; meaning changes in the amount of content that is produced, or, rarely, the availability of that content. Most often this category has captured observable changes in public interest journalism output, but it can also include the launch of a new access point for existing content. It can include changes to print publication frequency, but does not include print distribution area changes.
- iv. End / start of print edition; meaning changes in availability without a corresponding change in production. A newspaper that transitions to digital-only publication without reducing its coverage is an example.
- v. Merger / demerger, meaning the coverage and/or content area of one news outlet being absorbed into another without a corresponding change in production. This change type is treated as a contraction but is the lowest level of concern.

Some further caveats around this project are necessary to avoid misinterpretation of the data.

The first caveat is to acknowledge that the changes captured are broader than ‘closures’ and ‘openings’ of news outlets. ‘Contractions’ is not a synonym for ‘closures’; it is a broader category of negative changes to news production and availability. This report is updated regularly in order to demonstrate the difference.

The data is likely to be an undercount of the changes that have occurred. It is actively maintained by PIJI and contributions are received from news organisations, from civil society and academia, and from the public. Even then, we do not have visibility into all news production and availability around Australia, and we do not presume to have a complete log of all changes that have occurred over since 1 January 2019.

The way that data is recorded in the database also leads to undercounts in two subtly different ways: in changes that occur over time, and in multiple changes that occur simultaneously as part of one event. Each news publication is entered in the database only once, and only the most recent and most serious change type is represented. Where an event involves multiple change types it is logged as the highest ranked category to which it fits. This means that:

- If a news website was founded in January 2019; launched a print edition in April; closed that print edition in September and closed entirely by December, only the most serious (and, secondly, most recent) change – the ‘Masthead or station closure’ in December – would be recorded, despite the multiple other positive and negative changes to production and availability across the period.
- If the closure of a print news outlet was logged, the event would have necessarily involved the end of a print edition; a decrease in service and the closure of a newsroom, but it would be only logged as a ‘Masthead or station closure’, as that change type ranks highest on the hierarchy.

The data also flattens the complexity of what is being gained and lost by not having any assessment of the output, institutional characteristics or content of the news companies: the closure of a newspaper with ten working journalists would be presented as equivalent to the opening of a website of one. Clearly these two events would have very different impacts on the production and availability of news, but it is beyond this project’s scope to make this assessment for every change that occurs.

For these reasons caution must be taken in drawing conclusions about the general health of the news media ecosystem from this data alone.

Two further hypotheticals provide reasons for caution:

1. A news media ecosystem in which many news entrepreneurs had the confidence and the capital to establish organisations and outlets, the majority of which might fail, could be a healthy environment of public interest journalism production and competition but might appear in our data like a failing system due to the high number of closures.
2. A news media ecosystem in which all journalism was produced by a single company could be an uncompetitive environment or be failing to meet community need for diverse and locally relevant content, but would look healthy in our data if that one company was stable or growing.

Due to limited resources and the significant methodological difficulty in ensuring rigour, these projects do not record any information about journalism job gains and losses.

Despite these caveats we do believe that the *Australian News Data Report* offers information that, in combination with other research, can provide insight into the changing nature of journalism production and availability in Australia.

4 About the Public Interest Journalism Initiative

The [Public Interest Journalism Initiative](#) (PIJI) is a specialist think tank advancing a sustainable future for public interest journalism in Australia.

Through our original research and advocacy work, we seek to stimulate public discussion and establish optimal market pre-conditions in investment and regulation that will sustain media diversity and plurality in the long term.

PIJI is a [registered charity](#) with tax concession charity (TCC) status. It is a philanthropically funded, non-profit company limited by guarantee (ABN 69 630 740 153) governed by a [Board](#) of independent directors, advised by an [Expert Research Panel](#) and [Policy Working Group](#) and regulated by the ACNC, ATO and ASIC.

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[Public Interest Journalism Initiative]

CONTACT US

Public Interest Journalism Initiative Limited ABN 69 630 740 153

info@pji.com.au

www.pji.com.au

 [pji_journalism](https://twitter.com/pji_journalism)

 [linkedin.com/company/public-interest-journalism-initiative](https://www.linkedin.com/company/public-interest-journalism-initiative)

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