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Australian News Data Report

Monthly issue |
April 2023

Australian News Data Report: April 2023

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For more information about the Australian News Data Project, please visit:
<https://piji.com.au/research-and-inquiries/our-research/anmp/>

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AUSTRALIAN NEWS DATA REPORT

Monthly issue | April 2023

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Overview

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

- **Australian News Index (ANI)** is the national database of newsrooms and changes to news production. The ANI supplies the data for the ANMP visualisations.
- **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,

This report is part of PIJI's continued commitment to ensuring an evidence-based approach to building sustainable public interest journalism production in Australia.

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

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

New data: news outlet ownership

This month PIJI is releasing news outlet ownership data into the [Australian News Index](#), to provide insight into the state of media ownership in Australia. This is a major addition to the ANI and allows for greater analysis of news business entities alongside their news outlets.

In this issue, we also present monthly results as at 30 April 2023 including changes in news production and content sampling in five local government areas of Sydney: Burwood, Canada Bay, Canterbury-Bankstown, Inner West and Strathfield.

Feedback

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 Data Project]

Monthly results: April 2023

1 Australian News Data Project

This section provides detail about changes made in the Australian News Index and Australian News Mapping Project during the month.

The project was first launched in April 2020 to [track changes](#) in news production during COVID-19. 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.

ANDP 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: April 2023

As of 30 April 2023, the Australian News Index lists 1,174 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	70	465	8	4	9	556
Digital	6	164	3	6	42	221
Radio	94	248	1	0	1	344
Television	0	51	0	0	2	53
Total	170	928	12	10	54	1174

Table 1: Active news outlets, 30 April 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	*PS Brimbank	VIC	Masthead temporarily closed	31/12/2022
2	Beaudesert Times	QLD	Ownership changed to Ipswich Media Pty Ltd	06/04/2023
3	Border Chronicle	SA	Ownership changed to SA Today Pty Ltd	07/04/2023
4	Bunbury Mail 	WA	End of print edition	26/04/2023
5	Goondiwindi Argus 	QLD	Ownership changed to South Burnett Today Pty Ltd	29/03/2023
6	The Islander 	SA	Ownership changed to SA Today Pty Ltd	07/04/2023
7	Jimboomba Times 	QLD	Masthead closed	05/04/2023
8	Jimboomba Today 	QLD	Masthead opened	06/04/2023
9	Local Government Focus 	VIC	Added to the database	31/12/2018
10	Mandurah Mail 	WA	End of print edition	27/04/2023
11	Murray Valley Standard 	SA	Ownership changed to SA Today Pty Ltd	28/03/2023
12	My Weekly Preview 	QLD	Added to the database	31/12/2018
13	Naracoorte Herald 	SA	Ownership changed to SA Today Pty Ltd	08/04/2023
14	New Matilda 	QLD	Masthead reopened	23/01/2023
15	Port Lincoln Times 	SA	Ownership changed to SA Today Pty Ltd	07/04/2023
16	Pro Bono News 	VIC	Masthead closed	04/04/2023
17	Queensland Farmer Today 	QLD	Masthead opened	01/11/2021
18	The Recorder 	SA	Ownership changed to SA Today Pty Ltd	05/04/2023
19	Redland City Bulletin 	QLD	Masthead closed	03/04/2023
20	The Transcontinental 	SA	Ownership changed to SA Today Pty Ltd	04/04/2023
21	Victor Harbor Times 	SA	Ownership changed to SA Today Pty Ltd	04/04/2023
22	Warren Star 	NSW	Masthead opened	26/04/2023
23	Whyalla News 	SA	Ownership changed to SA Today Pty Ltd	13/04/2023

Table 2: Changed records, April 2023.

Twenty three changes were made in the database in April 2023, 16 of which occurred during April and seven of which are backdated to previous months. Many of the April changes relate to the sale of titles by Australian Community Media to the Today News Group.

As was first announced in December 2022, Australian Community Media has sold most of its papers across South Australia and Queensland to the Today News Group. The following Today News Group companies now operate these titles:

- Ipswich Media Pty Ltd
 - Beaudesert Times, Beaudesert, QLD
- South Burnett Today Pty Ltd
 - Goondiwindi Argus, Goondiwindi, QLD
- SA Today Pty Ltd
 - The Border Chronicle, Bordertown, SA
 - The Islander, Kangaroo Island, SA
 - Murray Valley Standard, Murray Bridge, SA
 - Naracoorte Herald, Naracoorte, SA
 - Port Lincoln Times, Port Lincoln, SA
 - The Recorder, Port Pirie, SA
 - The Transcontinental, Port Augusta, SA
 - Victor Harbor Times, Victor Harbor, SA
 - Whyalla News, Whyalla, SA

In addition, there has been a change in Jimboomba, QLD: Australian Community Media’s Jimboomba Times published its final edition on 5 April;¹ and Ipswich Media’s Jimboomba Today published its first edition on 6 April.² Other titles connected to the sale continued to operate under their existing masthead and website, and shifted to the Today branding in print and online as the sale took effect. This was not the case in Jimboomba, where the Times announced its closure and the Today its opening, with each operating on different websites. For this reason, PIJJ has treated this as one newspaper closing and one opening, rather than a continuation of the same business.

Three other changes to Australian Community Media titles were made in April.

The Redland City Bulletin, which covered Cleveland in South East Queensland, was not included in the sale and also announced its closure during the month.³ Its final edition was published on 5 April.

Two Western Australian papers – Bunbury Mail and Mandurah Mail – shifted to digital-only production, publishing their final print editions on 26 April and 27 April, respectively. Initially ACM announced that its other two WA titles, Augusta-Margaret River Mail and Busselton-Dunsborough Mail, would also shift to web-only, but these were subsequently sold to Sports Entertainment Network (SEN).⁴ That sale has not yet taken effect, but the titles have continued to publish print editions in the interregnum.

While reviewing the changes at Today News Group (and its related company, Star News Group) in April we identified two outlets that were not included in our data but which meet the eligibility criteria. Local Government Focus and Queensland Farmer Today have both been added to the database in April, with the latter listed at its opening date in November 2021.

¹ Jimboomba Times. <<https://www.jimboombatimes.com.au/digital-print-edition/>>

² Jimboomba Today. <<https://jimboombatoday.com.au/digital-editions/>>

³ Lowe E. 2023. Redland City Bulletin editorial staff say goodbye. Redland City Bulletin. 31 March. <<https://www.redlandcitybulletin.com.au/story/8125286/watch-goodbye-from-the-rcb-editorial-team/>>

⁴ SEN 2023. Sports Entertainment Network expands WA presence with acquisition of local newspapers. 21 April. <<https://www.sen.com.au/news/2023/04/21/sports-entertainment-network-expands-wa-presence-with-acquisition-of-local/>>

Five further changes were made that are unrelated to these sales.

*PS Brimbank was opened by *PSMedia⁵ in the western suburbs of Melbourne in December 2022 and was added to the database in January. The site has been inactive since its opening week. Editor Margaret Simons said on email that the title is temporarily closed, but that she hopes to be able to reopen it in the coming months. PIJI will continue to monitor.

My Weekly Preview, a local news magazine in the Sunshine Coast, was added to the database.

Digital news and opinion website New Matilda was listed as closed in the data in May 2022, having effect from its most recent reported piece at the time in September 2021. The site has been listed as reopened as of January 2023, as it has begun to regularly publish reported pieces from that time.

Pro Bono News, a news service operated by Pro Bono Australia,⁶ covered the philanthropy and not-for-profit sector for 22 years. On 4 April it closed,⁷ with editor Wendy Williams citing the financial difficulties of the media landscape as the cause.⁸

Finally, the Warren Star published its first edition on 19 April.⁹ It was launched as a joint effort between Gilgandra Newspapers, publisher of the Gilgandra Weekly and Nyngan Weekly, and Panscott Media, publisher of the Dubbo Photo News. The two companies also jointly publish the Narromine Star. The new paper in Warren follows the closure of the independently owned Warren Weekly, which published its final edition in July 2022.

1.1.2 Changes not yet in the database

There are multiple market changes that have been announced but have not yet taken effect. They will be added to the database when they do.

Four titles operated by Papers & Publications Pty Ltd (Eyre Peninsula Advocate, Fleurieu Sun, Plains Producer, Two Wells & District Echo) have also been purchased by SA Today.¹⁰ PIJI is seeking confirmation as to when that will take effect.

Australian Community Media is reportedly selling seven further titles in New South Wales¹¹ and two titles in Western Australia.¹² As of April 30, neither of these sales have been finalised.

⁵ Two founders of *PSMedia, Karen Mahlab AM and Margaret Simons, are former directors of PIJI. Margaret Simons remains on the Expert Research Panel, which she previously chaired. The decision to include this title in the Australian News Mapping Project was made independently by management.

⁶ The publisher of Pro Bono News, Karen Mahlab AM, is a former director of PIJI.

⁷ Pro Bono News. 2023. Karen Mahlab AM farewells Pro Bono News. Pro Bono News. 4 April.

<<https://probonoaustralia.com.au/about-us/>>

⁸ Williams W. 2023. Goodbye from the editor. Pro Bono News. 4 April.

<<https://probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2023/04/goodbye-from-the-editor/>>

⁹ Warren Star. 19 April. <<https://issuu.com/panscott/docs/wst20230419>>

¹⁰ Murray Valley Standard 2023. Exciting new chapter in Murraylands' story. Murray Valley Standard. 6 April.

<<https://murrayvalleystandard.com.au/news/2023/04/06/exciting-new-chapter-in-murraylands-story/>>

¹¹ AdNews. 2023. ACM sells newspapers to Provincial Press Group. AdNews. 31 March. <<https://www.adnews.com.au/news/acm-sells-newspapers-to-provincial-press-group>>

¹² SEN 2023. Sports Entertainment Network expands WA presence with acquisition of local newspapers. 21 April.

<<https://www.sen.com.au/news/2023/04/21/sports-entertainment-network-expands-wa-presence-with-acquisition-of-local/>>

1.2 News outlet ownership

This month, PIJI is releasing preliminary Australian news business entity data into the [Australian News Index](#), to provide an outlook into the state of media ownership in Australia.

This data draws on the [Australian Business Register](#) and the ACMA's [Register of Radiocommunications Licences](#) to supplement existing information about the registered entities as well as consultation with industry groups.

This data will continue to be expanded over the coming months, providing greater insights into operating locations, company structures and other characteristics of news entities.

Please note that this data demonstrates geographic ownership but does not consider other key market metrics such as total audience reach of a business entity or news outlet. For example, an entity that owns a single local newspaper with a readership of 200 is not comparable in reach to an entity operating a metropolitan television station, though each represent one outlet in this data.

It is also noted that most news entities are structured as private companies, and therefore, there is limited publicly available data on media ownership.

PIJI is seeking feedback on the data presented below. Please email any feedback to research@piji.com.au by 30 June 2023.

1.2.1 Definitions

To provide better understanding of the nature of media ownership, PIJI makes a distinction between a 'news entity' and a 'news outlet':

- A news entity as the business responsible for the operation of a news outlet.
- A news outlet is defined as a business which produces public interest journalism.

For example, Inner City News is a news outlet that produces news and is operated by the private news entity, Hyperlocal News Pty Ltd.

This data links news entities to the news outlets they operate but does not provide the full ownership interests or corporate structure.

In the broadcast sector, PIJI has identified the news entity as the business that holds the broadcast licence according to ACMA's Register of Radiocommunications Licences. It is generally the case that the entity which holds a broadcast licence is a subsidiary of a parent news entity: for example, the broadcast licence for the television news outlet 10 Adelaide is assigned to Network Ten (Adelaide) Pty Limited, a subsidiary entity of Ten Network Holdings.

To reflect this ambiguity, we have used the term 'holdings' to denote news outlets which are operated by news entities, and have refrained from using terms such as 'owns' or 'controls'.

This is particularly true in cases where multiple news entities have interests in singular outlets. PIJI is looking to provide further breakdown of these cases in future releases of this data.

Some news entities might have significant activities beyond public interest journalism: Nine Entertainment Co. operates the news outlet the Sydney Morning Herald, as well as having interests in other media and streaming properties, such as Domain and Stan.

Further discussion of the definitions that inform this section can be found in Section 3.

1.2.2 Results

As of 31 March 2023, the Australian News Index lists 529 news entities which operate 1174 print, digital, radio and television news outlets. Table 3 shows a breakdown of the distribution of news outlets linked to the number of news entities.

News outlet holdings	Subtotal	%
One outlet holding	442	84
Two outlet holdings	35	7
Three outlet holdings	19	4
Four outlet holdings	11	2
Five outlet holdings	7	1
Six outlet holdings	3	1
Seven or more outlet holdings	12	2
Total	529	100

The overwhelming majority of business entities (442, 84 per cent) only operate a single news outlet.

There are only 12 business entities that are linked to more than seven outlets. The number of outlets operated by this group has a very large range: between eight and 115 per news entity.

Table 3: News entities according to the number of outlet holdings

1.2.3 Types of news entities

The new data also provides better understanding of the business structures, adopting the different entity types as defined by the Australian Business Register, found [here](#), and described in Section 3.. This information is provided in Table 4.

There is scope to analyse entity types and provide more specific insight regarding the different structures that fall within each category. For example, ‘other incorporated entity’ and ‘other unincorporated entity’ entity types were the most common business structure for news entities responsible for operating community news outlets. However, these entity types included different organisational structures, such as clubs, community resource organisations or unions.

Entity Type	Subtotal	%
Australian private company	238	45
Other incorporated entity	166	31
Individual/sole trader	30	6
Discretionary trading trust	26	5
Australian public company	18	3
Other unincorporated entity	17	3
Co-operative	13	3
Other	21	4
Total	529	100

45 per cent of news entities operate as private companies, by far the largest category within the data.

There are several entity types which fall under the ‘other’ category, including: family partnerships, other partnerships, fixed unit trusts, discretionary investment trusts, hybrid trusts, and commonwealth government entities, of which there are two: the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the Special Broadcasting Service Corporation.

Table 4: Number of news business entities according to their company structure

1.2.4 News entities with the largest number of outlet holdings

Some news entities partially or wholly own another news entity. In these cases, it is common for the parent company’s branding to be publicly understood across the entire network. For example, News Pty Limited, a news entity, owns Nationwide News Pty Ltd, another news entity and the operator of news outlet the Daily Telegraph.

This is particularly true in broadcast, where each individual radio and television broadcast license in a network tends to be assigned to different incorporated entities, some of which are wholly owned, while others are joint ventures.

In Table 5 below, for simplicity of understanding, we have presented news entities where applicable by their parent entity, which therefore consolidates any subsidiary entities. This consolidation is marked in the table with an asterisk (*). In future reports, this table will be updated to include the number of parent entities and the number of subsidiary entities, which will not affect the number of parent entities nor outlet holdings, absent other market changes.

Parent entity	Number of outlet holdings	% total outlets
News Corp Australia*	115	10
Australian Community Media	86	7
Southern Cross Austereo*	71	6
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	53	5
Australian Radio Network	39	3
Seven West Media*	32	3
Star News Group	23	2
Broadcast Operations Group	17	1
Ace Radio Broadcasters	16	1
Today News Group*	12	1
Nine Entertainment Co.*	11	1
Surf Coast News Australia	8	1
Subtotal for entities with > 7 holdings	483	41
Outlets held by all other entities	691	59
Total	1174	100

Table 5: Parent entities according to their outlet holdings

Table 5 shows the 12 news entities that operate more than seven news outlets.

These entities operate 483, or 41 per cent, of the total outlets in Australia. Within this subset, five news entities collectively operate 364 outlets, or 31 per cent of the total outlets.

PIJI notes again that it has selected these twelve news entities by the number of their outlet holdings, and that Table 5 does not take into account other metrics such as affiliation, audience reach, or productive capacity. This means that 10 Network, with five outlet holdings, does not appear in Table 5, but would not be considered small in terms of its audience reach or productive capacity, relative to other news entities.

PIJI is looking to expand the data it collects to include any or some of these considerations to provide more insight into the diversity of Australian media.

News Corp Australia operates the largest number of outlets, with 115, around 10 per cent of outlets in the database. Rural Press Pty Ltd, commonly known as Australian Community Media, operates 86 outlets, around 7 per cent. Nine ACM outlets across NSW and WA have been announced as sold, but as of 30 April these changes have not taken effect and they are still included in this data.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation's ABC Local radio newsrooms appear individually in PIJI's data, which accounts for the high number of operated outlets (53) and allows for better understanding of the distribution of ABC locations and assessment of its local news coverage.

1.2.5 News entities operating outlets with national scale

News outlets provide coverage for geographic areas of different sizes. Every news outlet is 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. 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.

Table 6 below provides a breakdown of news entities that are associated with more than one outlet that has a national scale, meaning they have a geography larger than any single state or territory. There were relatively few outlets that operated with national scale, only about five per cent of the total outlets.

Parent entity	Outlet holdings of national scale	% total outlets of national scale
News Corp Australia*	4	14
Special Broadcasting Service	4	14
Nine Entertainment Co.*	3	9
Private Media	2	6
Schwartz Media*	2	4
Subtotal for entities with > 1 news outlets	15	28
Outlets held by all other entities	39	72
Total	54	100

Table 6: Parent entities with more than one outlet holding operating at a national scale

All other news entities not included in this table (39) operate only one national outlet. While national outlets make up only a fraction of the total outlets, it would be interesting to conduct further analysis to consider the feasibility and reach of these national outlets, especially considering closures of outlets such as Vice and BuzzFeed Australia.

1.2.6 State by state analysis of news entities and outlet holdings

In order to conduct an analysis of news entities and their outlet holdings on a state-by-state basis, we have combined all news outlets scales, with the exception of national, in the following sections.

Trends across states and territories generally followed population density trends. New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria experience the highest volume of changes in news production since 2019.

1.2.6.1 Australian Capital Territory

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in ACT	% total outlets in ACT
Southern Cross Austereo*	2	14
Subtotal for entities with > 1 news outlets	2	14
Outlets held by all other entities	12	86
Total	14	100

Table 7: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in the Australian Capital Territory

Though many outlets have a presence in Canberra to cover the federal government, PIJI's data draws a distinction between those and outlets that cover local issues such as the ACT Legislative Assembly other issues. The Australian Capital Territory has 14 of these local outlets, or 1 per cent of the total outlets across the country. Only one news entity, Southern Cross Austereo, holds more than one news outlet in the ACT, with two.

1.2.6.2 New South Wales

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in NSW	% total outlets in NSW
Australian Community Media	67	19
News Corp Australia*	36	10
Southern Cross Austereo*	17	5
Broadcast Operations Group	16	4
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	14	4
Subtotal for entities with > 7 news outlets	150	42
Outlets held by all other entities	210	58
Total	360	100

Table 8: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in New South Wales

New South Wales has the highest number of outlets in the country, with 360 or 31 per cent of the total outlets. The five news entities with the highest number of outlet holdings operate 42 per cent of all outlets in NSW. Australian Community Media (67 outlets, 19 per cent of NSW outlets) and News Corp Australia (36 outlets, 10 per cent) collectively operate 103 outlets, almost 30 per cent of the total outlets in NSW.

Australian Radio Network (seven outlets), WIN Network (five) Seven West Media (three), Nine Entertainment Co (three) and McPherson Media Group (three) are among those companies that operate multiple outlets in the state but are not in the table.

Australian Community Media has announced the sale of seven of its titles in New South Wales to the Provincial Press Group, but this sale has not yet taken effect at time of writing. Provincial Press Group primarily operates in Victoria and southern New South Wales.

1.2.6.3 Northern Territory

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in NT	% total outlets in NT
Southern Cross Austereo*	3	15
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	3	15
Subtotal for entities with > 1 news outlets	6	30
Outlets held by all other entities	14	70
Total	20	100

Table 9: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in the Northern Territory

The Northern Territory has 20 outlets, or 2 per cent of the total outlets. Only two news entities in the Northern Territory hold more than one news outlet: Southern Cross Austereo and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, both of which operate three outlets each, or 30 per cent of NT outlets.

1.2.6.4 Queensland

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in QLD	% of total outlets in QLD
News Corp Australia*	42	20
Southern Cross Austereo*	20	10
Today News Group*	17	8
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	11	5
Australian Radio Network	10	5
Subtotal for entities with > 6 news outlets	100	48
Outlets held by all other entities	108	52
Total	208	100

Table 10: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in Queensland

In Queensland, there were a total of 208 associated outlets (18 per cent of total outlets). The five news entities included operate 100 outlets or 48 per cent of total Queensland outlets, while remaining news entities operate 52 per cent, or 108 outlets.

Today News Group, which operates 8 per cent of Queensland outlets, has grown considerably in recent years as it has expanded into regions previously covered by News Corp. Most recently, it finalised the purchase of most of Australian Community Media's titles in Queensland and South Australia.

Resonate Broadcasting Engineering (six outlets), Star News Group (three), Nine Entertainment Co. (three) Australian Community Media (two) and Seven West Media (two) are not included in the table but operate more than two news outlets.

1.2.6.5 South Australia

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in SA	% total outlets in SA
Today News Group	12	15
News Corp Australia*	11	14
Australian Radio Network	7	9
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	5	6
WIN Network*	3	4
Subtotal for entities with > 2 news outlets	38	48
Outlets held by all other entities	42	52
Total	80	100

Table 11: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in South Australia

In South Australia, there are 80 outlets, or seven per cent of the total outlets across the country. News entities hold 37 or 47 per cent of outlets in South Australia. Today News Group holds 12 outlets, or 15 per cent of South Australian outlets. Today News Group first incorporated in the state

after purchasing the Border Watch, South Eastern Times and Penola Pennant when they closed in 2020 due to COVID-19, and recently purchased Australian Community Media’s 14 remaining titles in the state, including two that ACM closed in 2021 and which have not reopened. Today has also purchased four further newspapers in South Australia, but PIJI is still collecting data on this sale and it is not currently reflected in this table.

News Corp Australia holds the second highest number of outlets, predominantly in and around Adelaide, including The Advertiser, digital community titles in the suburbs, and hyperlocals in surrounding regional areas.

1.2.6.6 Tasmania

News entity	Outlet holdings in TAS	% total outlets in TAS
Australian Radio Network	8	16
Font Publishing	6	12
Southern Cross Austereo*	4	8
Subtotal for entities with > 1 news outlets	18	36
Outlets held by all other entities	32	64
Total	50	100

Table 12: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in Tasmania

Tasmania has 50 outlets, or 4 per cent of total outlets. Beyond those included in the table, News Corp Australia, Australian Community Media and the ABC also operate multiple outlets in the state. Font Publishing has emerged as a significant presence in local news in the state in recent years, having purchased six formerly independent newspapers, as well as two other titles not contained within PIJI’s data: the former News Corp magazine Tasmanian Country, and Tasmanian Business.

1.2.6.7 Victoria

News entity	Outlet holdings in VIC	% total outlets in VIC
Star News Group	19	7
News Corp Australia*	17	6
Ace Radio Broadcasters	14	5
Southern Cross Austereo*	10	4
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	9	3
Subtotal for entities with > 8 news outlets	69	26
Outlets held by all other entities	198	74
Total	267	100

Table 13: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in Victoria

Victoria has 267 associated outlets or 23 per cent of the total outlets. There was a more even spread in the level of outlet holdings in this subset than in other states, with 11 news entities operating more than three outlets in Victoria. The five news entities with the largest outlet holdings operate only 26 per cent (69 outlets) of the total outlets in Victoria, while the remaining news entities operate 198 outlets, or 74 per cent.

Star News Group, which holds a total of 23 outlets across Australia, operates most of those outlets within Victoria (19 outlets or 7 per cent of VIC outlets). Star is a sister company to the Today News Group, and operates predominantly within Melbourne’s suburbs and surrounding areas such as the Yarra Ranges.

McPherson Media Group (eight outlets), Surf Coast Australia (eight), Australian Community Media (six), and North East Media (six) are not included in the table but all have considerable presence in regional areas, particularly in the northern and central regions.

1.2.6.8 Western Australia

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in WA	% total outlets in WA
Seven West Media*	34	28
Southern Cross Austereo*	22	18
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	7	6
The Herald Publishing Company	5	4
Australian Community Media	4	3
Subtotal for entities with > 3 news outlets	72	59
Outlets held by all other entities	50	41
Total	122	100

Table 14: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in Western Australia

Western Australia has 122 associated outlets or 10 per cent of total outlets. The number of outlets linked to the news entities in the table (72, 59 per cent of WA outlets) was greater than the outlets held by the remaining entities (50, 41 per cent). Just two news entities, Seven West Media (34 outlets) and Southern Cross Austereo (22 outlets) operate 56 outlets, or 46 per cent of the total Western Australian outlets.

Australian Community Media has announced the sale of two of its remaining four titles in Western Australian to Sports Entertainment Network (SEN), but this sale has not taken effect at time of writing.

Examiner Newspapers (four outlets), Nine Entertainment Co. (three), and WIN Network (two) are not on the table but operate more than one news outlets.

1.2.6.9 Limitations

As noted, one limitation of this data is that it does not currently detail parent-subsidary companies. This will be added in future releases.

PIJI's data is under continuous review, and we are working to resolve data gaps where they arise. There are currently 25 news outlets which are not linked to an associated news entity. Some, but not all of these, will not be published by any incorporated entity, being individual or group efforts by volunteers and without any business revenue.

PIJI welcomes feedback on our data. Please email research@piji.com.au if you would like to contribute.

1.3 Web application and visualisation changes

In April, the [Australian News Index](#) visualisation was updated to reflect the release of news business entity data.

1.3.1 News businesses

The Australian News Index now has two search functions, each of which returns a different category of records. The existing function remains and continues to display news outlet records. A new function has been added to the sidebar, which will instead return news entity records. In this mode, a user can browse, filter and search through all of the business entity records in PIJI's database, obtain and export further information on them.

1.3.2 Record pages

A greater depth of information is now provided on a dedicated page for each news outlet and news business entity record. Alongside every result in the Index a dropdown arrow now appears, with a 'View' button. This button will take the user to a page for that outlet or business, providing further information. These pages can be linked to externally.

Currently, these pages list the following items for news outlets:

- Name of the outlet
- Primary format
- Scale
- Local government areas it operates in
- The news business(es) that operate it

The following items are listed for news businesses:

- Name of the business
- Trading name for the business, where relevant
- ABN
- ABN registration date
- Business structure
- Main business location
- Date registered for GST
- The news outlet(s) it operates
- External links to further information on the Australian Business Register and Australian Securities and Investment Commission, where relevant

Registered charities also have the following items:

- Whether the outlet receives GST concession, income tax exemption or FBT rebate
- Whether the outlet is eligible to receive tax deductible gifts
- An external link to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission

More data will be added to these pages over time. If there are particular fields that you would like PIJI to consider adding, please email us: research@piji.com.au.

[Australian News Sampling Project]

Case study, April 2023:

Inner West Sydney, New South Wales

2 Australian News Sampling Project

The results presented here are from an April 2023 survey of five local government areas in Sydney's inner west region: Burwood Council, the City of Canada Bay, Inner West Council and the Municipality of Strathfield, as well as the City of Canterbury-Bankstown, which has been included due to the association of the City of Canterbury with the region prior to 2016 local government amalgamation in New South Wales, and the possibility of de-amalgamation in the future.

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 a minimum of 200 news articles. Where that can't be met, the entire month is coded.

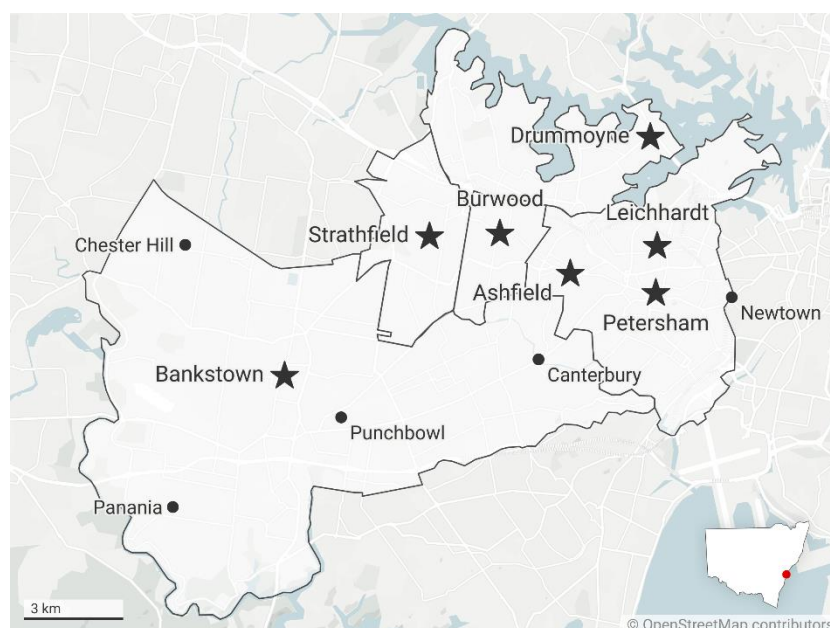
With this work, we seek to expand the amount of information about local news around Australia. This project fills a data gap in the existing ANDP work through its focus on the content output, testing the underlying assumption that newspapers and websites are providing public interest journalism for their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

The Inner West is a region of Sydney. It consists of four local government areas – Burwood, Canada Bay, Inner West and Strathfield – as well as the north-east of the City of Canterbury-Bankstown.



Region

Land area	18 650.2 ha
Residents	432 088

Population centres

Bankstown	Strathfield
Ashfield	Punchbowl
Burwood	Leichhardt
Drummoyne	Canterbury
Petersham	

News outlets (April 2023)

Print	2
Digital	3
Radio	10
Television	3

2.1.1 Local news producers

Outlet	Format	Ownership	Scale	Total
2RPH (2RPH)	Radio	Radio for the Print Handicapped of New South Wales Co-operative Ltd	Community	0
2DayFM 104.1 Sydney (2DAY)	Radio	Southern Cross Austereo Pty Ltd	Local	0
2GB 873 AM (2GB)	Radio	Nine Entertainment Co Pty Ltd	Local	0
2SM Sydney 1269 AM (2SM)	Radio	2SM Pty Ltd	Local	0
90.1FM NBC Community Radio (2NBC)	Radio	Narwee Baptist Community Broadcasters	Community	0
ABC Sydney	Radio	Australian Broadcasting Corporation	Local	192
Canterbury Bankstown Express	Digital	News Corporation Australia	Local	30
Daily Telegraph	Print	News Corporation Australia	Metropolitan	347
Inner West Courier	Digital	News Corporation Australia	Local	47
Inner West Independent	Digital	Inner West Co Pty Ltd	Local	6
KIIS 1065 (2WFM)	Radio	Australian Radio Network Pty Limited	Local	0
Nine Sydney (TCN)	Television	Nine Entertainment Co Pty Ltd	Local	0
Radio 2RDJ FM 88.1 (2RDJ)	Radio	RDJ-FM Community Radio Co-op Ltd	Community	0
Radio Skid Row 88.9FM (2RSR)	Radio	Radio Skid Row Ltd	Local	0
Seven Sydney (ATN)	Television	Seven West Media Limited	Local	0
Sydney Morning Herald	Print	Nine Entertainment Co Pty Ltd	Metropolitan	266
10 Sydney (TEN)	Television	Network Ten	Local	0
The Torch	Print	Torch Publishing Company Pty Ltd	Local	106
Triple M Sydney 104.9 (2MMM)	Radio	Southern Cross Austereo Pty Ltd	Local	0
Total				994

Table 15: News producers in Inner West Sydney and the total number of articles assessed.

Being a large region of metropolitan Sydney, the inner west is well covered by multiple news outlets of all scales and formats. Both the Daily Telegraph and Sydney Morning Herald (SMH) serve the area, as do News Corp’s local titles the Inner West Courier and Canterbury-Bankstown Express. Both of these were in print prior to COVID-19 and are now provided digitally.

Independent outlets in the region include The Torch, a Canterbury-Bankstown-based newspaper operated by Torch Publishing. Torch also previously published the Inner West Times, which was closed in

Date	Change observed
08/04/2020	Inner West Courier ended print Canterbury-Bankstown Express ended print
28/10/2020	Inner West Times closed
02/02/2022	Inner West Review opened
27/07/2022	Inner West Review closed

Table 16: Changes observed in the region since 1 January 2019.

2020. The Inner West Independent, an offshoot of CityHub Sydney, also operates at a small scale. Australian Community Media was briefly present, launching the Inner West Review in February 2022, before closing it in July of the same year.

The region has a heavy radio presence, with major brands including Southern Cross Austereo-owned Triple M Sydney and 2DayFM, part of the Hit Network. Australian Radio Network also operates KIIS 1065 Sydney, and Nine Entertainment operates 2GB. Independent and community radio outlets include Radio Skid Row, Radio 2RDJ and 2SM.

Each of the three major commercial television networks has a Sydney-based newsroom and produces local news from the inner west and across the wider metropolitan area.

2.1.2 Sample

Of the 18 outlets across the region, the digital output of the five publishers and the ABC newsroom were assessed between 1 – 30 April 2023. For most outlets this represented the total of their digital output across that period. For the Daily Telegraph and Sydney Morning Herald, four full editions of the print newspaper were coded: Monday 3 April, Thursday 6 April, Wednesday 12 April and Friday 21 April.

A total of 994 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 Inner West Independent had very low output across the month. Results are presented here for completeness but due to this very small sample size, no percentages or commentary has been provided for these titles.

Overall, we found moderate to high levels of public interest journalism, with a focus on the state government, the local community, and a higher focus on violent crime and lower focus on public services than has been observed in previous samples. Stories were of a diverse story scale, with a mix of local, state and national represented. Localism was particularly high for the City of Canterbury-Bankstown, moderate for the Inner West Council, and low for Burwood, Canada Bay and Strathfield.

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	n	n
ABC Sydney	126	68	59	32	185	7	192
C-B Express	28	93	2	7	30	0	30
Daily Telegraph	149	49	155	51	304	43	347
Inner West Courier	37	79	10	21	47	0	47
Inner West Independent	5	-	0	-	5	1	6
Sydney Morning Herald	153	70	66	30	219	47	266
The Torch	80	84	15	16	95	11	106
Total	578	65	307	35	885	109	994

Table 17: Stories by whether they are public interest journalism, other journalism, or excluded from the sample.

Table 17 provides detail of how the total sample breaks down into public interest journalism, other journalism and exclusions. We found a mix of moderate to high levels of public interest journalism coverage across the sample. The rate was lowest at the Daily Telegraph while being high at its digital hyperlocals the Courier and Express, likely a reflection of the broader coverage remit at the newspaper.

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 advertising or press releases. Stories contributed by people who have an interest in the content – such as an elected official about their achievements – will also be excluded. Excluded stories are removed from further analysis.

This sample saw a small number of exclusions, with the Sydney Morning Herald having the highest proportion, at 17 per cent of all coded stories. This is still on the low end, particularly for a broader title like the SMH: in recent months, some newspapers have recorded exclusions up to 30 per cent. 13 per cent of stories at the Daily Telegraph and 10 per cent at The Torch were excluded.

Outlet	Public interest journalism											
	Government			Courts and crime			Community			Public services		
	All	U	% U	All	U	% U	All	U	% U	All	U	% U
ABC Sydney	61	46	25	72	42	23	45	41	22	33	31	17
C-B Express	7	7	23	31	18	60	12	7	23	1	1	3
Daily Telegraph	122	85	28	49	32	11	47	42	14	17	17	5
Inner West Courier	9	9	19	33	19	40	9	9	19	5	5	11
Inner West Independent	9	5	-	0	0	-	2	2	-	0	0	-
Sydney Morning Herald	165	102	47	52	36	16	52	45	21	10	10	5
The Torch	25	18	19	8	8	8	66	51	54	22	22	23
Total	398	272	31	245	155	18	233	197	22	88	86	10

Table 18: Breakdown of public interest journalism.

Stories can be allocated up to four subjects each. As such, Table 18 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).

In most samples, community is the highest category of coverage, followed by government, services and, finally, court and crime reporting, which will frequently lag far behind other subjects. In the inner west, this was different: we found government was the highest category of coverage at most outlets, followed by community, courts and crime, and finally public services. Only the Torch retained the expected order: community, government, services and crime.

Across government stories, the NSW government was the biggest focus (48 stories), followed by federal (38) and local (22) governments. Both the ABC and Daily Telegraph gave most attention to the state government (15 and 12 stories) and Canberra second (10 and nine), while the reverse was true at the Sydney Morning Herald (18 federal, 16 state). The Torch, Courier and Express all leaned local.

The highest subjects of coverage were the economy, particularly at the Herald (17 stories) and the Telegraph (10); war and conflict (29); foreign policy (23); industrial relations (22) and transport infrastructure (20).

The Voice to Parliament featured heavily in federal government coverage (16 stories), as the federal Liberal Party announced that it would oppose the referendum during April. Other coverage included fallout from a by-election held in Victoria on 1 April and previews of the May budget, particularly cost-of-living pressures.

War coverage focussed on Ukraine but also included reporting on the prospect of a war over Taiwan and smaller-scale conflict in Israel and Afghanistan. In both foreign policy and economy, there were multiple stories across both the Telegraph and the Sydney Morning Herald about improving relations with China leading to increasing beef and barley exports.

The new Labor Government in New South Wales dominated state coverage, beginning with falling short of achieving a majority; the announcement of the cabinet; and coverage of different interest groups and their priorities from the government. The Metro West train line, which will include new stations in Strathfield, Burwood and Canada Bay, was heavily covered as cost and time blowouts were revealed.

We found fewer local government stories than coverages of other levels. Stories were more common in the local outlets, with The Torch publishing the most (seven stories), followed by the Courier (six), ABC Sydney (three), Canterbury-Bankstown Express (two) and Sydney Morning Herald (one). The Daily Telegraph did not publish any local government stories in the assembled sample, however, both the Courier and the Express are News Corp local titles in the region.

Local government stories included community grants and events programs and an Iftar Dinner hosted by the mayor of Canterbury-Bankstown. The ABC reported that Inner West Council is organising screenings of the FIFA Women's World Cup. The Courier reported that the City of Canada Bay is seeking to increase rates.

Community stories were the largest focus at The Torch, and second overall at other outlets, with individuals (50), injuries and deaths (38), events (34) and community health (33) the highest subcategories.

The ABC published a profile of a man who organised the evacuation of his family and a group of orphans from Kabul as it fell to the Taliban, and both the broadcaster and the Sydney Morning Herald profiled Sydney-based Michelle Lee, who completed a solo row across the Pacific Ocean, arriving in Port Douglas early in April.

Most injury and death stories (32 of 38) were published by the three larger outlets. These stories tend to accord with car and other accidents, but can also be used where a person has died and the circumstances of that death are not clear at the time of the reporting.

Religious occasions dominated community events coverage, with 14 stories across all outlets dedicated to the Sydney Royal Easter Show and 11 to Ramadan. ANZAC Day was also featured in community events (6 stories), as well as community history (four stories).

In court and crime stories, during April a judicial inquiry into Kathleen Folbigg’s convictions for killing her four children was held. Evidence given to this inquiry was covered three times by the ABC. This story did not appear in the sample of the Daily Telegraph and Sydney Morning Herald that was assembled, but it is likely that these outlets also covered this. The murder of alleged underworld figure Mahmoud Ahmad in April 2022 was covered again by the ABC, Telegraph, Herald and the Torch after police released CCTV footage in a renewed manhunt.

Most stories were from the local court (15) or other judicial inquiries and tribunals (15), with less coverage of intermediate (nine) and superior (five) courts. Violent crime (81) was more prevalent in coverage than non-violent crime (54), with only the Canterbury-Bankstown Express covering more non-violent than violent.

Public services is a broad category that includes emergency services such as police, health and fire, disaster relief like the state emergency services, aged, disability and child care, as well as education.

Public services were a low priority at around half of the outlets covered, and were a high priority only at The Torch. Most stories were related to police and education (23 each), other services such as emergency services and the RSL (17), and health (12). We found little coverage of care services (two stories) and nothing about fire.

Police stories are often public requests for assistance with investigations. This was true, as in the Mahmoud Ahmad example, in a Courier story about the five most-wanted alleged criminals in the state, and after a newborn baby was abandoned in Blacktown. Other police stories concerned police enforcement activities, such as fines handed out in Kings Cross and reports of a secret minimum annual quota for speeding tickets issued, as well as requests for enforcement, such as a campaign by a pro-cycling group to have police fine motorists who drive too close to bikes.

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 Sydney	97	52	4	2	21	11	79	43
C-B Express	24	80	4	13	8	27	0	0
Daily Telegraph	41	14	12	4	56	18	149	49
Inner West Courier	33	70	2	4	15	32	12	26
Inner West Independent	5	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Sydney Morning Herald	67	31	9	4	46	21	119	54
The Torch	87	92	4	4	17	18	9	10
Total	354	40	35	4	163	18	368	42

Table 19: Scale of coverage of reported stories.

We found that the coverage scale varied significantly across outlets, from predominantly state and national issues at the Daily Telegraph and Sydney Morning Herald, to a mix of local and national at the ABC, and mostly or entirely local at the Express, Courier and Torch.

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.

LGA	ABC		IC		CBE		DT		SMH		T	
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %
Burwood	0	0	3	6	2	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
Canterbury-Bankstown	8	4	1	2	15	50	2	1	2	1	87	92
Canada Bay	1	1	2	4	0	0	1	<1	0	0	0	0
Inner West	2	1	14	30	2	7	2	1	10	5	1	1
Strathfield	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3

Table 20: Localism of coverage of reported stories.

The localism of each story is presented in Table 20. As this sample covers multiple local government areas, we have elected to review results against the region as a whole.

Overall, we found mixed localism for the sampled region. The Torch had the greatest overall localism, with 92 per cent of its coverage located within the City of Canterbury-Bankstown. The Express followed, with half of its stories in the same LGA, and the Courier had just under a third of its stories in the Inner West Council. Both News Corp local titles also published a small number of stories from Burwood.

The larger titles tended to be less local. The Sydney Morning Herald sample contained ten stories from Inner West, two from Canterbury-Bankstown, and none from other LGAs; the ABC was most focussed on Canterbury-Bankstown with eight stories, two from Inner West and one from Canada Bay, and the Daily Telegraph published two each from Inner West and Canterbury-Bankstown and one from Canada Bay.

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.

2.1.5 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’s NCA 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 should be limited 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.

News Corp has national news desks that contribute content on sport and politics across all their metropolitan daily mastheads. This leads to a higher level of internal syndication than at other outlets.

Outlet	Syndication						Original	
	Internal		Wire		Other		n	All %
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %		
ABC Sydney	31	17	28	15	0	0	126	68
C-B Express	15	50	0	0	0	0	15	50
Daily Telegraph	168	55	11	4	20	7	101	33
Inner West Courier	38	81	0	0	0	0	9	19
Inner West Independent	0	-	0	-	0	-	5	-
Sydney Morning Herald	7	3	27	12	10	5	175	80
The Torch	0	-	0	0	0	0	95	100
Total	259	30	66	7	30	3	526	60

Table 21: Syndication of reported stories.

3 Data eligibility, definitions and process

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.

Data collection and maintenance

News outlet and business data is assembled by the Public Interest Journalism Initiative from public sources and through consultation with industry. 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.

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.

Definitions

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.

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 PIJ 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.

Business entities

PIJI uses the following terms in its discussion of news entities.

A **news outlet** is the publication, website, radio or television station where consumers access news. The Riverine Herald, for example, is a news outlet that operates as a newspaper and website covering Echuca on the Victoria-New South Wales border.

A **news entity** is the incorporated entity that operates the news outlet. It will usually refer to the company, trust, partnership or group that publishes or broadcasts the outlet. Riverine Herald Pty Ltd is a news entity that operates the news outlet the Riverine Herald.

A **holding** describes the relationship between a news entity and the news outlets that it operates. The Riverine Herald is a holding of Riverine Herald Pty Ltd.

A **parent entity** is a news entity that has a majority or controlling stake in another subsidiary entity. McPherson Newspapers Pty Ltd is the parent company of Riverine Herald Pty Ltd. Where a single parent entity operates multiple news outlets through multiple subsidiary entities, that group of outlets often has a collective identity. For example, McPherson Newspapers Pty Ltd has 11 news outlet holdings through 10 subsidiary companies and is collectively known as the McPherson Media Group.

A **subsidiary entity** is a news entity that is controlled by a parent entity.

Business entity types

News business entities are categorised according to their 'entity type'. This term, the categorisation, and the definition for each type, have been adopted from the [Australian Business Register](#). The entity types that have been identified among news entities are:

Australian Private Company: A private Australian company is not listed on the stock exchange and is not included in the description of Australian public company or cooperative.

Australian Public Company: A company is a non-individual client type. Company is defined to include a body corporate and any other unincorporated association or body of persons but does not include a partnership or a non-entity joint venture.

Co-operative: A Co-operative is an organisation with rules: limiting the number of shares held by one shareholder; prohibiting the quotation of its shares to the public, and; establishing it primarily for the

purpose of marketing, processing or storing commodities for disposal or distribution among its shareholders, or rendering other services to its shareholders.

Discretionary Investment Trust: The main source of income of the discretionary trust is from investment activities.

Discretionary Trading Trust: The main source of income of the discretionary trust is from trading activities.

Individual/Sole Trader: The Tax Office distinguishes between individuals and non-individuals. Individual is a term used to identify natural persons and non-individuals is a term used to identify entities other than an individual such as: trust; company; partnership; superannuation fund.

Other Incorporated Entity: Other incorporated entity includes an entity that has the same characteristics as a company but is not incorporated as a corporation's law company. This category includes: a branch of an overseas company not incorporated in Australia (often the name ends in corporation); incorporated associations which are incorporated under a State Act; incorporated charitable institutions.

Other Unincorporated Entity: An other unincorporated entity is a number of people grouped together by a common purpose with club-like characteristics, for example, a sporting club, social club or trade union. Some club-like characteristics are that: there are members of the association; the members will normally be free to join or leave the association; the association will normally continue in existence independently of any change to the composition of the association; as a matter of history, there will have been a moment in time when a number of persons combined to form the association; there is a contract (which can fall short of a legally enforceable contract) binding the members among themselves, and; there is a constitutional arrangement for meetings of members and for appointing officers. The meaning of any other unincorporated association or body of persons does not include a non-entity joint venture.

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]

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