

[Public
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Australian News Data Report

Monthly issue |
November 2022

Australian News Data Report: November 2022

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

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AUSTRALIAN NEWS DATA REPORT

Monthly issue | November 2022

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Overview

The **Australian News Data Report** is a monthly collection and analysis of information about news production in Australia.

It consists of 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 database of newsrooms and changes to news production. The ANI supplies the data for the ANMP visualisations and will also incorporate the ANSP data in due course.

In this issue, we present monthly results as at 30 November 2022 and content sampling project results from the City of Fremantle (Western Australia), Shire of Bourke (New South Wales) and the City of Burnie (Tasmania).

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](#).

[Australian News Mapping Project]

Monthly results: November 2022

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 the first three months, we observed a dramatic contraction in production as newspapers suspended their production, ended their print editions and, in some cases, companies closed entirely. This was followed by a dramatic bounce-back in the following quarter and continuing volatility in the years since.

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 on page 30.

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 a complete database, but we do believe that this is the most comprehensive record of its kind.

1.1 Monthly results: November

As of 30 November 2022, the Australian News Index lists 1,166 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	470	8	3	8	561
Digital	7	161	3	5	41	217
Radio	93	247	0	0	1	341
Television	0	45	0	0	2	47
Total	172	923	11	8	52	1166

Table 1: Active news outlets, 30 November 2022.

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 East Herald	SA	Masthead or station closure	25/11/2022
2	Central Coast Business Access	NSW	Added to the database	31/12/2018
3	Central West Leader Today	QLD	New masthead, station or website	03/12/2021
4	Hawkesbury Post	NSW	Masthead or station closure	13/11/2022
5	Parramatta Times	NSW	Added to the database	31/12/2018
6	The Point	NSW	New masthead, station or website	07/05/2021
7	Tamar Valley News	TAS	Added to the database	31/12/2018
8	The Tasmanian Browser	TAS	New masthead, station or website	23/07/2020
9	ticker NEWS	VIC	New masthead, station or website	19/08/2019
10	Western Sydney Business Access	NSW	Added to the database	31/12/2018

Table 2: Changed records, November 2022.

Ten changes were made in the database in November. A summary is provided in Table 2. Most of the changes made were to add outlets which had been missing, including four titles established since data collection began that we had not previously identified, as well as two closures.

Three titles – Central Coast Business Access,¹ Parramatta Times² and Western Sydney Business Access³ – are Sydney-based print and digital news outlets. These three outlets and a fourth which was already in the database (Blacktown News⁴) are owned by Community Broadcast Network Pty Ltd according to the Australian Business Register⁵ but trade as Access News Australia.⁶

Central West Leader Today⁷ is a sister publication to the Longreach Leader Today, owned by Central Queensland Media Pty Ltd and part of the broader Today Group of Newspapers. It was launched in late 2021⁸ and covers a broad part of remote Queensland, including the shires of Boulia, Barcaldine, Diamantina and Barcoo.

¹ Central Coast Business Access. <<https://www.coastba.com.au/>>

² Parramatta Times. <<https://parramattatimes.com.au/>>

³ Western Sydney Business Access. <<https://www.accessnews.com.au/>>

⁴ Blacktown News. <<https://www.greaterblacktownnews.com.au/>>

⁵ Australian Business Register. 2022. Community Broadcast Network Pty Limited.

<<https://www.abr.business.gov.au/ABN/View?abn=42624150250>>

⁶ <<https://www.linkedin.com/company/access-news-australia/>>

⁷ Central West Leader Today. <<https://leadertoday.com.au/>>

⁸ Central West Leader Today. 2021. December 3. <<https://leadertoday.com.au/all-digital-editions/central-west-leader-today-3rd-december-2021/>>

Tamar Valley News⁹ and The Tasmanian Browser¹⁰ are owned by Hyperlocal Media Pty Ltd. The former is a local publication covering the Tamar Valley region north of Launceston, while the former has a broader focus on the state. Though the News has been in operation since before our data collection began, the Browser was launched in 2020.

Finally among additions to the database, ticker NEWS¹¹ is a digital broadcast news outlet founded in 2019 by former Sky News journalist Ahron Young. It is based in Melbourne but focusses on national and international stories for its coverage.

Two outlets were listed as closed in November. Both of these closures occurred within the past month.

The Adelaide East Herald was founded by long-time publisher of the Adelaide Hills Herald Peere Straker in October 2020. Straker died in April 2022 and both titles were expected to close¹² but were acquired by South Australian company Taylor Group Media, publisher of the Murray Pioneer in Renmark and The Bunyip in Gawler. Both titles were returned within the month¹³ but the Adelaide East Herald was subsequently closed on 25 November 2022.¹⁴

The Hawkesbury Post launched in September 2020 to cover the Hawkesbury local government area on the outer north-west fringe of Sydney. It was suspended by founder Tony Bosworth in November 2022, who said in an email that despite spending two years building a reputation for independent journalism and original reporting of local government in particular, the title was not financially sustainable. Bosworth, who has previously worked at Australian Consolidated Press, Fairfax and News Corp, has now commenced as editor of the Barrier Truth in Broken Hill.

⁹ Tamar Valley News. <<https://tamarvalleynews.com.au/>>

¹⁰ Tasmanian Browser. <<https://tasmanianbrowser.com.au/>>

¹¹ ticker NEWS. <<https://tickernews.co/>>

¹² 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>>

¹³ Adelaide Hills Herald 2022. The Adelaide Hills Herald is back! Facebook. 6 May. <<https://www.facebook.com/AdelaideHillsHerald/posts/pfbid0VDFdB1boyQWtq3reELzqF2387LWPBSj4xRmPPH8UaZLGY6iWJbDxdHDxgqbZgfPQl>>

¹⁴ Adelaide East Herald 2022. It's a bittersweet time for Taylor Group Media as Friday marked the final edition of the Adelaide East Herald. Facebook. 28 November. <<https://www.facebook.com/AdelaideEastHerald/posts/pfbid0EMasQj6uJKS1JzqsJEAWp7Yd9YFStPMfzXRSw6LJVXiZ8s7Y5ZgDnUCUWRNSnktBl>>

[Australian News Sampling Project]

Case studies, November 2022:

Shire of Bourke, New South Wales

City of Burnie, Tasmania

City of Fremantle, Western Australia

2 Australian News Sampling Project

The results presented here are from a November survey of the Shire of Bourke, New South Wales, City of Burnie, Tasmania and City of Fremantle, Western 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 a minimum of 100 articles or four editions of a print newspaper. Where the minimum cannot be met, we review the entire month of content. Where resources permit, we expand the number of articles sampled.

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 is included in samples in this project, however, only the journalism that is published to ABC Local websites are assessed. This content may be different from that which is broadcast on ABC Local Radio or on television.

2.1 Bourke Shire Council, New South Wales

Bourke Shire Council is a remote local government area in the Orana region of northwest New South Wales. It borders Queensland to the north, the Shires of Brewarrina, Bogan and Cobar to the east and south, and unincorporated territory to the west. The seat of local government and namesake for the Shire is around 780km from Sydney.



Local government area

Seat	Bourke
Remoteness	Remote
Land area	4 159 837.2 ha

Population data (2021)

Residents	2 417
Density	0.1km ²
Median age	36.3

News outlets (Nov 2022)

Print	2
Digital	1
Radio	5
Television	3

2.1.1 Local news producers

Eleven news producers are present in Bourke Shire, though many of these operate remotely and may not produce local content. The main local paper is the Western Herald, published since 1887 and owned by local community radio station Outback Radio since 2018. The Shire also falls within the coverage areas of Australian Community Media's Daily Liberal paper, based in Dubbo, and The Western Plains App, a digital product launched in 2021 by Coonamble Times publisher Locolee.

The Shire is within the broadcast area of ABC Western Plains, also based in Dubbo, and is part of the Remote Central and Eastern Australia television license area.

Outlet	Format	Ownership	Scale	Total
2cuzFM (2CUZ)	Radio	Muda Aboriginal Corporation	Community	0
ABC Western Plains	Radio	Australian Broadcasting Corporation	Local	50
CAAMA Radio (8KIN)	Radio	Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association	Community	0
Daily Liberal	Print	Rural Press Pty Ltd	Local	121
Flow FM (8SAT)	Radio	W&L Phillips Pty Ltd	Local	0
Imparja (IMP)	Television	Imparja Television Pty Ltd	Local	0
Outback Radio (2WEB)	Radio	WREB Co-operative Limited	Community	0
Seven Central (QQQ)	Television	Southern Cross Austereo Pty Ltd	Local	0
Ten Central Digital Television (CDT)	Television	Southern Cross Austereo Pty Ltd	Local	0
The Western Herald	Print	WREB Co-operative Limited	Local	39
The Western Plains App	Digital	Locolee Pty Ltd	Local	96
Total				306

Table 3: News producers in the Shire of Bourke and the total number of articles assessed.

2.1.2 Sample

The digital output of the public broadcaster, Western Herald, Daily Liberal and The Western Plains App was assessed between 1 – 30 November 2022. For most titles this represented the total of their digital output across that period. For the Daily Liberal it was five editions: Tuesday 1 November, Saturday 5 November, Thursday 10 November, Wednesday 16 November, Monday 22 November.

The Western Herald sample was limited to stories published on the website as no digital editions of the newspaper were available, and a print subscription could only be taken as a six-month commitment. This sample may therefore be different from what is provided in the newspaper.

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

The sample period overlapped with significant flooding in and around Bourke¹⁵ which has unquestionably affected the sample by increasing the number of stories focussed on disaster services and potentially diverting coverage from other issues.

Overall, we found high levels of public interest journalism production at all outlets, focussed particularly on coverage of community, state government and preparation for and recovery from natural disasters. Local stories were the most common overall, but we found significant differences between outlets, with high levels of coverage of regional and state-wide issues alongside local ones. Coverage of Bourke was very low, however, except at the home town newspaper.

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				Subtotal	Excluded	Total
	PIJ		Other				
	n	%	n	%	n	n	n
ABC Western Plains	43	96	2	4	45	5	50
Daily Liberal	67	74	23	26	90	31	121
The Western Herald	35	97	1	3	36	3	39
The Western Plains App	82	98	2	2	84	12	96
Total	227	89	28	11	255	51	306

Table 4: Stories by whether they are public interest journalism, other journalism, or excluded from the sample.

Table 4 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 coverage at the ABC, Western Herald and Western Plains App and high levels at the Daily Liberal.

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.

¹⁵ Costin L. 2022. Floods to reach the back of Bourke as parts of NSW may stay submerged until 2023. InQLD. 18 November. <<https://inqld.com.au/news/2022/11/18/floods-to-reach-the-back-of-bourke-as-parts-of-nsw-turn-into-inland-sea/>>

Around a quarter of stories at the Daily Liberal were excluded from analysis. Most of these were non-news articles contained within travel and motoring lift outs.

Outlet	Public interest journalism											
	Government			Courts and crime			Community			Public services		
	All	U	% U	All	U	% U	All	U	% U	All	U	% U
ABC Western Plains	19	14	31	3	2	4	15	13	29	15	15	33
Daily Liberal	46	28	31	13	8	9	45	31	34	34	29	32
The Western Herald	16	12	33	0	0	0	22	14	39	13	12	33
The Western Plains App	47	35	42	7	6	7	46	36	43	30	27	32
Total	128	89	35	23	16	6	128	94	37	92	83	33

Table 5: Breakdown of public interest journalism.

Stories can be allocated to up to four subjects each. As such, Table 5 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.

All outlets showed a high interest and near even split between public interest journalism stories about government, public services and the community. Very few stories were published about courts and crime, including none at the Western Herald.

Community stories were the highest coded subject. Within this category the most common topics were small business, accidental injury and death, community events and individuals. A smaller number of stories were produced civil action and protest, local sport, community history, and two obituaries: one about Wilyakali elder Maureen O'Donnell published by the ABC, the other for former general manager of Brewarrina Shire Council Jeff Sowiak in the Western Herald.

In government stories the New South Wales government received by far the most attention (29 stories overall), with all outlets providing similar levels of coverage, followed by local government, also nearly evenly split (15 stories), and federal government (8 stories), which was weighted heavily toward the Daily Liberal (5 of 8).

Among government-related subjects, transport infrastructure received the most attention (15 stories), followed by industrial relations (7 stories) and water infrastructure (5).

The services category includes education, health and care, police, fire and other services.

The sample period corresponded with preparation for and experience of significant flooding in and around Bourke. As a consequence, we found 75 stories overall, or 30 per cent of the sample, had a natural disaster angle. Almost half of all stories at the ABC (22, 49 per cent) and more than a third at The Western Plains App (29, 35 per cent) were about disasters. Related to this finding, State Emergency Services were the subject of the most services coverage across all outlets (29 of 83), followed by health and police (14) care (4) and fire (3). These results were different across outlets: the Daily Liberal published more than half of all police and health-related stories, a greater proportion than their presence in the sample would otherwise suggest. The ABC published no stories about health over the entire month.

Education stories were common at the Daily Liberal and Western Plains App in particular. Stories were published about falling standards at regional schools, teacher burnout, shortages and strikes and a state government fuel voucher program for new apprentices. The ABC only published two education stories across the month, one of which was a story about a Bogan Shire primary school with seven students and 85 hectares of wheat.

Court and crime stories were uncommon at all outlets. The Daily Liberal’s coverage from Dubbo Local Court made up half of stories in this category (8 of 16).

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.

Outlet	Local		Regional		State		National	
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %
ABC Western Plains	37	82	5	11	14	31	2	4
Daily Liberal	42	47	18	20	14	16	31	34
The Western Herald	36	100	1	3	4	11	0	0
The Western Plains App	48	57	28	33	26	31	8	10
Total	163	64	52	20	58	23	41	16

Table 6: Scale of coverage of reported stories.

The scale of coverage varied widely between outlets, with every story at the Western Herald and fewer than half at the Daily Liberal coded as local. Both the Liberal and Western Plains App had significant coverage of issues across a broader region and the state, with high levels of national coverage at the former as well. International stories are rare in the samples, but we the Daily Liberal published 12 internationally-focused stories – mostly sport.

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 Western Plains	2	4	14	31	25	56
Daily Liberal	1	1	6	7	38	42
The Western Herald	24	67	18	50	1	3
The Western Plains App	11	13	42	50	12	14
Total	38	15	80	31	76	30

Table 7: Localism of coverage of reported stories.

The localism of each story is presented in Table 7. We found very low levels of coverage of Bourke Shire at both the ABC and Daily Liberal with only two and one stories at the titles respectively. Both stories at the public broadcaster were about disaster preparedness across multiple LGAs, rather than being limited to Bourke. The same was true for the only story from the Daily Liberal in the sample, which was of a new drug and alcoholic rehabilitation clinic for Indigenous people across the region.

The Western Plains App was more localised, with 13 per cent of stories located within the shire. Two thirds of stories at The Western Herald, the only Bourke-based title in the sample, were local.

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 Bourke Shire were set to the Shire Councils of Bogan, Brewarrina, Cobar, Coonamble, Gilgandra, Narromine, Walgett, Warren and Warrumbungle, as well as three neighbouring shires across the border in Queensland: Balonne, Bulloo and Paroo.

Here the Western Plains App and public broadcaster spent considerably more attention. Among nearby areas, Walgett Shire Council, and the town of Lightning Ridge in particular, received the most coverage, followed by Warrumbungle Shire Council, Bogan, Brewarrina and Cobar. One cross-border story was published: The Western Herald covered the community’s response to a store fire in Thargomindah, Bulloo Shire.

The ‘Other LGA’ category represents coverage from outside the sample area and region.

Dubbo was the largest subject of coverage at the Daily Liberal in particular, being part of 35 stories across the month. Surprisingly, the ABC had very little coverage of Dubbo – only three stories – despite the newsroom being based there. Its coverage across the month tended to track natural disasters, with stories from within its area (Mid-Western Regional Council) and outside it (Orange, Gunnedah, Forbes in particular).

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, whether it is internally syndicated – 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 it publishes, making it very easy to identify. It may therefore appear to use syndicated content at a higher rate relative to other outlets, but this will be impacted by the comparatively high quality of that data. 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 Western Plains	19	42	0	0	0	0	26	58
Daily Liberal	10	11	31	34	0	0	49	54
The Western Herald	0	0	0	0	0	0	36	100
The Western Plains App	4	5	0	0	0	0	80	95
Total	32	13	31	12	0	0	191	75

Table 8: Syndication of reported stories.

We found high levels of internal syndication at the ABC and low levels at the Daily Liberal and The Western Plains App.

ABC Western Plains syndicated from across the state. Most stories came from the Orange-based newsroom at ABC Central West (5 stories), followed by Newcastle (3), Illawarra, Rural and Broken Hill (2 each) and finally ABC Riverina, Mid North Coast, ABC New England, South East NSW and Landline, each with a single story.

Syndication at the Daily Liberal was harder to identify as it was not consistently flagged as such. We found a small amount of internal syndication from the Canberra Times (6 stories), Newcastle Herald, Wellington Times and Central Western Daily (Orange) with one story each.

The Western Plains App syndicated four stories from stablemate the Coonamble Times.

We did not identify any syndicated stories at the Western Herald, though we note that we do not have access to a news archive from Outback Radio and are therefore unable to verify whether stories were shared between the two.

The Daily Liberal was the only user of wire copy and used it heavily: around a third of stories analysed were from the Australian Associated Press. Where we have previously found heavy use of wire copy for sport stories, the paper used it more broadly. Sport was still the largest category, but federal politics, business and industrial relations, cybersecurity and cost of living pressures all featured.

2.2 City of Burnie, Tasmania

The City of Burnie is a local government area on the north west Tasmanian coast centred around its namesake city.



Local government area

Seat	Burnie
Remoteness	Outer regional
Land area	61 095.3 ha

Population data (2021)

Residents	20 441
Density	33.5 km ²
Median age	39.8

News outlets (Nov 2022)

Print	1
Digital	1
Radio	4
Television	3

2.2.1 Local news producers

Burnie’s major news producer is The Advocate, a daily newspaper founded in 1890 and published by Australian Community Media. In recent years News Corp has also launched a small digital presence, the North West Coast News, as an extension of the Mercury covering the broader region. ABC Northern Tasmania is based in Launceston. Australian Radio Network operates two stations in the town: 7BU 100.9FM and Sea FM 101.7 Burnie, and Coast FM 7DBS is a community radio station in nearby Wynyard.

All of Tasmania is covered by a single television license area, Tasmania TV1, since the market was aggregated in 1994. Each of the three commercial stations – Seven, Ten and WIN – are based in Hobart and produce a small amount of news coverage alongside rebroadcasts from Melbourne.

Outlet	Format	Ownership	Scale	Total
7BU 100.9FM Burnie (7BU)	Radio	Australian Radio Network Pty Ltd	Local	0
ABC Northern Tasmania	Radio	Australian Broadcasting Corporation	Local	107
The Advocate	Print	Rural Press Pty Ltd	Local	261
Coast FM (7DBS)	Radio	Coastal FM Inc	Community	0
The North West Coast News	Digital	News Corp Australia	Local	17
Sea FM 101.7 Burnie (7SEA)	Radio	Australian Radio Network Pty Ltd	Local	0
Seven Tasmania (TNT)	Television	Southern Cross Austereo Pty Ltd	Local	0
Ten Network Tasmania (TDT)	Television	Southern Cross Austereo Pty Ltd	Local	0
WIN Tasmania (TVT)	Television	WIN Corporation Pty Ltd	Local	0
Total				385

Table 9: News producers in City of Burnie and the total number of articles assessed.

2.2.2 Sample

The digital output of the public broadcaster, The Advocate and The North West Coast News was assessed between 1 – 30 November 2022. For most titles this represented the total of their digital output across that period. For The Advocate it was five editions: Tuesday 1 November, Saturday 5 November, Thursday 10 November, Wednesday 16 November, Monday 22 November.

The North West Coast News is a digital hyperlocal run by The Mercury, News Corp’s Hobart-based newspaper. This structure impacts the sample: only stories that were presented on the North West Coast News section of the Mercury’s website were included, and as a consequence the results reflect a heavily localised subset of the company’s overall output in the state. This is not representative of The Mercury’s broader reporting in Tasmania, and a Burnie-based reader of the News could be reasonably expected to also access state- and national content from other parts of the site.

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

Overall, we found high levels of public interest journalism coverage, with the focusses different across outlets. The North West Coast News had low output and almost exclusively published court stories, while the other outlets were more balanced in their interests. The News also had the highest rates of local and localised coverage, reflecting its editorial position, while The Advocate and the ABC provided a broader mix of local, state and national coverage both within Burnie and outside of it.

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				Subtotal	Excluded	Total
	PIJ		Other				
	n	%	n	%	n	n	n
ABC Northern Tasmania	71	80	18	20	89	18	107
The Advocate	167	75	55	25	222	39	261
The North West Coast News	15	100	0	0	15	2	17
Total	253	78	73	22	326	59	385

Table 10: Stories by whether they are public interest journalism, other journalism, or excluded from the sample.

Table 10 provides detail of how the total sample breaks down into public interest journalism, other journalism, and exclusions. We found high levels of public interest journalism at all outlets. The North West Coast News had particularly high public interest journalism output, but we note that this is a much smaller sample than the other two titles.

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. These excluded stories are removed from analysis.

Most of the stories excluded from analysis of The Advocate were non-news articles contained within travel and food lift outs, or were opinion pieces. At the ABC, a regular gardening segment was excluded for not being news.

Outlet	Public interest journalism											
	Government			Courts and crime			Community			Public services		
	All	U	% U	All	U	% U	All	U	% U	All	U	% U
ABC Northern Tasmania	38	30	34	35	15	17	26	23	25	27	23	26
The Advocate	125	85	39	27	18	8	96	79	36	39	35	16
The North West Coast News	0	0	0	30	11	73	4	3	20	0	0	0
Total	163	115	35	92	44	13	126	105	32	66	58	18

Table 11: Breakdown of public interest journalism.

Stories can be allocated to up to four subjects each. As such, Table 11 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.

More than a third of stories at both the public broadcaster and The Advocate related to government in some way, followed by stories about community, public services and courts and crime. The News Corp title had the opposite focus: most of its stories were about crime, with a small number of community stories and no coverage of either government or services.

We found that the ABC tended to focus on state government issues (18 stories), followed by federal government (5) with only a single story about a local government – an ongoing story about Hobart City Council’s rejection of a cable car project on kunanyi/Mt Wellington. By contrast, the Advocate had an equal number of stories about local and state government (9) and few about the federal government (2).

The Advocate covered a broad set of government-related issues. We found stories addressing industrial relations (10), foreign policy (8), planning (8), energy infrastructure (5), elections (5) and transport infrastructure (3). Much of this content, particularly outside of the local area, was syndicated. The ABC had relatively high coverage of transport (6) and industrial relations (4).

No stories about government were included in the North West Coast News section during November.

Across the entire sample, we found only one story about the Burnie City Council: a story in The Advocate about state government funding to the council to beautify the entrance to the city.

In community coverage we found both the ABC and The Advocate focussed most heavily on individuals (10 and 27 stories, respectively). Beyond that, coverage diverged: The Advocate’s highest focusses were on events in the community (18) and local sport (17), followed by public health (12). The ABC shifted to social disadvantage and individual health (3 each), small business and local sport (2 each).

The North West Coast News were found to publish on small business festival running in Burnie, a death in a quad bike accident and horse racing on King Island.

The services category is broad and includes education, health and care, police, fire and other services.

Health services stories were the biggest focus of the Advocate (11), followed by education (10) and police (6) and other services (5). Among health stories The Advocate published on the NDIS and mental health services, COVID-19 boosters, ambulances and a successful kidney transplant in Burnie. Crossing over with government coverage, we also found ongoing reporting on a wage dispute

between the Tasmanian government and education sector workers, as well as coverage of schoolies and falling test results.

The ABC had other services equal first with police and education (5), with health close behind (4). At least two health stories at the broadcaster were about Campbell Town, a small town in northern Tasmania which is about to lose its last doctor. Voluntary assisted dying and the need for more services for long COVID were the other two.

The other services category is most often used for coverage of disaster-related services, but is intended to capture anything that doesn't fit elsewhere. In November it was used broadly for stories about burnout among wildlife rescuers; a state government plan to split Tasmania's only youth jail into five new jails; family violence services and the 70th anniversary of a Devonport army barracks.

No stories about services were included in the North West Coast News section during November.

Crime was a major focus for the News Corp title, accounting for almost two thirds of stories in November. All of these were court reports; we found no coverage of a crime before it reached the court system. We also found some court reporting from the ABC and for The Advocate. Though it made up a much lower percentage of their overall output, we found that both titles published more court and crime stories overall than the North West Coast News. The Advocate in particular covered every court story that the News did; and did it with more regular updates.

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 the results table.

Outlet	Local		Regional		State		National	
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %
ABC Northern Tasmania	61	69	0	0	33	37	14	16
The Advocate	83	37	4	2	65	30	77	35
The North West Coast News	15	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	159	49	4	1	98	30	91	28

Table 12: Scale of coverage of reported stories.

We found a large split in results between different outlets. While the North West Coast News was – as expected – entirely focussed on local stories, both the ABC and Advocate split their attention between local issues, state issues and national issues to varying degrees. The balances here are also different: two thirds local at the public broadcaster, one third at the newspaper.

These results suggest that the outlets are not comparable in their editorial interests. While the North West Coast News is entirely focussed on stories in the region, The Advocate is operating as a full-service paper with coverage across the state, country and internationally. ABC Northern Tasmania sits in between the two, focussed on the local but bringing in broader coverage from across the network for its audience.

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 Northern Tasmania	12	14	12	14	42	47
The Advocate	30	14	50	23	3	1
The North West Coast News	4	27	8	53	4	27
Total	46	14	70	22	49	15

Table 13: Localism of coverage of reported stories.

The localism of each story is presented in Table 13.

We found very few articles published about Burnie over the month by the North West Coast News, though it was a high overall percentage of its low output. The ABC, too, published a low number of stories about Burnie: only one every 2.5 days. By contrast, across just five editions of a newspaper which publishes 24 editions per month, we found 30 stories in The Advocate specific to Burnie – a low percentage of their overall output, but high in absolute terms.

As well as this 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 the City of Burnie were set as councils from across north-west and west Tasmania: neighbouring Waratah-Wynyard and Central Coast, Circular Head, Devonport, Kentish, Latrobe, West Coast and King Island.

All of the sampled titles published at least as many, if not considerably more stories about nearby areas. For the ABC, Burnie was by far the single highest focus in the region (12 stories), with other coverage spread across West Coast, Kentish, West Coast, Central Coast and Devonport. The Advocate had a high focus on Devonport and Waratah-Wynyard, and less on Central Coast, Circular Head and West Coast. The North West Coast News was spread across Devonport, Waratah-Wynyard, Circular Head, Central Coast and King Island.

The ABC also had a big focus on other local government areas beyond the region around Burnie. Launceston is within ABC Northern Tasmania’s coverage area and was the subject of 13 stories; Hobart is outside of it and featured in the same amount.

2.2.5 Syndication

Content has been assessed for whether it is syndicated, whether it is internally syndicated – 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. It may therefore appear to use syndicated content at a higher rate relative to other outlets, but this will be impacted by the comparatively high quality of that data. 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 Northern Tasmania	15	17	0	0	0	0	74	83
The Advocate	21	10	79	35	2	1	120	54
The North West Coast News	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	100
Total	36	11	79	24	8	2	209	64

Table 14: Syndication of reported stories. Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

We found low levels of internal syndication at the ABC and The Advocate.

More than half of internally syndicated stories we found at ABC Northern Tasmania were from ABC Hobart: 8 of 15 instances. Other coverage came from ABC Rural (3), Hack on Triple J (2), Double J, ABC Perth and ABC Radio National (1 each)

Syndication at The Advocate was harder to identify as it was not consistently flagged as such. We found small amounts of internal syndication from the Canberra Times, The Examiner in Launceston, Border Mail and Newcastle Herald.

We did not find internal syndication at the North West Coast News, though we note that it effectively operates as a hyperlocal section of The Mercury, rather than as an outlet in its own right.

The Advocate used wire copy for about a third of its stories. In particular, its coverage of national and international news, as well as national sport, tended to be from the Australian Associated Press.

2.3 City of Fremantle, Western Australia

Fremantle is a port city around 19km south west of Perth at the mouth of the Swan River.



Local government area

Seat	Fremantle
Remoteness	Major Cities
Land area	183,176 ha

Population data (2021)

Residents	22,348
Density	12.2 km ²
Median age	42.8

News outlets (Nov 2022)

Print	3
Digital	3
Radio	6
Television	3

2.3.1 Local news producers

A large number of news producers serve both Fremantle specifically and the greater Perth metropolitan area. Dedicated print and digital news producers include independent locals the Fremantle Herald and Fremantle Shipping News and Seven West Media's community title PerthNow Fremantle; which rebranded from the Fremantle Gazette in June 2021.

Outlet	Format	Ownership	Scale	Total
882 6PR (6PR)	Radio	Nine Entertainment Co. Pty Ltd	Local	0
96.9 Triple M Perth (6MMM)	Radio	Southern Cross Austereo Pty Ltd	Local	0
96FM (6NOW)	Radio	Australian Radio Network Pty Ltd	Local	0
ABC Perth (6WF)	Radio	Australian Broadcasting Corporation	Local	207
Fremantle Herald	Print	Herald Publishing Company Pty Ltd	Local	32
Fremantle Shipping News	Digital	Southbeach Trust	Local	46
Mix 94.5 FM Perth (6MIX)	Radio	Southern Cross Austereo Pty Ltd	Local	0
Nine Perth (STW)	Television	Nine Entertainment Co. Pty Ltd	Local	0
Nova 93.7 (6PER)	Radio	Nova Entertainment	Local	0
PerthNow	Digital	Seven West Media Limited	Metropolitan	0
PerthNow Fremantle	Print	Seven West Media Limited	Local	69
Seven Perth (TVW)	Television	Seven West Media Limited	Local	0
Ten Network Perth (NEW)	Television	Ten Network Holdings Limited	Local	0
WA Today	Digital	Nine Entertainment Co. Pty Ltd	Metropolitan	111
The West Australian	Print	Seven West Media Limited	Metropolitan	307
Total				772

Table 15: News producers in City of Fremantle and the total number of articles assessed.

Seven also operates The West Australian, the major newspaper for the metropolitan area and the state as whole, and the digital PerthNow brand which acts as a single access point for the ten localised editions spread across the city, and the Coastal Times in Mandurah. Nine Entertainment publishes the digital-only WA Today, and the ABC's Perth newsroom is in East Perth.

The city has a heavy news radio presence, with Southern Cross Austereo, Australian Radio Network and Nine Entertainment all present, alongside the three television networks.

2.3.2 Sample

The digital output of the Fremantle Herald, Fremantle Shipping News, PerthNow Fremantle, The West Australian, WA Today and ABC Perth was assessed between 1 – 30 November 2022. For most titles this represented the total of their digital output across that period. For The West Australian it was five editions: Tuesday 1 November, Saturday 5 November, Thursday 10 November, Wednesday 16 November, Monday 22 November.

PerthNow Fremantle was chosen as the local edition of the broader PerthNow brand, which has been excluded from the sample. This will result in the sample being more localised than if it had included broader coverage from across the PerthNow brand.

Only the West Australian news section of the WA Today website was coded. The website republishes content broadly from across the Nine Entertainment mastheads, including the Sydney Morning Herald and The Age, and it was beyond our available resources to include everything. We expect that this has made the sample more local and state focussed, with less focus on national issues.

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

Overall, we found high levels of public interest journalism coverage at most outlets and a moderate level at The West Australian. State government was a heavy focus, with less attention to local and federal government; community individuals and police and health services. There was little court reporting at most outlets. Localism was high among the Fremantle-focussed outlets and low among those covering the greater metropolitan area or state. We found evidence of internal syndication particularly at the ABC and use of wire copy at The West Australian.

2.3.3 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				Subtotal	Excluded	Total
	PIJ		Other				
	n	%	n	%			
ABC Perth (6WF)	143	84	28	16	171	36	207
Fremantle Herald	22	96	1	4	23	9	32
Fremantle Shipping News	31	91	3	9	34	12	46
PerthNow Fremantle	41	91	4	9	45	24	69
WA Today	82	92	7	8	89	22	111
The West Australian	167	61	107	39	274	33	307
Total	486	76	150	24	636	136	772

Table 16: Stories by whether they are public interest journalism, other journalism, or excluded from the sample.

Table 16 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 at most outlets, and a moderate-high level at The West Australian. This finding reflects that the West Australian is the only title in this sample that is providing broad news: in absolute terms it published more public interest journalism stories than any other outlet, and more other stories than all other outlets combined, even though the sample size was limited to only five newspapers.

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.

Slightly less than a fifth of stories were excluded at ABC Perth. Many of these were explainer pieces, often on an element of law, culture or science, which didn't appear to have a news hook and/or reporting behind them. Explainers on differential pricing of car registration based on the vehicle being operated, the effectiveness of food labels and tips for maximising superannuation returns were examples of these stories.

Around 35 per cent of stories from PerthNow Fremantle were excluded from the results. Many of these were external promotional stories – advertorials, either declared or suspected, or internally-focused promotional stories such as awards for staff and coverage.

Outlet	Public interest journalism											
	Government			Courts and crime			Community			Public services		
	All	U	% U	All	U	% U	All	U	% U	All	U	% U
ABC Perth (6WF)	102	69	40	58	35	21	55	48	28	70	63	37
Fremantle Herald	32	17	74	0	0	0	17	13	57	3	3	13
Fremantle Shipping News	13	8	24	1	1	3	32	24	71	7	7	21
PerthNow Fremantle	25	13	29	11	8	18	39	27	60	11	10	22
WA Today	55	41	46	34	24	27	31	29	33	32	31	35
The West Australian	164	110	40	54	35	13	54	49	18	56	50	18
Total	391	258	41	158	103	16	228	190	30	179	164	26

Table 17: Breakdown of public interest journalism.

Stories can be allocated to up to four subjects each. As such, Table 17 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.

Government saw the highest coverage across the sample and was the largest category of coverage at the ABC, Fremantle Herald, WA Today and The West Australian. Community issues were second and were the highest for Fremantle Shipping News and PerthNow Fremantle, followed by public services. The lowest category of coverage, and in last place at every outlet, was courts and crime coverage.

The state government received by far the greatest coverage overall (88 stories), far greater than coverage of local (29) or federal (20) government. ABC Perth in particular had a heavy focus on state government issues, accounting for 51 of the 88 stories.

Two issues recurred across the month and contributed to high state coverage: a wage dispute between the nurses' union and state government, leading to a state-wide strike on 23 November; and ongoing coverage of the Banksia Hill Juvenile Detention Centre, including media reporting of

abuse of inmates. This issue had been reported on in the months leading up to November, but CCTV footage aired by the ABC in November brought the issue back into the news cycle: we counted 29 stories across the broadcaster, WA Today and The West Australian.

Every outlet covered at least one local government story, though the spread was not even: PerthNow Fremantle (9 stories), Fremantle Herald (8), ABC Perth (7), WA Today and The West Australian (2) and Fremantle Shipping News (1).

Of 29 local government stories, 12 were about the City of Fremantle: six at the Herald, four at PerthNow and one each at the ABC and Fremantle Shipping News. The Fremantle Herald was particularly focussed on planning decisions by council, which accounted for all but one of the stories. The last was about local government finances. Both the Herald and ABC covered a council plan to evict a sauna business on public land, while the Herald and PerthNow both covered Matilda Bay Brewery's failed attempt to get council approval to build residential towers on its existing property. A community campaign against a plan to replace a heritage-listed bridge over the Swan River in Fremantle was covered by the Shipping News.

Federal government coverage was split between the ABC (8) and The West Australian (12). Issues included the Voice to Parliament, the Prime Minister's meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping at the G20 summit and new industrial relations laws.

The economy (42) and industrial relations (41) were by far the biggest focusses of government-related coverage. Due to the G20 summit we also found focus on foreign policy (17), and transport (16) and energy (13) infrastructure.

Community stories were significant at all outlets. Small business was the largest focus in this subgroup (38), particularly at the two Seven West Media newspapers and the Fremantle Shipping News (10 each). Accidental injuries (37) and individuals in the community (34) were next, particularly at the ABC (16 and 7) and The West Australian (11 and 12).

We observed less local sport coverage than we expected: only 11 stories across all outlets for the month, and half of this at PerthNow Fremantle. No local sport was covered by the Fremantle Shipping News and though we found none at WA Today, it is likely that it would not be captured within the sample.

Some reporting about individuals was prompted by crime. In mid-October Indigenous teenager Cassius Turvey was assaulted in Perth; he died 10 days later. Ten stories about Turvey were in the sample, including coverage of his funeral, vigils held across the country in remembrance, and the early stages of a trial against a man accused of his murder.

Two other incidents prompted repeated coverage: an inquest into the 1988 disappearance of Perth woman Julie Cutler reported in November, and late in the month an Indigenous woman, Diane Miller, was killed when a concrete block was dropped on her at a shopping centre. Both of these incidents had separate coverage of both the crime and the individuals who had died, particularly at the ABC.

The services category is broad and includes education, health and care, police, fire and other emergency services. We found high coverage of police (53 stories) and health (49 stories), moderate coverage of education (15) and very low coverage of care (7) and fire (2) services.

The West Australian published for 23 of 53 police stories. These included regular updates to the road toll, coverage of new resources and the threat of industrial action by police, and Crimestoppers articles where police appeal for information from the public. 18 stories about health services were about industrial action by the nurses' union. There was also coverage of abortion law reform, and scrutiny of healthcare funding levels, ambulance ramping and the ongoing impact of COVID-19.

2.3.4 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.

Outlet	Local		Regional		State		National	
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %
ABC Perth (6WF)	94	55	6	4	73	43	29	17
Fremantle Herald	22	96	0	0	6	26	1	4
Fremantle Shipping News	28	82	0	0	7	21	5	15
PerthNow Fremantle	42	93	0	0	3	7	2	4
WA Today	51	57	7	8	41	46	0	0
The West Australian	65	24	0	0	68	25	113	41
Total	302	48	13	2	198	31	150	24

Table 18: Scale of coverage of reported stories.

The results reflect these outlets position in the market, or the sample taken from them.

After coding everything published across the month by Fremantle-focussed titles the Herald, Shipping News and PerthNow, we found that coverage was overwhelmingly local, with on small amounts of state and national story coverage.

WA Today's coverage was also primarily local and state-based, with no coverage of national issues; though this finding is explainable by the coverage sample obtained from this outlet. ABC Perth and The West Australian both provided coverage across the spectrum, with the former weighted toward local issues and the latter toward national issues.

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 Perth (6WF)	4	2	42	25	50	29
Fremantle Herald	17	74	6	26	0	0
Fremantle Shipping News	23	68	3	8	2	6
PerthNow Fremantle	18	40	28	62	0	0
WA Today	1	1	34	38	20	23
The West Australian	0	0	49	18	20	7
Total	63	10	162	25	92	15

Table 19: Localism of coverage of reported stories.

The localism of each story is presented in Table 19.

We found moderate to high levels of localism at the Herald and Shipping News, a moderate amount at PerthNow and almost no stories about Fremantle at the ABC or WA Today. In total there were 84 stories about the City of Fremantle within our sample, most of these

There were no local stories about Fremantle at The West Australian, though one story was published about a new player at the Dockers AFL team.

The only story about Fremantle at WA Today was about the death of a man in Hilton. Of the four stories published by the ABC, one was an interview with the editor of the Fremantle Herald about the importance of local news.

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 Fremantle were within Greater Perth: the towns of East Fremantle, Mosman Park, Cottesloe, Claremont and Cambridge and the cities of Melville, Cockburn, Nedlands, Canning, Perth, South Perth and Subiaco.

Nearby LGA coverage was overwhelmingly stories about the city centre: 120 articles overall were coded to the City of Perth; 19 per cent of the total sample and 60 per cent of Nearby LGAs. We also found small amounts of coverage of the cities of Cockburn (20 stories) and Melville (10).

2.3.5 Syndication

Content has been assessed for whether it is syndicated, whether it is internally syndicated – 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. It may therefore appear to use syndicated content at a higher rate relative to other outlets, but this will likely be impacted by the comparatively high quality of that data. 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 Perth (6WF)	26	15	0	0	0	0	145	85
Fremantle Herald	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	100
Fremantle Shipping News	0	0	0	0	3	9	31	91
PerthNow Fremantle	5	11	0	0	0	0	40	89
WA Today	2	2	2	2	0	0	85	95
The West Australian	4	2	56	20	19	7	183	67
Total	37	6	58	9	22	4	507	80

Table 20: Syndication of reported stories.

We found low levels of internal syndication at the ABC and PerthNow Fremantle, and very little at WA Today or The West Australian. The Fremantle Herald is part of a network of suburban Perth newspapers but we did not find evidence of syndication between them.

The ABC ran internal content from its teams at ABC South West WA and ABC Midwest and Wheatbelt (6 each), 7.30 and Four Corners (3 each), ABC Great Southern (2), AM, Investigations, ABC Kimberley, ABC Pilbara, Rural and WA Country Hour (1 story each).

Our October 2022 study of the Shire of Esperance found that The West Australian is a source of syndicated content for the Kalgoorlie Miner, particularly for stories about the state government, mining and business news, and the broader economy. These November results indicate that news content flows out to Seven's regional newspapers but may not come into the metropolitan daily: of four identified stories from internal sources, only two were from the regions – the Geraldton Guardian and Kimberley Echo – one from PerthNow, and the last from an internal business magazine.

PerthNow Fremantle republished stories from PerthNow Cockburn, one each from Melville and Perth, and ran a police story that was common across multiple titles and which we could not find the origin of.

WA Today syndicated twice from stablemate Nine News Perth, and twice from the Australian Associated Press.

The West Australian was the only major user of wire copy. This was predominantly the Australian Associated Press (39 stories), but we also found stories from Reuters (11 stories), Associated Press (9) News Corp's NCA Newswire (4) and the Press Association (2), and from non-wire sources CNBC (4 stories), The Economist (2) and Bloomberg (2). These stories tended to cover national politics and the economy, national sport and international relations or politics.

We also found three uses creative commons content from The Conversation at Fremantle Shipping News, each of them about the environment: one about greenwashing, another about a successful court case against a coal mine, the last conservation laws and bushfires.

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 this project, 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 this project 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 is 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 a 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 to 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 license 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 license 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 license 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, and 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 the past two years.

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 only this project data.

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, the project does 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. PIJI is a limited shelf-life initiative, due to cease operation in 2023 in line with achieving its intended impact.

Our evidence-based approach focuses on three key research themes into public interest journalism: assessment of diversity, community value and support, and investment and financial sustainability.

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[Public Interest Journalism Initiative]

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