

[Public  
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Initiative]

# Australian News Data Report

Quarterly issue |  
June 2023

### **Australian News Data Report: June 2023**

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

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

Quarterly issue | June 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.
- **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.

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

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

This issue presents monthly and quarterly results as at 30 June 2023 and content sampling in the local government areas of City of Albury in New South Wales and City of Wodonga, Shire of Towong and Shire of Indigo in Victoria.

### **New data: broadcast areas, call signs and licence sub services**

In June PIJI has added new broadcast news producer data into the Australian News Index, covering the broadcast subservices, call signs and broadcast areas of radio and television news.

## 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](mailto:research@piji.com.au).

# [ Australian News Mapping Project ]

Monthly results: June 2023

# 1 Australian News Mapping Project

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

The project was first launched in April 2020 to [track changes](#) in news production during COVID-19. 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 5: Data eligibility.

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: June 2023

As of 30 June 2023, the Australian News Index lists 1212 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
<b>Print</b>	64	456	8	5	9	<b>542</b>
<b>Digital</b>	6	166	3	6	41	<b>222</b>
<b>Radio</b>	0	394	0	0	1	<b>395</b>
<b>Television</b>	0	51	0	0	2	<b>53</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>1067</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>1212</b>

Table 1: Active news outlets, 30 June 2023.

### 1.1.1 Changes to news outlet records

21 changes were made to outlet records, all of which are backdated. All but two are new records for PIJI's database, but not new outlets in the market. This table does not include changes made to news entity records, which are reported separately in section 1.1.2.

#	Outlet		Description of change	Effective date
1	102.9 Hot Tomato	QLD	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
2	2CA AM 1053 Canberra	ACT	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
3	2RE FM 88.9	NSW	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
4	4WK	QLD	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
5	6iX Perth Forever	WA	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
6	6RTR	WA	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
7	7AD 98.9 FM Devonport	TAS	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
8	Business Insider Australia	N/A	● Outlet closed	03/03/2022
9	C91.3 FM	NSW	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
10	Cairns 4CA AM	QLD	○ Updated name	31/12/2018
11	GOLD 1242 Gippsland	VIC	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
12	HOT100 FM	NT	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
13	KROCK 95.5	VIC	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
14	Magic 105.9 FM	SA	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
15	Power FM Ballarat	VIC	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
16	Power FM Bega Bay	NSW	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
17	SEA FM 107.1 Devonport	TAS	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
18	Snow FM	NSW	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
19	Triple G 975FM	NSW	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
20	Triple M Cairns 99.5	QLD	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
21	ZINC 96.1 FM	QLD	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018

Table 2: Changed news outlet records, June 2023.

Most of the recorded changes in June are related to ongoing work to improve data related to radio news producers. PIJI has undertaken a complete review of the radio news producers listed within the Australian News Index, and those that have been excluded, using the Australian Communications and



Media Authority’s Register of Radiocommunications Licences and consultation with industry to guide assessments.

Separately, we have listed Business Insider Australia as closed, backdated to March 2022.<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1.2 Changes to news entity records

16 new entity records were added to the data in June. Each of these news entities operates a radio news outlet that has also been added during this past month (see section 1.1.1).

#	Outlet		Description of change	Effective date
1	8CCC Community Radio Inc	NT	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
2	Amalgamated Marketing Pty Limited	QLD	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
3	AMI Radio Pty Ltd	QLD	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
4	Bay FM Community Radio Inc	QLD	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
5	Campbelltown Radio Pty Limited	NSW	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
6	Creative Broadcasters Ltd	QLD	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
7	First Australians Media Enterprises Aboriginal Corporation	VIC	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
8	Fresh Broadcasters Inc	SA	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
9	Hope Media Ltd	NSW	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
10	Manning Valley Max The Heat FM Pty Ltd	NSW	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
11	Northern Tasmania Broadcasters Proprietary Limited	TAS	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
12	Positive Media Inc	VIC	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
13	Radio Perth Pty Ltd	WA	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
14	RTRFM 92.1 Ltd	WA	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
15	Sydney Educational Broadcasting Ltd	NSW	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
16	Triple R Broadcasters Ltd	VIC	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018

Table 3: Changed outlet records, June 2023.

<sup>1</sup> Samios Z. 2022. Business Insider Australia to close in global strategic shift. Sydney Morning Herald. 30 January. <<https://www.smh.com.au/business/companies/business-insider-australia-to-close-in-global-strategic-shift-20220128-p59rz3.html>>

## 1.2 New broadcast outlet fields and reclassification

Three new fields have been added to the [Australian News Index](#), each relevant to the broadcast news sector. This data has been drawn from the [Australian Communications and Media Authority's Register of Radiocommunications Licences](#).

### Broadcast licence area

Radio and television broadcast outlets now have their assigned broadcast licence areas displayed on the Index. Broadcast licence areas are a truer reflection of the geographic footprint of a service, though local government areas continue to be displayed against radio and television broadcast outlets as these are likely to be more familiar to audiences than broadcast licence areas, and they allow for greater data portability.

Due to the complex and overlapping nature of radio broadcast geographies, licence areas are not available on the [Local News Map](#).

### Callsign

The callsigns of radio and television outlets are now listed as a separate field rather than appearing in the 'Name' field: where previously an outlet in the data may have been called 'Triple M Adelaide 104.7 (5MMM)', it would now only be called 'Triple M Adelaide 104.7' with its callsign, '5MMM', in the new 'Callsign' field.

A callsign may remain in the Name field if it is the same as or part of the on-air ID: 4WK, for example, is a Toowoomba-based commercial radio station that uses its callsign as its brand.

### Broadcast licence sub service

A new field to list the broadcast licence sub service, from the following options:

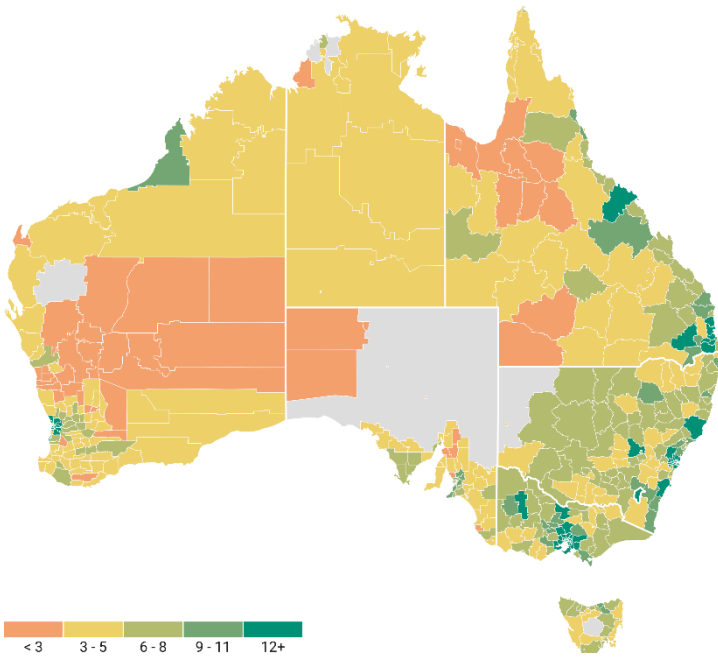
- Commercial radio
- Commercial television
- Community broadcasting
- National broadcasting
- Temporary community broadcasting

With the addition of licence sub services, classification of community radio sector has been reviewed. This sector was previously grouped with the community newspaper sector due to shared characteristics: being largely volunteer-run and operated by not-for-profits, and emphasising social news at the hyperlocal level.

Community radio is different to community newspapers, however, in that it is regulated by the ACMA and has a set of industry standards that it operates under. Community newspapers, on the other hand, tend to be amateur efforts, produced sporadically, and without any requirement to adhere to a professional code.

The addition of this field allows community and commercial radio to be identified within the data on their own terms, according to the licence they hold, rather than according to their scale. With this, PIJI has changed all community radio outlets from community scale to local scale to better reflect their production characteristics.

## 2 Quarterly results: news outlets



▲ Figure 1: Count of local news producers, excluding television, by local government area, 30 June 2023.

▼ Figure 2: Count of local news producers, excluding radio and television, by local government area, 30 June 2023.

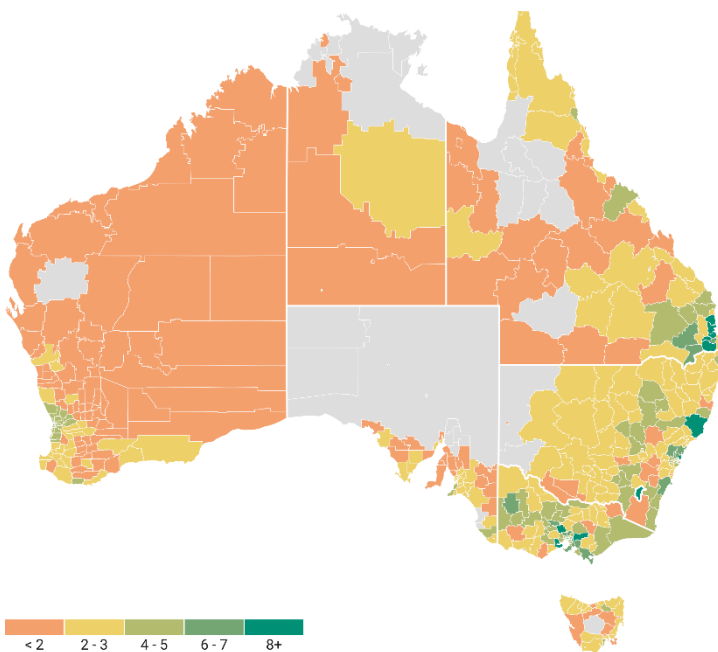


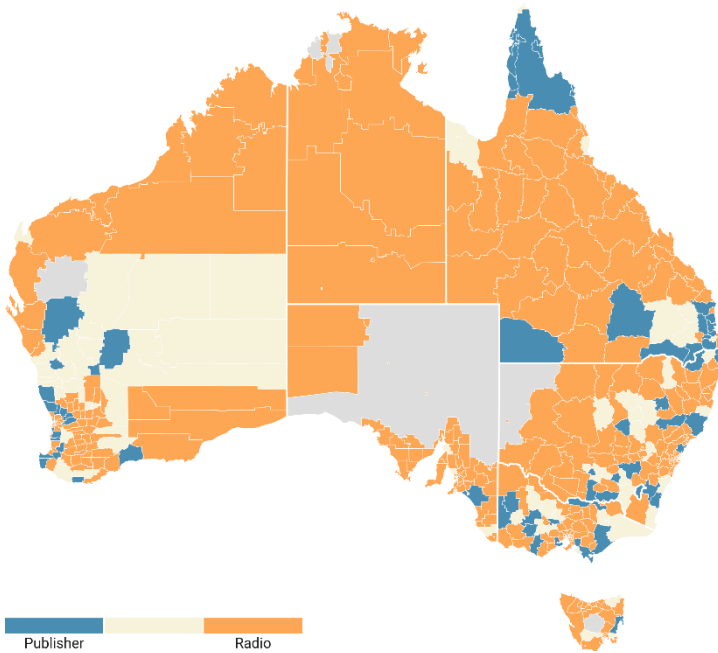
Figure 1 shows the distribution of metropolitan, local, and community-scale news producers by local government area around Australia. It includes publishers (print and digital) and radio broadcasters.

This baseline map of news availability around Australia suggests very high levels of news availability in the capital cities and the broader east coast, with higher density in Central Victoria and Sunraysia, South and Mid-North Coast New South Wales, South East Queensland. Other hubs of news availability include the Whitsundays Region (QLD), Cabonne (NSW), Shoalhaven (NSW) and Campaspe (VIC).

Regional and remote areas, particularly in Queensland, the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia have lower news density.

Figure 2 provides a similar map of the density of news producers by local government areas, but excludes radio so as to only reflect the publishing sector. This exclusion removes 33 per cent of all outlets from the count; and the key has been adjusted down accordingly. Even with this adjustment, news outlet density drops considerably, with large parts of regional Australia shifting into the lowest band. Some areas, particularly in regional Queensland and the Northern Territory, appear to have no print or digital news producers present in them at all.

Metropolitan areas lose some of their density relative to others in Figure 2. This is particularly true in middle-ring suburban local government areas in Melbourne and Sydney.



◀ *Figure 3: Local government areas according to whether they have more publisher outlets, radio outlets, or an equal number, 30 June 2023.*

Figure 3 offers an indication of whether each local government area has a greater number of publisher outlets (blue), radio outlets (orange) or a balance between them (white).

Of 546 local government areas and other regions identified as having at least one news producer, more than half (308, 57 per cent) have a greater number of radio outlets than publishers, almost a quarter more publisher outlets (121, 22 per cent)

and the remaining fifth (110, 20 per cent) a balance between the two. Mapping this indicates that radio dominates particularly in regional and remote areas, and is outnumbered by print in only a few places, and nowhere in the Northern Territory.

It is important to note that these maps only indicate the presence of local news outlets; not whether the local news outlet also provides coverage of that place. It is entirely possible – and would be consistent with other research findings beyond this project – that publisher news outlets are responsible for a greater amount of news production, even in places where they are in the minority.

Television is excluded from these maps as the entire country is contained within at least one broadcast licence area, and, functionally, has access to the three main commercial television networks or their affiliates and the public broadcasters through terrestrial or satellite transmission. Broadcast geographies can be huge – in some instances they include the regional areas of one or multiple states – and as a consequence, television news production tends to be more nationalised than other news distribution platforms. Including television within the density of this map therefore has the effect of uniformly lifting the count of every LGA into the highest bands available on the scale without providing any insight into the actual local news coverage conducted by the relevant station.

### 2.1.1 Local government areas without local news producers

An ongoing area of interest in PIJI’s data is which local government areas do not appear to have a local news producer and, by implication, which may not be the subject of any consistent news coverage. There is a distinction between these two questions: it is entirely possible that an area may not have a local news producer, but may be covered from outside; conversely, an outlet which appears to be a news producer may not actually be contributing to original news production.

It is very resource intensive to assess and maintain data on the content coverage of news producers. PIJI undertakes this work on a small scale, assessing a select number of local government areas each month through the Australian News Sampling Project.

As noted earlier, television is broadly available across the entire country, either through terrestrial or satellite transmission. As such, it is excluded here.

### Local government areas without local publisher or radio news outlets

PIJI has not identified any publisher or radio local news producers in the following five local government areas. This list is unchanged from the previous quarter:

- Belyuen Shire, NT
- Central Highlands Council, Tas
- Flinders Council, Tas
- Mornington Shire, QLD
- Upper Gascoyne, Shire of, WA

### Local government areas without local publisher news outlets

Isolating to only print and digital publishers, we have not identified any news outlets in 30 areas:

- Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara, SA
- Belyuen Shire, NT
- Carpentaria Shire, QLD
- Central Highlands Council, Tas
- Coomalie Shire, NT
- Croydon Shire, QLD
- East Arnhem Region
- Etheridge Shire, QLD
- Flinders Council, Tas
- Flinders Ranges Council, SA
- Flinders Shire, QLD
- Kingston, District Council of
- Maralinga Tjarutja, SA
- McKinlay Shire, QLD
- Mornington Shire, QLD
- Mount Remarkable, District Council of, SA
- Northern Areas Council, SA
- Orroroo Carrieton, District Council of, SA
- Palm Island Aboriginal Shire, QLD
- Peterborough, District Council of, SA
- Quilpie Shire, QLD
- Roxby Downs, Municipal Council of, SA
- Richmond Shire, QLD
- Robe, District Council of, SA
- Roper Gulf Region, NT
- Tiwi Islands, NT
- Upper Gascoyne, Shire of, WA
- West Arnhem Region, NT
- West Daly Region, NT
- Woorabinda Aboriginal Shire, QLD

Six local government areas have been added to this list since it was last reported in March 2023:

- Flinders Ranges Council, SA
- Kingston, District Council of, SA
- Mount Remarkable, District Council of, SA
- Northern Areas Council, SA
- Orroroo Carrieton, District Council of, SA
- Robe, District Council of, SA

These local government areas have been added following the confirmation that two former Australian Community Media papers, Flinders News and the Coastal Leader, have been closed.

The following two local government areas have been removed from the list since March 2023:

- Diamantina Region, QLD
- Goyder, Regional Council of, SA

Diamantina is part of the coverage area of the Central West Leader Today. The Regional Council of Goyder is part of a recently expanded coverage area of The Leader, a Barossa Valley-based title.

If you have further information about a local news outlet that is missing and that covers one of these areas, please [let us know](#).

## 2.1.2 National changes in news production

Data changes recorded against outlets in the database have two attributes: the change type, which describes the nature of the change, and the change category, which list the changes as either expansions or contractions in news production and availability.

Table 3 provides the cumulative total of each change type observed since 1 January 2019 at two benchmarks: the current quarter and same quarter last year. Table 4 groups those records according to their change category.

Change type	Q2/23	Q2/22	Variance
New masthead, station or website	131	121	+10
Newsroom opened	14	14	0
Increase in service	9	9	0
New print edition	15	15	0
Merger	24	18	+6
End of print edition	101	102	-1
Decrease in service	45	47	-2
Newsroom closure	6	6	0
Masthead or station closure <sup>2</sup>	141	92	+49
<b>Total number of records</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>+62</b>

Table 3: Count of records by change type since 1 January 2019, 30 June 2023 and 30 June 2022.

Change category	Q2/23	Q2/22	Variance
Expansions	169	159	+10
Contractions	317	265	+52
<b>Net change</b>	<b>(-148)</b>	<b>(-106)</b>	<b>(-42)</b>

Table 4: Net change by change category since 1 January 2019, 30 June 2023 and 30 June 2022.

PIJJ's data is maintained and updated each month. New data changes are frequently identified as having occurred in past quarters. As such, the data presented in the tables above is our best estimate of the news market at the reported moment in time, but will adjust with any new information.

<sup>2</sup> In the initial release of this report, the number of masthead or station closures observed at Q2/23 was incorrectly stated as '14'. That has been corrected to '141' in this re-release. Other figures in the table were not affected.

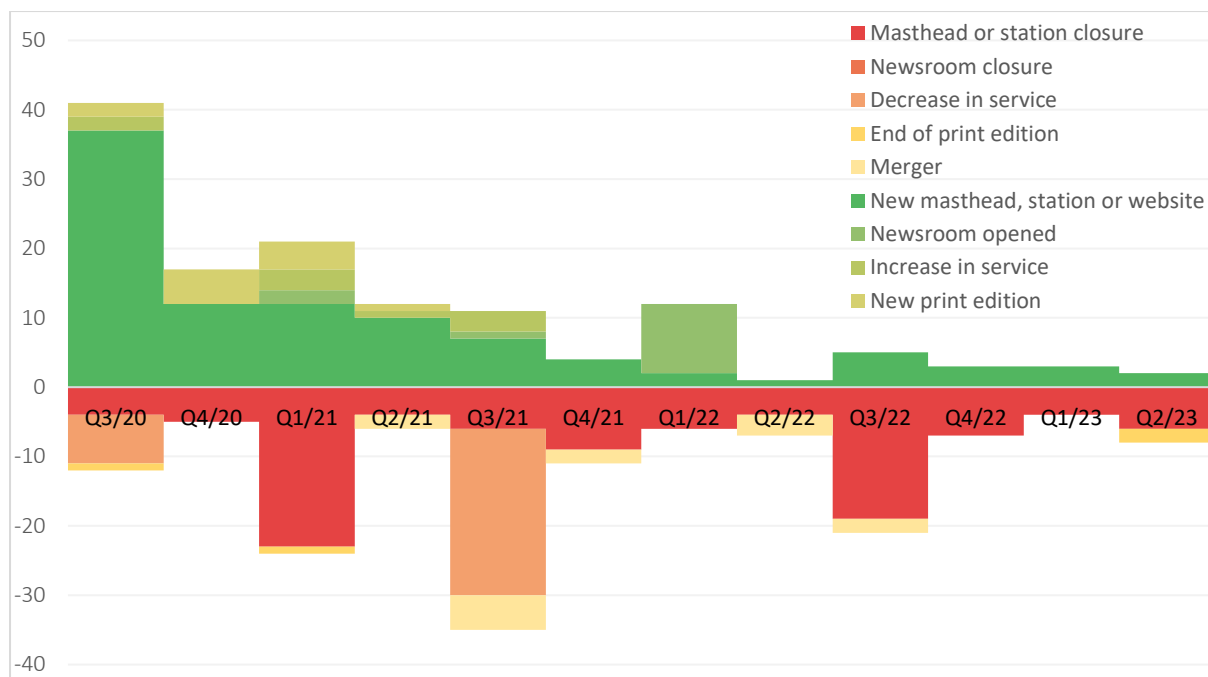


Figure 4: Change types by quarter, 1 July 2020 - 30 June 2023.

The first quarter of the impact of COVID-19 on the news industry, the April-June 2020 quarter, has shifted off Figure 4 as this report focusses on the previous three years of data. Q3/20, the July-September quarter, featured a strong bounce-back as many outlets, most notably at Australian Community Media but also across the broader sector, returned from temporary suspensions. This period also saw a flourishing of new outlets, as independent titles opened in markets where existing newspapers closed due to the pandemic.

Other major changes across the period include:

- In Q1/21 ACM retired nearly two dozen of its mastheads, closing their individual websites and social media presences.<sup>3</sup>
- Regional and metropolitan television reaffiliation came into effect in Q3/21, which led to significant changes in news provision in Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales.<sup>4</sup>
- Also in Q3/21, further Australian Community Media newspapers were recorded as ‘Decrease in service’ following reductions to their publishing schedules.<sup>5</sup>
- In Q1/22 the large growth in ‘Newsroom opened’ was a result of the ABC’s significant expansion in regional areas, adding 55 new jobs, 10 new bureaux and 9 expanded bureaux.<sup>6</sup>
- An increase in the cost of newsprint in July 2022, reportedly up to 80 per cent for some publishers, seemed to account for the large number of closures in Q3/22: of 16 closed mastheads in this period, at least 11 were explicitly or implicitly due to this price increase.

<sup>3</sup> Dickson G. 2021. Australian Newsroom Mapping Project Report: April 2021. Melbourne: Public Interest Journalism Initiative. <<https://piji.com.au/research-and-inquiries/our-research/anmp/anmp-data/>>. pp. 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> Dickson G. 2021. Australian Newsroom Mapping Project Report: July 2021. Melbourne: Public Interest Journalism Initiative. <<https://piji.com.au/research-and-inquiries/our-research/anmp/anmp-data/>>. p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Dickson G. 2021. Australian Newsroom Mapping Project Report: September 2021. Melbourne: Public Interest Journalism Initiative. <<https://piji.com.au/research-and-inquiries/our-research/anmp/anmp-data/>>. p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> ABC 2022. Australia benefits from major expansion of regional and rural coverage. ABC. 10 March. <<https://about.abc.net.au/press-releases/australia-benefits-from-major-expansion-of-regional-and-rural-coverage/>>

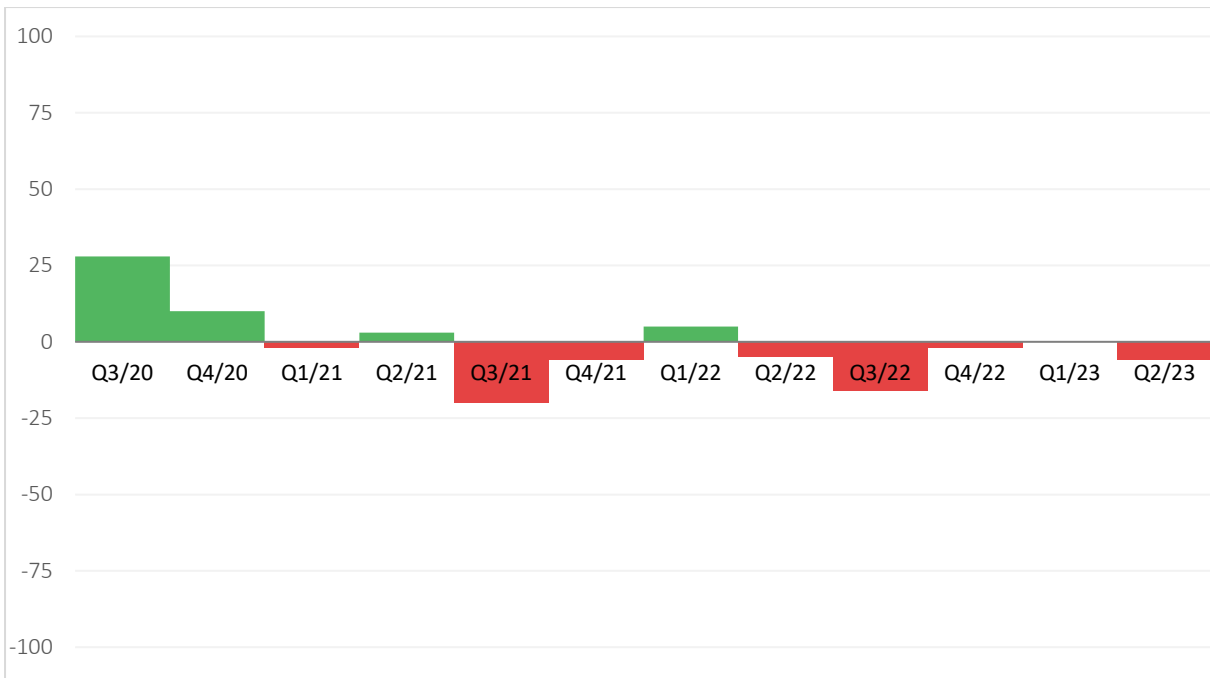
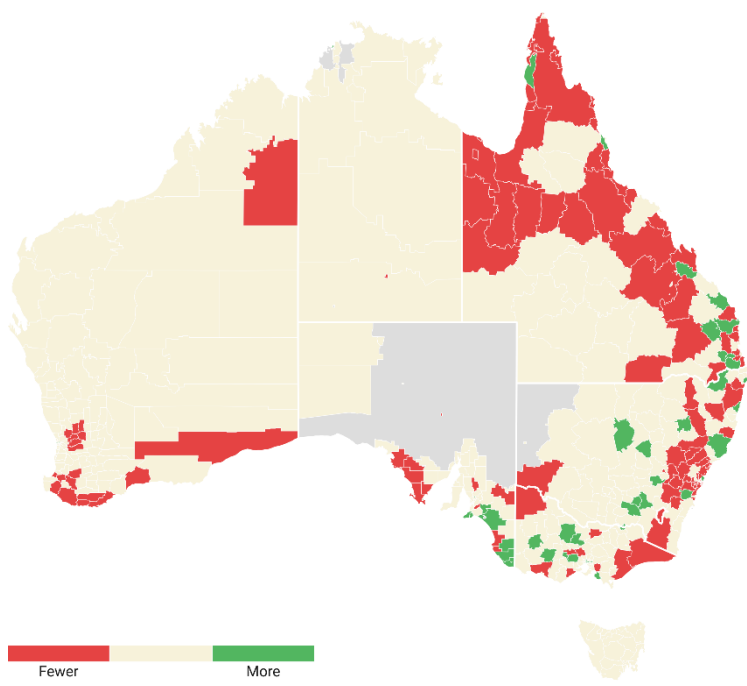


Figure 5: Net changes in news production by quarter, 1 July 2020 - 30 June 2023.

While the ‘End of print edition’ change is recorded as a contraction event, it could reasonably be argued that the transition from physical to online news distribution is a sign of positive change for an industry still in the process of digital transformation.

Acknowledging that ambiguity, Figure 5 removes both the ‘End of print edition’ and ‘New print edition’ change types so as to assess only those records that reflect changes in news production. This data subset suggests more stable news media market over the life of the project, with 145 expansions compared to 164 contractions since January 2019, a negative variance of -19. Isolating the data further to only the outlets that have opened or closed over the period shows a positive variance of +5, although such analysis does not include any impact assessment of productive capacity.





◀ *Figure 6: Net loss and gain of news outlets since 1 January 2019 by local government area, 30 June 2023*

According to PIJl’s data, of 546 local government areas with at least one news producer, almost a quarter (131, 24 per cent) have fewer outlets now than at the beginning of 2019. Only 85 (15 per cent) have more producers over the same period. The remainder (330, 61 per cent) have the same number, though the active producers may have changed over time. Figure 6 provides insight into the geographic spread of news outlets opening and closing across the country, where local

government areas coloured green have more news producers now than at 1 January 2019, those coloured in red have fewer, and those in white have the same amount.

A limitation of these findings is that this research does not take into account the productive capacity of news outlets that are gained and lost; only the fact of their opening or closing. A newspaper with deep community ties, strong editorial structures and half a dozen full-time journalists that closed would look identical in this data to a replacement website employing one volunteer. As close observers of the industry since 2019 PIJl believes that more news productive capacity has been lost than gained but this data does not speak to that.

### 2.1.3 Metropolitan, regional and remote areas

The following figures provide a quarterly breakdown of changes according to whether the affected outlet is located in metropolitan, regional or remote Australia. It uses the Australian Bureau of Statistics Remoteness Structure<sup>7</sup> to make this determination, which allocates local government areas to one of five categories<sup>8</sup> based on their relative access to services.

	Metro	Regional				Total
Remoteness area	Major Cities	Inner	Outer	Remote	Very Remote	
Designated LGAs, n	133	133	144	58	78	546
Designated LGAs, %	24.4	24.4	26.4	10.6	14.3	100
Population (2021), n	18,571,710	4,608,023	2,066,689	290,931	200,789	25,738,142
Population (2021), %	72	18	8	1	1	100

Table 5: Local government area designations and population of remoteness areas.

There is a near even allocation of LGAs between the first three categories, but the populations of each are significantly different: almost three quarters of Australians live in Major Cities, and almost a fifth in Inner Regional Areas. Though more than a quarter of all LGAs are Outer Regional, fewer than 10 per cent of Australians live in them.

The Major Cities category does not line up with the state and territory capitals. Hobart is classified as Inner Regional area and Darwin as Outer Regional, while regional cities like Geelong (VIC), and Wollongong (NSW) and regional areas Tweed (NSW) and the entire Australian Capital Territory are Major Cities.

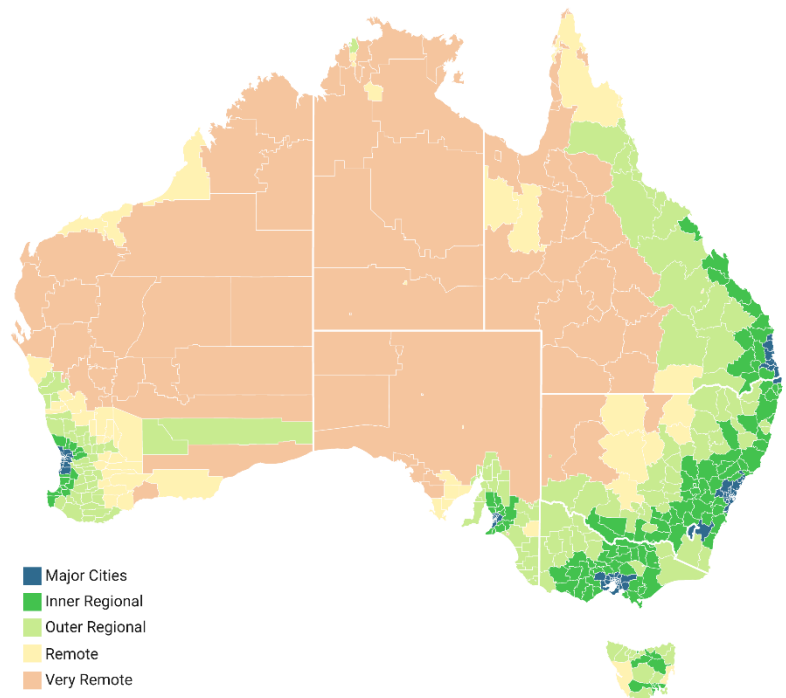


Figure 7: Distribution of remoteness areas by local government area.

<sup>7</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2016. Remoteness Structure. 1270.0.55.005. Australian Statistical Geography Standard: Volume 5. <<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/standards/australian-statistical-geography-standard-asgs-edition-3/jul2021-jun2026/remoteness-structure>>

<sup>8</sup> Major Cities, Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote, Very Remote.

### 2.1.3.1 Changes in metropolitan, regional and remote Australia

		Metro	Regional				Total	
Remoteness area		Cities	Inner	Outer	Remote	V. Remote	Subtotal	
Expansions		61	71	25	5	7	108	169
Contractions		130	109	60	12	6	187	317
<b>Total change</b>		<b>191</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>486</b>
<b>Net change</b>		<b>(-69)</b>	<b>(-38)</b>	<b>(-35)</b>	<b>(-7)</b>	<b>+1</b>	<b>(-79)</b>	<b>(-148)</b>

Table 7: Net change by remoteness and region since 1 January 2019, 30 June 2023.

Table 7 shows that regional and remote Australia has experienced the greatest change since 1 January 2019. 61 per cent of changes recorded have been in regional and remote Australia, and 39 per cent in Major Cities – a ratio very disproportionate to their relative populations, where 72 per cent of Australians live in metropolitan areas and 28 per cent outside of them. Of these overall changes, 59 per cent of all contractions and 64 per cent of expansions occurred in regional Australia.

Most outlets that have either closed (66 per cent) or decreased their service (91 per cent) have been in regional areas (Table 8, Figure 7). On the other hand, two thirds of the new outlets that have opened anywhere in Australia in regional Australia (85, 65 per cent); though this is outweighed by the number of closures (94).

The nature of changes experienced in metropolitan and regional areas are also different. 57 per cent (69) of contractions in Major Cities are of the end of print edition type as local suburban newspapers, particularly those owned by News Corp, have shifted to digital-only delivery. Another third is closed titles (33 per cent). In regional areas, more substantial changes to news provision occur as outlets close (46 per cent of regional contractions) or decrease their level of service by cutting frequencies or output (23 per cent). Cuts to print editions are 18 per cent of changes in the regions.

		Metro	Regional				Total
Remoteness area	Cities	Inner	Outer	Remote	V Remote	Subtotal	
New masthead, station or website	46	57	20	5	3	85	129
Newsroom opened	2	6	4	0	2	12	14
Increase in service	1	5	1	0	2	8	9
New print edition	12	3	0	0	0	3	15
Merger	7	6	9	1	1	17	24
End of print edition	70	19	8	2	2	30	101
Decrease in service	4	24	16	1	0	41	45
Newsroom closure	2	4	0	0	0	4	6
Masthead or station closure	47	56	27	8	3	94	140
<b>Total number of records</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>486</b>

Table 8: Count of records by change types and remoteness since 1 January 2019, 30 June 2023.



Figure 7: Change types by remoteness and region since 1 January 2019, 30 June 2023.

Figure 8 isolates the data to changes in news production over the period (that is, all change categories except the ‘End of print edition’, ‘New print edition’ and ‘Merger’ types). It suggests that despite the opening of new outlets in regional areas, the impact of other market contractions – outlet and newsroom closures and decreases in service–negates that growth overall. On this measurement, metropolitan areas have a -6 variance in outlets and service, while regional areas end the current quarter with a -37 variance since 1 January 2019.

As previously discussed, PIJ does not collect detailed information on the ongoing productive capacity of news outlets, including staffing levels, which may further affect these findings.

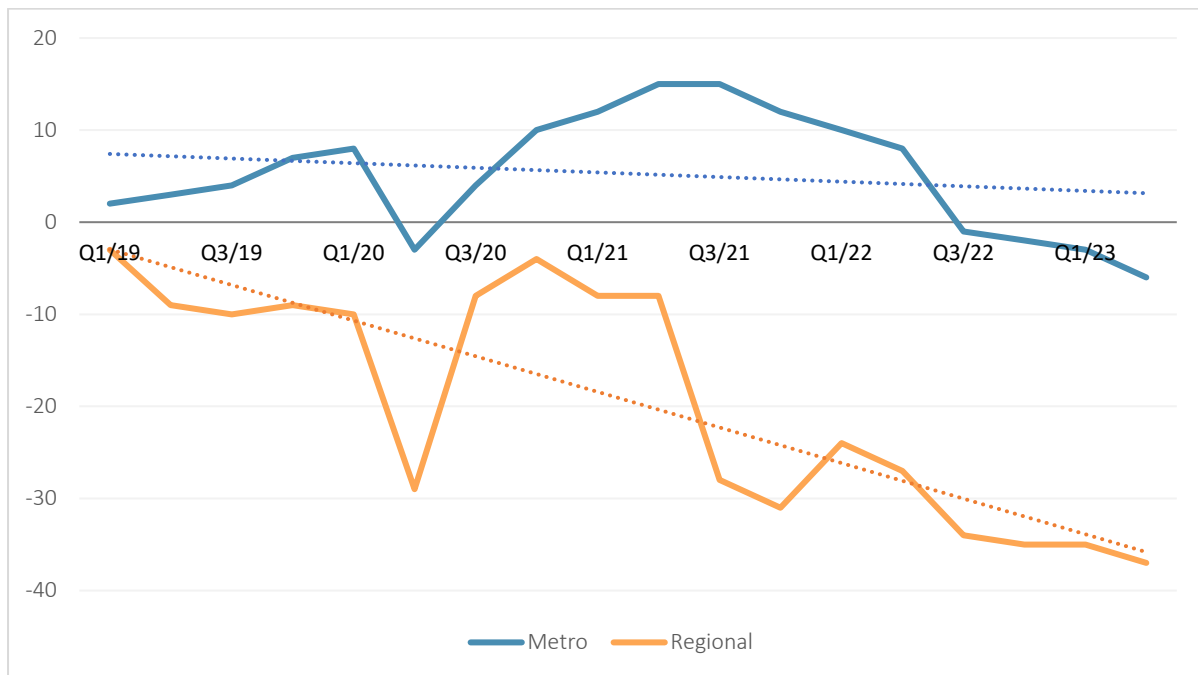


Figure 8: Net change in news production by region since 1 January 2019, 30 June 2023.

## 2.2 Quarterly results: States and territories

The following tables show outlets by state or territory at the end of the June 2023 quarter and a breakdown of changes observed, both of the change types observed and of the overall change categories and net change, since 1 January 2019.

Scale	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Total
Community	0	3	0	4	1	3	43	16	70
Local	16	365	23	203	80	46	220	114	1.067
Metropolitan	0	2	0	2	1	0	3	3	11
State/territory	0	2	0	3	1	3	2	0	11
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>1.159</b>
National									53
<b>Total</b>									<b>1.212</b>

Table 9: Count of outlets by coverage scale and state/territory, 30 June 2023.

Change category	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Total
Expansions	1	54	2	44	14	5	43	6	169
Contractions	1	121	2	97	21	0	61	14	317
<b>Total change</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>486</b>
<b>Net change</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(-67)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(-53)</b>	<b>(-7)</b>	<b>+5</b>	<b>(-18)</b>	<b>(-8)</b>	<b>(-148)</b>

Table 10: Net change by change category and state/territory since 1 January 2019, 30 June 2023.

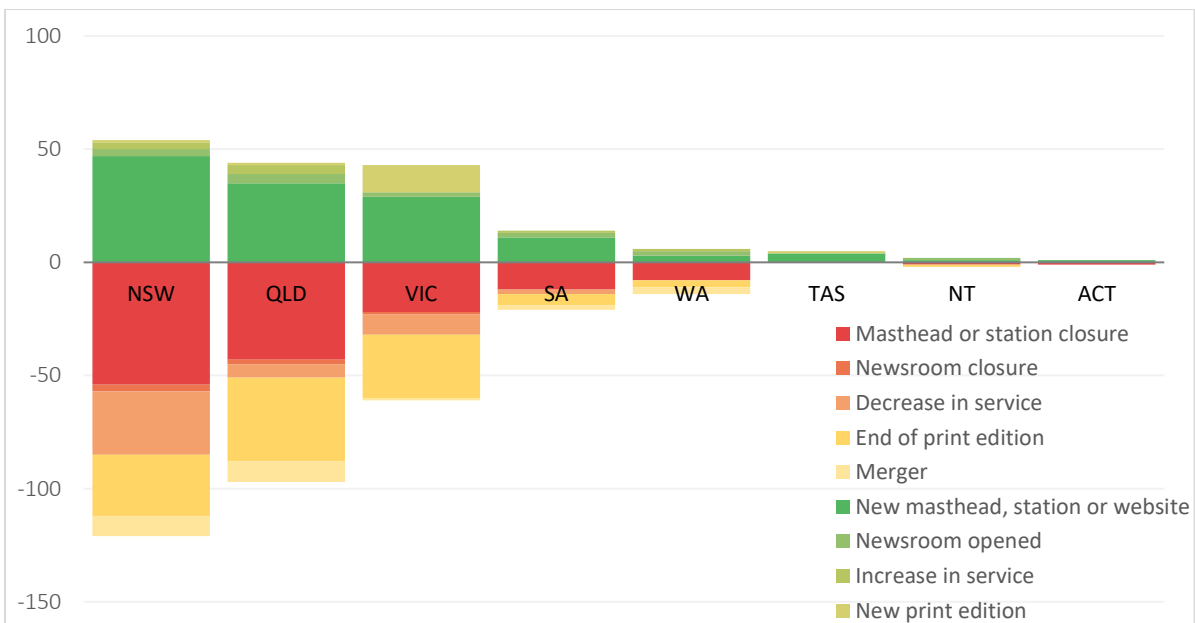


Figure 9: Change types by state or territory since 1 January 2019, 30 June 2023.

### 2.2.1 Australian Capital Territory

	Community	Local	Metro	Territory	Total
Print	0	3	0	0	3
Digital	0	4	0	0	4
Radio	0	8	0	0	8
Television	0	1	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	0	16	0	0	16

◀ Table 12: Count of local news producers in the Australian Capital Territory, 30 June 2023.

▼ Figure 10: Count of local news producers in the Australian Capital Territory, excluding television, 30 June 2023.

News producers in the capital range from the large media companies (Canberra Star, News Corp; Canberra Times, Australian Community Media) to small-medium news businesses focussed on the capital region like RiotACT. Independents include the Canberra City News and the Canberra Weekly. The Queanbeyan Age sits outside of the ACT in New South Wales but provide some coverage of the territory.

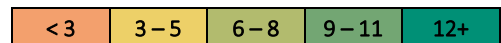
Few changes in news production have been observed in the ACT since 2019: they include News Corp’s launch of the Canberra Star in June 2019 and Australian Community Media’s decision to merge the Canberra Chronicle into the Queanbeyan Age in early 2020.

Outside the Territory but affecting it, in July 2022 the District Bulletin was suspended. The Bulletin was a digital news publication based in Bungendore, NSW, but which provided broadcaster coverage of the ACT, Capital Region and Monaro.

The ACT also has a dense radio environment. Southern Cross Austereo operates hit104.7 (2ROC) and Australian Radio Network operates Mixx 106.3 (1CBB). Capital Radio Network is a smaller radio company based in the capital and operating a local station (2CC Talking Canberra (2CC)), and others within the broader Capital and Monaro regions. ABC Canberra (2CN) is the public broadcaster’s local radio newsroom.

The territory does not have its own commercial television licence area and sits entirely within Southern New South Wales TV1. It is covered by 10 Southern NSW & ACT (CTC), 7 News Southern NSW and ACT (CBN) and Nine Southern NSW & ACT (WIN).

Assessing coverage of the ACT is complicated by the presence of the federal government. Most news outlets across the country will contain at least occasional coverage of federal government activities, however, for the purpose of this research PIJL only includes news producers covering other issues of relevance for residents of the capital. This may include the legislative assembly, local crime and court reporting, planning and development or community issues.



### 2.2.2 New South Wales

	Community	Local	Metro	State	Total
Print	3	162	2	1	168
Digital	0	67	0	1	68
Radio	0	124	0	0	124
Television	0	12	0	0	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>372</b>

◀ Table 13: News producers in New South Wales, 30 June 2023.

▼ Figure 11: Count of local news producers in New South Wales, excluding television, by local government area, 30 June 2023.

News production in New South Wales is heavily centred in coastal areas, particularly from Bega Valley on the Victorian border north through the Illawarra, Sydney and Central Coast to Port Macquarie-Hastings and the Hunter Valley. Smaller hubs of production exist particularly in Young and Lismore and around Dubbo. Cabonne Shire in the Central West is listed with a high density of outlets due to its proximity to Orange, Forbes and Parkes, which border and overlap in the Shire.

While the number of outlets in these areas has grown since 2019, it has decreased in the Murray, Riverina and Monaro in the south, the Mid-Coast and the Northern Rivers areas, and in greater Sydney.

Changes in New South Wales have been heavily impacted by Australian Community Media’s consolidation of its presence in the state. Since 2020, PIJ has recorded the closure of at least 22 ACM newspapers in regional New South Wales, with a further 25 reducing their service in some way: either by reduced publication frequency, or, in some cases, largely existing as digital shells that rerun network content produced at other papers without any original local production. Within suburban Sydney, ACM has also closed seven titles.

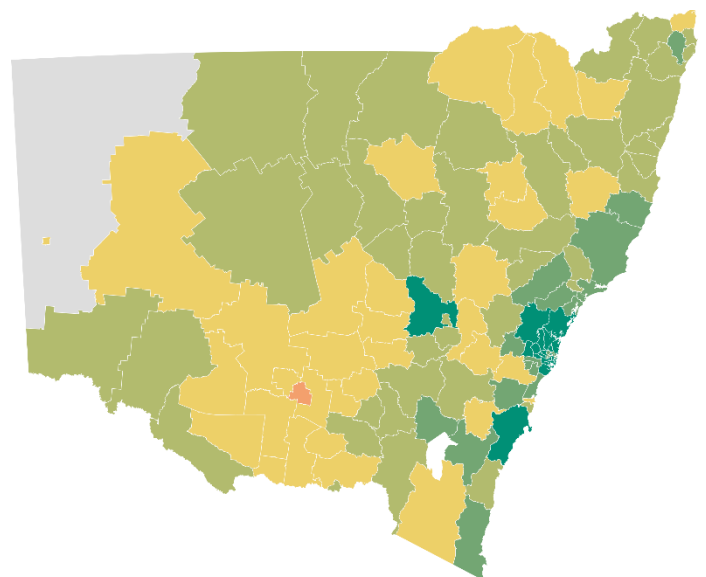
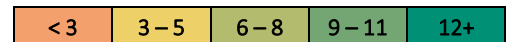
News Corp also closed papers in the north of the state in early 2020.

Both companies have also opened outlets in regional New South Wales. ACM opened two papers in the Northern Rivers area, one of which has since closed, while News Corp has launched digital hyperlocal verticals in Lismore, Bowral, Wagga Wagga, and Wollongong, among other places.

There has also been growth among independent news producers, particularly in the Hilltops Council and other regions following larger company closures and mergers.

Most parts of the state have a heavy density of radio stations, including local newsrooms for major nationwide brands Triple M, hit and Mixx FM as well as local and community radio.

The state is covered by four television licence areas: Sydney TV1, Northern New South Wales TV1, Southern New South Wales TV1 and Remote Central and Eastern Australia TV1/TV2.





### 2.2.3 Northern Territory

	Community	Local	Metro	Territory	Total
Print	0	4	0	0	4
Digital	0	1	0	0	1
Radio	0	13	0	0	13
Television	0	5	0	0	5
Total	0	23	0	0	23

◀ Table 14: News producers in the Northern Territory, 30 June 2023.

▼ Figure 12: Count of local news producers in the Northern Territory, excluding television, by local government area, 30 June 2023.

There are few digital/print news producers in the Northern Territory. News is produced out of Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek by News Corp, Australian Community Media and independents, the Tennant & District Times and NT Independent.

Remote parts of the territory are reached by two main radio sources. The ABC’s Alice Springs and Darwin bureaux are retransmitted in Jabiru, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Mataranka, Borroloola and others. FlowFM (8SAT) is a commercial radio station which broadcasts into remote areas across the country, including Jabiru and Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory.

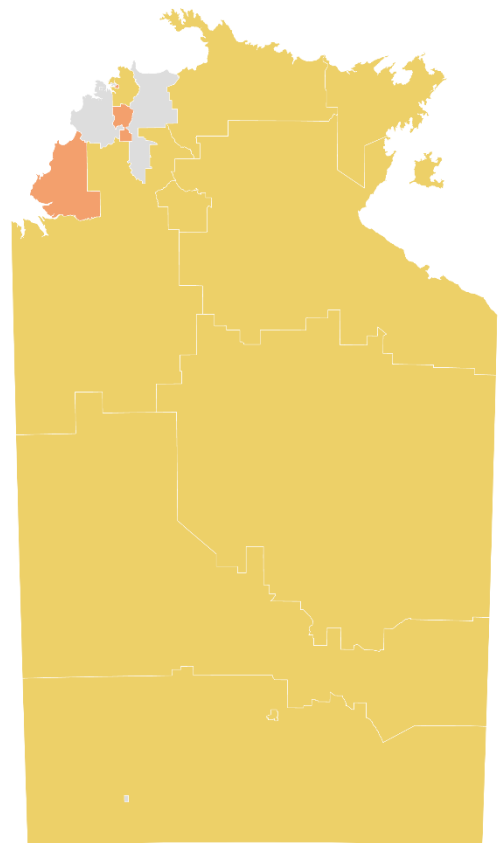
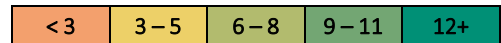
Two publisher outlets, both based in Alice Springs, have closed. Beginning in 2020 News Corp merged the Centralian Advocate into its territory-wide paper the NT News, first by suspending its print edition, then by redirecting traffic to the News website, and finally by removing any Advocate branding from coverage of Alice Springs. The NT News does still cover Alice, but the local brand has been closed.

Separately, independent news website the Alice Springs News closed in November 2021 due to a declining financial position.

One digital news outlet has opened in the Territory since January 2019: the NT Independent is a Darwin-based news website which covers politics and business.

The geographically large local government areas give the impression that most of the territory receives broad coverage. This is not the case: coverage is overwhelmingly concentrated in those few population centres named above, with very little in the much smaller and more remote communities.

Due to a technical limitation this map does not display the Tiwi Islands. PIJI has no record of print publications on the Islands, but they do fall within ABC Darwin’s broadcast area.



## 2.2.4 Queensland

	Community	Local	Metro	State	Total
Print	3	70	1	2	76
Digital	1	48	1	1	51
Radio	0	79	0	0	79
Television	0	6	0	0	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>212</b>

◀ Table 15: News producers in Queensland, 30 June 2023.

▼ Figure 13: Count of local news producers in Queensland, excluding television, by local government area, 30 June 2023.

There are many digital/print news producers in Queensland, spread across the state but with a particular concentration in the south-east and Whitsunday Region, with smaller news production hubs around Cairns, Hervey Bay and Dalby.

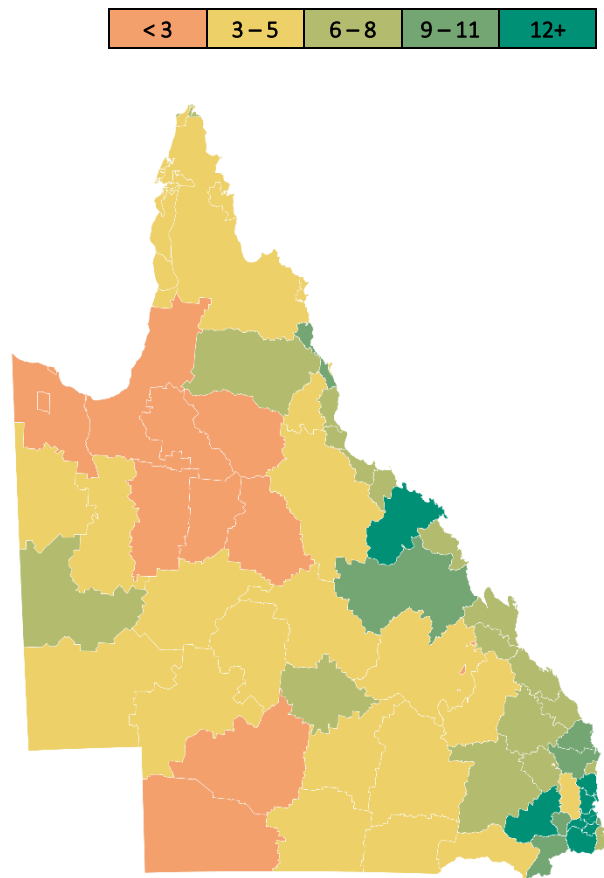
Queensland has experienced significant changes since 2019. News Corp closed 15 papers in the state in May 2020 and merged another four into larger regional papers. 24 of their papers shifted to digital-only publishing in the same year.

Independent outlets in Queensland have seen mixed success. In many regions where News Corp retreated, multiple independent papers simultaneously opened to fill the void. This was particularly true in places like Dalby, Chinchilla, Cairns and Burnett. Over time, many of these start-ups have closed, leaving only one remaining in many markets.

Queensland has also been the site of sustained growth by the Today brand of newspapers. Prior to COVID-19 it was a single digital-only news outlet in Noosa, and in the period since has launched 11 titles across different regions and taken over the Longreach Leader.

Three television licence areas cover the state: Brisbane TV1 in the capital and surrounds, Regional Queensland TV1 runs along the coast from Cairns to Sunshine Coast and inland to capture Toowoomba, Warwick and Emerald. Remote Central and Eastern Australia TV1/TV2 covers the remainder of the state, including Far North Queensland and the interior.

Due to a technical limitation this map does not display the Wellesley or Torres Strait Islands. Torres Shire and Torres Strait Island Regional Council are covered by the Cape York Weekly but we have no record of a news outlet covering Mornington Shire since the North West Weekly closed. Indigenous Australian publications The Koori Mail and Torres News also cover Far North Queensland, and the National Indigenous Radio Service (4ACR) transmits in the Torres Strait.



## 2.2.5 South Australia

	Community	Local	Metro	State	Total
Print	1	25	1	0	27
Digital	0	14	0	1	15
Radio	0	32	0	0	32
Television	0	9	0	0	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>83</b>

◀ Table 16: News producers in South Australia, 30 June 2023.

▼ Figure 14: Count of local news producers in South Australia, excluding television, by local government area, 30 June 2023.

News production in South Australia is centred around Adelaide, the Fleurieu Peninsula, Murray Valley and Mount Gambier. News production in the south-east part of the state up to the capital appears to have improved since 2019, though with some fluctuations across that period.

The south-east of the state was hit hard by news closures in early COVID. Australian Community Media temporarily closed the Naracoorte Herald, Murray Valley Standard, Flinders News and others; while long-standing independents were forced to either merge multiple papers together (such as the River News and Loxton News into the Murray Pioneer) or close completely (The Border Watch, South-Eastern Times and Penola Pennant).

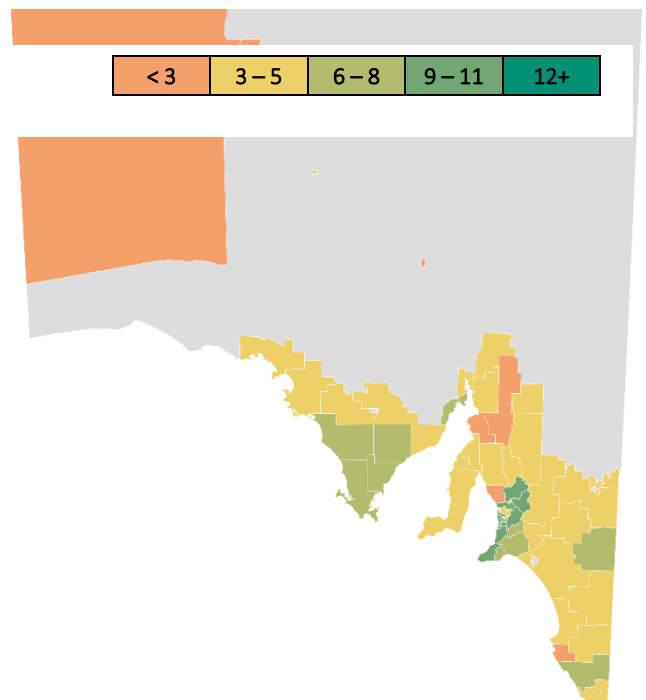
The Today News Group has emerged as a major player in the state in the June 2023 quarter. It revived the Border Watch, South-Eastern Times and Penola Pennant in 2020, and subsequently purchased 11 titles from Australian Community Media in April 2023. It also purchased four titles from Papers and Publications in the same month.

New independent papers emerged in Naracoorte, Murray Bridge and Mount Gambier to fill temporary gaps and have remained in service even as the previously closed papers have been slowly revived.

News Corp has expanded in the state, adding digital hyperlocal titles in the Barossa and Clare Valleys and Upper Spencer Gulf.

Along the Eyre Peninsula, however, there has been a reduction in the number of local news outlets. This is largely due to the retreat of ACM from the region: both the West Coast Sentinel and Eyre Peninsula Tribune were closed in 2020, leaving the Port Lincoln Times and new independent the Eyre Peninsula Advocate to cover the area. Both of these titles are now operated by SA Today.

Due to a technical limitation this map does not display Kangaroo Island, which is covered by SA Today's The Islander and remote radio service Flow FM (8SAT).



## 2.2.6 Tasmania

	Community	Local	Metro	State	Total
Print	3	22	0	1	26
Digital	0	4	0	2	6
Radio	0	17	0	0	17
Television	0	3	0	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>52</b>

◀ Table 17: News producers in Tasmania, 30 June 2023.

▼ Figure 15: Count of local news producers in Tasmania, excluding television, by local government area, 30 June 2023.

Tasmania has a higher proportion of independent news producers to large media companies compared to other states and territories, with News Corp and Australian Community Media present in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie, and the island otherwise covered by small-medium companies.

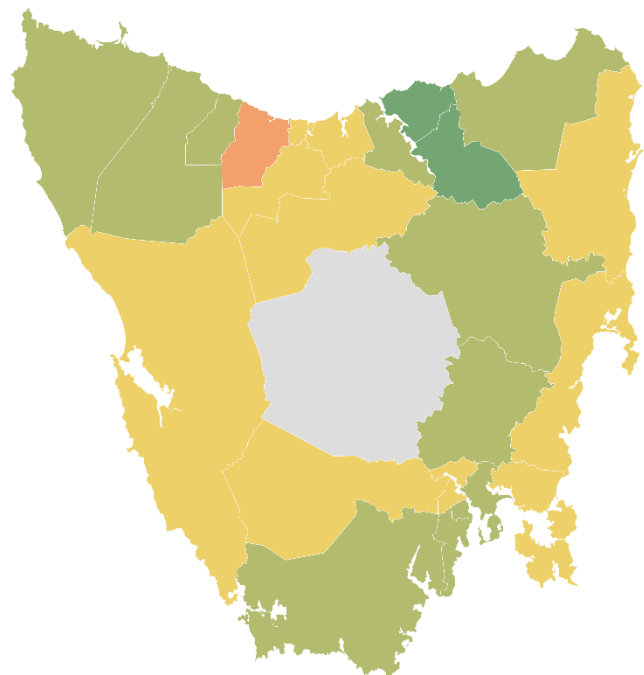
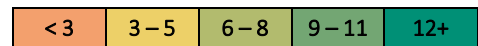
A growing presence in Tasmanian news media is Font Publishing, which has purchased multiple local outlets over the past few years, including Tasmanian Country, Derwent Valley Gazette, Sorrell Times and others.

Yeates Media is a Victoria-based news company with local newspapers in Kingston, Huonville and Circular Head. Independent outlets include the Valley and East Coast Voice, North-Eastern Advertiser and BridREport.

Most of Tasmania, including the capital, are within the Tasmania TV1 licence area, which includes Seven Tasmania (TNT), WIN Tasmania (TVT) and 10 Tasmania (TDT). Parts of the West Coast, Huon Valley, Waratah-Wynyard and Central Highlands local governments are within the Remote Central and Eastern Australia TV1/TV2 broadcast area.

Due to a technical limitation this map does not display some islands, including:

- King Island, which is covered by the King Island Courier, ABC Northern Tasmania and Tasmania TV1 networks.
- Flinders Island, for which PIJI has no record of print, digital or radio news producers. It is included the Tasmania TV1 licence area and ABC Gippsland in Victoria has suggested to PIJI it occasionally covers the island.
- Bruny Island is also not present on this map, though the mainland part of Kingborough Council is. Bruny News operates on the island, while the Kingston Classifieds, The Mercury and Kingborough Chronicle cover other parts of the local government area.



## 2.2.7 Victoria

	Community	Local	Metro	State	Total
Print	39	118	3	1	161
Digital	4	23	0	1	28
Radio	0	70	0	0	70
Television	0	9	0	0	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>268</b>

◀ Table 18: News producers in Victoria, 30 June 2023.

▼ Figure 16: Count of local news producers in Victoria, excluding television, by local government area, 30 June 2023.

Victoria has a dense and diverse media landscape, with a high number of independent local news outlets, small-medium news businesses, as well as large media companies, covering every part of the state but particularly the north, central and Gippsland. The Age and Herald Sun cover metropolitan Melbourne, with the latter’s local coverage supported by a network of Leader community newspapers and digital hyperlocals around the state.

Star News Group publishes 18 papers in Melbourne’s suburbs and surrounds, and two in Geelong. The Local Paper also exists across Melbourne city, though with a smaller reporting footprint. Hyperlocal News publishes five titles within the City of Melbourne.

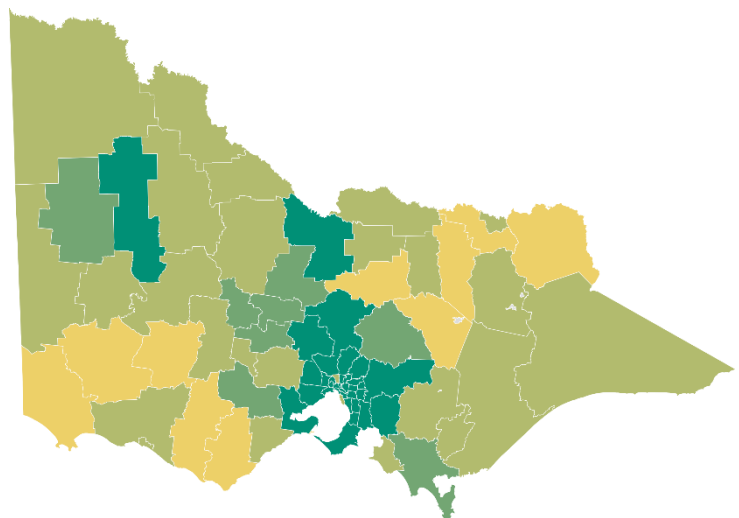
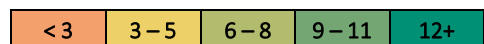
Australian Community Media is present in larger regional cities in Victoria, with papers in Bendigo, Ballarat, Shepparton, Warrnambool and others. In 2022, the company also published the Inner East Review in East Melbourne and Richmond, both since closed. In the regions, small-medium news businesses include North East Media, McPherson Media, Yeates Media and Elliott Newspaper Group.

Independent newspapers exist in almost every local government area across the state. Victoria also has a large number of community newspapers, particularly in Melbourne’s suburbs and in north/central local government areas like Macedon Ranges, Mount Alexander, Bendigo and Loddon.

Regional Victoria TV1 and Melbourne TV1 are the two main television licence areas. Mildura and the Sunraysia have a separate television region.

Despite multiple lockdowns, including in regional areas, Victoria lost fewer news outlets during COVID-19 than New South Wales or Queensland. Papers that did close include independent papers the Kyneton Free Press, Yarram Standard and Great Southern Star, Yeates Media’s East Gippsland News, ACM’s Moyne Gazette and Hepburn Advocate, and News Corp’s Bellarine and Surf Coast Echo.

This map does not display Phillip Island, though the remainder of Bass Coast Shire is present. The island is covered by the Phillip Island and San Remo Advertiser.



### 2.2.8 Western Australia

	Community	Local	Metro	State	Total
<b>Print</b>	15	52	1	0	68
<b>Digital</b>	1	5	2	0	8
<b>Radio</b>	0	51	0	0	51
<b>Television</b>	0	6	0	0	6
<b>Total</b>	16	114	3	0	133

◀ Table 19: News producers in Western Australia, 30 June 2023.

▼ Figure 17: Count of local news producers in Western Australia, excluding television, by local government area, 30 June 2023.

Western Australia’s media landscape is dominated by Seven West Media. Almost every local government area in the state is covered by one of SWM’s 19 regional newspapers, including very remote areas. In Perth, the West Australian and PerthNow cover the whole metro and a network of PerthNow print papers exist across the suburbs.

The only local government area not included in SWM’s coverage is the Shire of Upper Gascoyne. PIJJ could not identify regular coverage of Gascoyne Junction in a 2021 audit, though it is likely that the region does fall into the footprint of at least one paper if a major event were to occur.

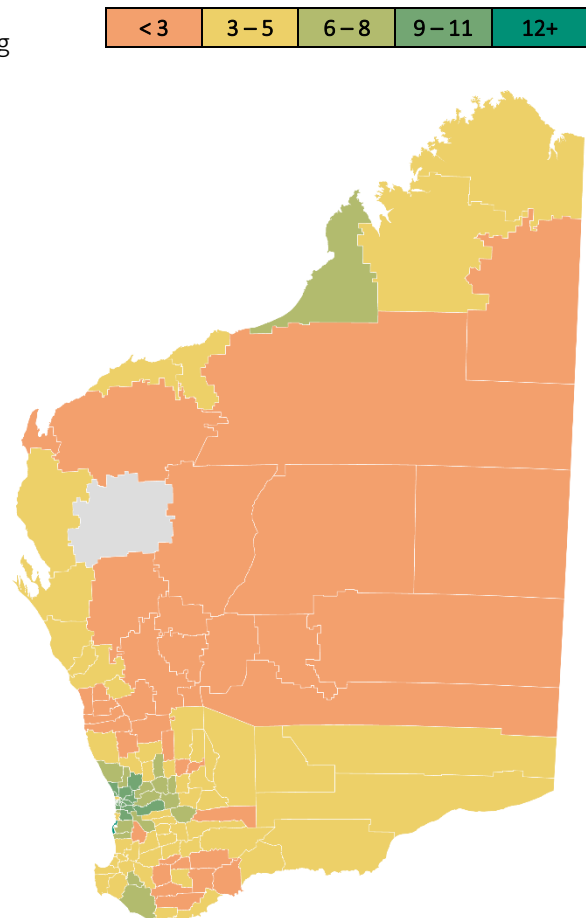
Within Perth there are two other small news companies: the Herald Publishing Company, which has papers in Fremantle, Cockburn, Melville and Perth; and Examiner Newspapers, which operates in Armadale, Canning, Gosnells and Serpentine Jarrahdale.

The other major feature of WA’s media landscape is a strong presence of community newspapers. WA has a network of community resource centres spread particularly across shires in the South West, Great Southern and Wheatbelt regions, and it is common for them to produce regular newspapers focussed on the social and business lives of their communities. Examples include The Windmill (Shire of Corrigin), Pingelly Times (Shire of Pingelly) and Crosswords (Shire of Yilgarn).

Australian Community Media has reduced its presence in the state since 2019. It has closed four newspapers - the Avon Valley Advocate, Donnybrook-Bridgetown-Manjimup Mail, Collie Mail and Esperance Express.

As in other states, where major publishers have retreated other local papers have emerged, including the Esperance Weekender, Bridgetown Star and Collie River Valley Bulletin.

The ABC operates out of its Perth station and eight local stations around the state: Esperance, Goldfields, Great Southern, Kimberley, Midwest & Wheatbelt, Pilbara and South West.



### 3 Quarterly results: news entities

PIJI provides quarterly updates on Australian news business entity and outlet ownership data, which draws on the [Australian Business Register](#) and the ACMA's [Register of Radiocommunications Licences](#) as well as engagement with industry.

This report includes a significant increase in the number of recorded news entities, from 529 to 663. This does not reflect an increase in the number of news outlets operating in Australia, but is a result of PIJI's ongoing review of its broadcast data and a separate but related effort to reflect parent-subsidiary relationships between news entities.

This entity 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 one metropolitan television station, though each represent one outlet in this data.

Most news entities are private companies, and therefore, offer limited information publicly.

#### 3.1.1 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 is 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 Melbourne-based newspaper (a news outlet) that produces public interest journalism and is operated by the private news entity, Hyperlocal News Pty Ltd.

The Australian News Index links news entities to the news outlets they operate but does not provide full shareholdings 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 (RRL). It is generally the case that the entity which holds a broadcast licence is also 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'.

Some news entities might also 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 5.

### 3.1.2 Results

As of 30 June 2023, the Australian News Index lists 663 news entities which operate 1,212 print, digital, radio and television news outlets. Table 20 shows a breakdown of news outlets holdings per news entity.

Note that in this section subsidiary news entities have not been consolidated into their parent entities.

News outlet holdings	Subtotal	%
One outlet holding	525	79
Two outlet holdings	82	12
Three outlet holdings	18	3
Four outlet holdings	14	2
Five outlet holdings	8	1
Six outlet holdings	6	1
Seven or more outlet holdings	13	2
Total	<b>663</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 20: News entities according to the number of outlet holdings

The overwhelming majority of business entities (525, 79 per cent) only operate a single news outlet.

83 additional news entities were linked to one outlet since this data was reported in April 2023, while news entities with two outlet holdings increased from 35 in to 82 entities. These record changes largely reflect PIJJ's ongoing review of the radio sector. Most broadcast licences are individually assigned to a single company, though in some cases (such as in

more remote areas), there may be two outlets held under a single entity.

There are only 13 business entities that are linked to more than six outlets. The number of outlets operated by this category has a very large range: between seven and 78 per news entity. This range has narrowed since it was reported in April 2023 due to ongoing work identifying subsidiary companies and updating the data to reflect this.

### 3.1.3 Types of news entities

The business structures of news entities is provided in Table 21. using the entity types as defined by the Australia Business Register, found [here](#), and described in Section 5.

There is scope to analyse entity types and provide 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	361	54
Other incorporated entity	170	26
Individual/sole trader	28	4
Discretionary trading trust	28	4
Australian public company	26	4
Other unincorporated entity	17	3
Co-operative	13	2
Other	20	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>663</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 21: Number of news business entities according to their company structure

54 per cent of news entities operate as private companies, by far the largest category within the data. Almost all news entities included since April were classified as private companies, resulting in this category increasing to more than half of all entities.

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.

### 3.1.4 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 licence in a network tends to be assigned to different incorporated entities, some of which are wholly owned, while others are joint ventures.

In Table 22 below, for simplicity of understanding, where applicable we have presented news entities by their parent entity, consolidating any subsidiary entities. Consolidated holdings are marked in the table with an asterisk (\*).

Parent entity	Number of outlet holdings	% total outlets
News Corp Australia*	115	10
Southern Cross Austereo*	91	7
Australian Community Media*	84	7
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	53	4
Australian Radio Network*	44	4
Seven West Media*	38	3
Today News Group*	33	3
Star News Group*	24	2
Broadcast Operations Group*	18	1
Ace Radio Broadcasters*	17	1
Nine Entertainment Co.*	18	1
WIN Network*	15	1
McPherson Media Group*	11	1
Surf Coast News Australia	8	1
Font Publishing	7	1
<b>Subtotal for entities with &gt; 6 holdings</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>48</b>
Outlets held by all other entities	636	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>1212</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 22: Parent entities according to their outlet holdings

Table 22 shows 15 news entities that operate more than seven news outlets. This does not reconcile with the number of news entities with seven or more outlets displayed in Table 20 because PIJl has consolidated subsidiary news entities under their parent entity. For example, McPherson Media Group is included in this table, despite each of its subsidiary entities holding two or fewer outlets.

These entities combined operate 576, or 48 per cent, of the total outlets in Australia. This has increased from April, both in terms of outlet holdings, as well as in relation to their proportional percentage of total outlets.

This is due to:

- the inclusion of additional outlets in PIJl’s database as a result of our review of the broadcaster sector,
- the inclusion of news entities that PIJl had previously not identified as subsidiaries of the entities listed,
- general market changes, as detailed in Section 1.

For example, in the case of Southern Cross Austereo, outlet holdings increased from 71 to 91 partly

as a result of the identification of Regional Broadcasters Australia as a subsidiary entity and the inclusion of additional outlets in PIJJ's database.

PIJJ notes that these changes do not necessarily reflect an increase in an entity's outlet holdings, but rather the review of this data, which is still in development.

The top five news entities collectively operate 381 outlets, or 31 per cent of the total outlets. There has been little change in this area, with the proportional percentage of total outlets unchanged from April.

PIJJ notes again that these 15 news entities are listed by their outlet holdings, and that Table 22 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 22, but that it would be considered large in terms of its audience reach or productive capacity relative to other news entities.

News Corp Australia operates the largest number of outlets, with 115, around 10 per cent of outlets in the database. Southern Cross Austereo operates 91 outlets or 7 per cent of total outlets, overtaking Rural Press Pty Ltd, commonly known as Australian Community Media, since the April report.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation's ABC Local radio newsrooms appear individually in PIJJ'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.

The number of outlets operated by Today News Group has increased from 16 in the April 2023 report to 33 at 30 June. This is due to the completion of a number of purchases in the interim: 11 titles were purchased from Australian Community Media; four from Papers & Publications, and one was launched in Jimboomba, Queensland.

### 3.1.5 News entities operating outlets with national scale

News outlets provide coverage for geographic areas of different sizes. Every news outlet is assigned a 'primary coverage scale': community, local, metropolitan, state/territory or national.

Table 23 below provides a breakdown of news entities that are associated with outlets of a national scale, meaning they have a geography larger than any single state or territory. There are relatively few outlets that operate with national scale (53), only about four per cent of the total outlets. Five entities are listed as operating more than one national scale outlet, while a further 39 operate one national scale outlet each.

Parent entity	Outlet holdings of national scale	% total outlets of national scale
News Corp Australia*	4	8
Special Broadcasting Service	4	8
Nine Entertainment Co.*	2	4
Private Media*	2	4
Schwartz Media*	2	4
<b>Subtotal for entities with &gt; 1 news outlets</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>26</b>
Outlets held by all other entities	39	74
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 23: Parent entities with more than one outlet holding operating at a national scale

### 3.1.6 State analysis of news entities and outlet holdings

The following analysis of news entities and their outlet holdings is on a state-by-state basis and therefore excludes news outlets of national scale.

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.

#### 3.1.6.1 Australian Capital Territory

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in ACT	% total outlets in ACT
Southern Cross Austereo*	3	19
Australian Radio Network*	2	13
<b>Subtotal for entities with &gt; 1 news outlets</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>31</b>
Outlets held by all other entities	11	69
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 24: 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, PIJ's data focusses on outlets that cover local issues such as the ACT Legislative Assembly other issues. The

Australian Capital Territory has 16 of these local outlets, or 1 per cent of the total outlets across the country. Only two news entities, Southern Cross Austereo and Australian Radio Network, hold more than one news outlet in the ACT.

### 3.1.6.2 New South Wales

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in NSW	% total outlets in NSW
Australian Community Media	67	18
News Corp Australia*	36	10
Southern Cross Austereo*	19	5
Broadcast Operations Group	17	5
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	14	4
<b>Subtotal for entities with &gt; 7 news outlets</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>41</b>
Outlets held by all other entities	219	59
<b>Total</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 25: 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 372 or 31 per cent of total outlets. Five news entities operate 41 per cent of all outlets in NSW. The two largest holdings, Australian Community Media (67 outlets, 18 per cent of NSW outlets) and News Corp Australia (36 outlets, 10 per cent) collectively operate 103 outlets, or 28 per cent of outlets in NSW.

Other operators with multiple outlets include Australian Radio Network (seven outlets), WIN Network (five), Nine Entertainment Co (four) and McPherson Media Group (three).

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

### 3.1.6.3 Northern Territory

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in NT	% total outlets in NT
Southern Cross Austereo*	3	13
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	3	13
<b>Subtotal for entities with &gt; 2 news outlets</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>26</b>
Outlets held by all other entities	17	74
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 26: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in the Northern Territory

The Northern Territory has 23 outlets, or 2 per cent of 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, or 26 per cent of NT outlets.

Australian Radio Network and Nine Entertainment Co both operate two outlets in the Northern Territory but are not listed in this table.

### 3.1.6.4 Queensland

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in QLD	% of total outlets in QLD
News Corp Australia*	42	20
Southern Cross Austereo*	21	10
Today News Group*	17	8
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	11	5
Australian Radio Network	11	5
<b>Subtotal for entities with &gt; 7 news outlets</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>48</b>
Outlets held by all other entities	110	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 27: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in Queensland

In Queensland, there were a total of 212 associated outlets (17 per cent of total outlets). Five news entities operate 102 outlets or 48 per cent of total Queensland outlets, while the remaining entities operate 52 per cent, or 110 outlets.

Other operators with multiple outlets not listed include Star News Group (three), Nine Entertainment Co. (three) and Resonate Broadcasting Engineering (three).

### 3.1.6.5 South Australia

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in SA	% total outlets in SA
Today News Group	16	19
News Corp Australia*	11	13
Australian Radio Network	8	10
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	5	6
<b>Subtotal for entities with &gt; 4 news outlets</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>52</b>
Outlets held by all other entities	40	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 28: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in South Australia

In South Australia, there are 83 outlets, or seven per cent of the total outlets across the country. News entities listed in this table hold 37 or 52 per cent of outlets in South Australia.

Today News Group holds 16 outlets, or 19 per cent of South Australian outlets, which increased from 12 in April after the finalisation of a purchase of Australian Community Media and Papers & Publications' holdings in the state.

News Corp Australia holds the second highest number of outlets (11 outlets, or 13 per cent), predominantly in and around Adelaide, including The Advertiser, digital community titles in the suburbs, and hyperlocals in surrounding regional areas.

Other entities with more than one outlet are Murray Pioneer (three), Southern Cross Austereo (three) and WIN Network (three).

### 3.1.6.6 Tasmania

News entity	Outlet holdings in TAS	% total outlets in TAS
Australian Radio Network	8	15
Font Publishing	7	13
Southern Cross Austereo*	4	8
News Corp Australia*	3	6
Corporate Communications (Tas.)	3	6
<b>Subtotal for entities with &gt; 2 news outlets</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>48</b>
Outlets held by all other entities	27	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 29: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in Tasmania

Tasmania has 52 outlets, or 4 per cent of total outlets. Australian Radio Network operates the largest number of news outlets in the state. Font Publishing has emerged as a significant presence in local news in Tasmania in recent years, having purchased six formerly independent newspapers, a statewide News Corp magazine and an additional title that is not in PIJJ's data, Tasmanian Business Reporter. Beyond those included in the table, Australian Community Media, the ABC and WIN Network operate two outlets each.

### 3.1.6.7 Victoria

News entity	Outlet holdings in VIC	% total outlets in VIC
Star News Group	20	7
News Corp Australia*	17	6
Ace Radio Broadcasters	15	6
Southern Cross Austereo*	10	4
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	9	3
<b>Subtotal for entities with &gt; 7 news outlets</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>26</b>
Outlets held by all other entities	197	74
<b>Total</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 30: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in Victoria

Victoria has 268 associated outlets or 22 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 12 news entities operating more than two outlets in Victoria. The five news entities with the largest outlet holdings operate only 26 per cent (71 outlets) of the total outlets in Victoria, while the remaining news entities operate 197 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. Australian Radio Network and The Trustee for McCullough Family Trust both operate five outlets in Victoria, while Nine Entertainment Co. operates three.

### 3.1.6.8 Western Australia

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in WA	% total outlets in WA
Seven West Media*	33	25
Southern Cross Austereo*	28	21
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	7	5
The Herald Publishing Company	5	4
<b>Subtotal for entities with &gt; 3 news outlets</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>58</b>
Outlets held by all other entities	56	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 31: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in Western Australia

Western Australia has 133 associated outlets or 11 per cent of total outlets. Four news entities in the table hold 77 outlets, or 58 per cent of WA outlets. Just two news entities, Seven West Media (33 outlets) and Southern Cross Austereo (28 outlets) operate 61 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.

The Van Rongen Trust, which trades as Examiner Newspapers, operates four outlets, Nine Entertainment Co. (three), and WIN Network (two) are not on the table but operate more than one news outlets.



### 3.1.7 Limitations

As noted, one limitation of this data is that it does not currently detail parent-subsidary companies. PIJI is working to release this data in the coming months.

PIJI's data is under continuous review, and we are working to resolve data gaps where they arise. There are currently 21 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 led by volunteers and without any business revenue.

PIJI welcomes feedback on our data. Please email [research@piji.com.au](mailto:research@piji.com.au) if you would like to contribute.

# [ Australian News Sampling Project ]

Case study, June 2023:

**Albury-Wodonga region,  
New South Wales & Victoria**

## 4 Australian News Sampling Project

The results presented here are from a June 2023 survey of four local neighbouring government areas in New South Wales and Victoria: the cities of Albury and Wodonga and the shires of Indigo and Towong.

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 monthly sample size for each outlet is a minimum of 200 news articles. Where that can't be met, the entire month's reporting is coded.

With this work, we seek to expand insight into local news around Australia. This project focuses on 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 due to a lack of transcript data. We can remotely audit print and digital news content, but it is much more difficult to reliably access radio or television news programming from outside of its broadcast area. In almost all cases that we have found, there are no public digital archives of broadcast news content available, meaning that assessments must be done by live stream which is extremely resource intensive. This is a significant barrier to independent scrutiny, and not one that PIJI is resourced to overcome.

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

## 4.1 Albury-Wodonga region, New South Wales & Victoria

Albury and Wodonga are the two major cities of the New South Wales – Victorian border, with a collective population of around 100,000 residents.



### Region

Land area	945 428.5 ha
Residents	123 827

### Population centres

Albury	Wodonga
Beechworth	Rutherglen
Yackandandah	Chiltern
Corryong	Tallangatta

### News outlets (June 2023)

Print	3
Digital	1
Radio	5
Television	3

### 4.1.1 Local news producers

Outlet	Format	Operating entity	Scale	Total
10 Regional Victoria	Television	Southern Cross Communications Pty Limited	Local	0
1494 2AY	Radio	ACE Radio Broadcasters Pty Limited	Local	0
ABC Goulburn-Murray	Radio	Australian Broadcasting Corporation	Local	33
Albury 101.7FM	Radio	Vision Australia Limited	Local	0
The Albury-Wodonga News	Digital	News Corp Australia Pty Limited	Local	88
Border Mail	Print	Rural Press Pty Limited	Local	285
Corowa Free Press	Print	Yarrowonga Chronicle and Corowa Free Press Pty Ltd	Local	88
Corryong Courier	Print	Moscol Group Pty Ltd	Local	79
hit104.9 The Border	Radio	Radio Albury Wodonga Pty Limited	Local	0
Prime7 Regional Victoria	Television	Prime Television (Victoria) Pty Limited	Local	0
Radio Upper Murray	Radio	Upper Murray Community Radio Inc	Local	0
Triple M The Border 105.7	Radio	Goulburn and Border Broadcasters Pty Ltd	Local	0
WIN Regional Victoria	Television	WIN Television VIC Pty Ltd	Local	0
<b>Total</b>				<b>573</b>

Table 32: News producers in Albury-Wodonga and the total number of articles assessed.

The Albury-Wodonga region has reasonably high news outlet density. The major newspaper in the region is the Border Mail, published daily by Australian Community Media. News Corp has a hyperlocal digital presence in The Albury-Wodonga News. The Corryong Courier is an independent local newspaper in Towong Shire, while the Corowa Free Press, based in the unsampled New South Wales local government area Federation Council, also provides coverage of neighbouring Albury and across the border into Indigo Shire.

Southern Cross Austereo’s Triple M and hit brands are both present, as is Australian Broadcasting Corporation with a newsroom in Wodonga. ACE Radio Broadcasters operates 1494 2AY from Albury, and Vision Australia operates Albury 101.7FM as part of its national network of reading radio stations. Radio Upper Murray is a community radio station across the region, based out of Walwa, a small town near Corryong in Towong Shire.

Despite being in New South Wales, Albury is part of the Regional Victoria TV1 licence area and is covered by WIN, 10 and Prime7.

#### 4.1.2 Changes observed in the Albury-Wodonga region

Few outlet changes have been observed in the region. In June 2019 WIN Television closed its Albury-based newsroom, and the following year News Corp launched the digital hyperlocal The Albury-Wodonga News.

Date	Change observed
28/06/2019	● WIN TV closed its Albury newsroom
21/09/2020	● The Albury-Wodonga News opened

Table 33: Changes observed in the region since 1 January 2019.

#### 4.1.3 Sample

Of the 12 outlets across the region, the digital output of the four publishers and the ABC newsroom were assessed between 1 – 30 June 2023. For most outlets this represented the total of their digital output across that period. For the Border Mail, which publishes every weekday, editions on Monday 5, Friday 9, Wednesday 14, Monday 19 and Friday 23 June were coded.

A total of 573 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.

Overall, we found high levels of public interest journalism at most outlets, with a strong focus on community news, and community sport in particular. Individuals, organisations and events in the community were also the subjects of coverage. Local and federal government issues were prioritised differently by some outlets. Health services received considerable coverage, as did police and education. Internal syndication was common at the major outlets, and wire coverage was used for federal and international issues.

Separately, we found that coverage of the Voice to Parliament was rare at most outlets, but the Border Mail published 17 items across the month, mostly relating to federal politics but with some local issues mixed in, including the positions of prominent individuals and community events.

#### 4.1.4 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 Goulburn-Murray	30	94	2	6	32	1	33
The Albury-Wodonga News	22	79	6	21	28	60	88
The Border Mail	181	72	69	28	250	35	285
Corowa Free Press	75	93	6	7	81	7	88
Corryong Courier	70	96	3	4	73	6	79
<b>Total</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>573</b>

Table 34: Stories by whether they are public interest journalism, other journalism, or excluded from the sample.

Table 34 provides detail of how the total sample breaks down into public interest journalism, other journalism and exclusions. We found high to very high levels of public interest journalism output at most outlets.

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.

A large number of stories have been excluded from The Albury-Wodonga News. Across its network of digital hyperlocal titles, News Corp produces near-daily, AI-generated stories that provide the day's weather, updates on traffic conditions and petrol prices, and reproduce lists of people appearing before local courts and recent business liquidations. 55 of the 60 excluded stories from the sample are of this type.

Outlet	Public interest journalism											
	Government			Courts and crime			Community			Public services		
	All	U	% U	All	U	% U	All	U	% U	All	U	% U
ABC Goulburn-Murray	31	20	63	3	3	9	18	13	41	19	16	50
The Albury-Wodonga News	4	3	11	11	6	21	21	15	54	2	2	7
The Border Mail	125	70	28	54	33	13	135	98	39	38	30	12
Corowa Free Press	32	17	21	5	5	6	77	60	74	66	6	7
Corryong Courier	35	19	26	3	2	3	61	51	70	12	11	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>14</b>

Table 35: Breakdown of public interest journalism.

Stories can be allocated up to four subjects each. As such, Table 35 provides both the total number of subjects coded within each category (All) and the number of unique stories identified within each group (U), as well as the number of unique stories coded to that category as a percentage of all reported stories sampled from that outlet (% U).

Community was the largest focus for most all outlets except the ABC, which published more stories about both government and public services.

Across all outlets' community coverage, local sport was by far the greatest focus, with 116 pieces. This was particularly true at the Border Mail (40 stories), Corowa Free Press (39) and Corryong Courier (29). Local sport coverage in the region was notable as it appears journalists were present at matches: stories included bylines, write-ups and photography, as compared to short writeups provided by the clubs as has been a common observation in previous samples. The Corowa Free Press was also found to include humour in its sport reporting. Though a small number overall, a large proportion of The Albury-Wodonga News' output was also sport-focussed (seven stories, 33 per cent of public interest journalism produced in June). This content tended to be mixed in with syndicated results from across the state.

The ABC did not publish any stories about sport across the month, the closest being an explainer about the meteorological indicators for the skiing season.

Individuals were the next biggest focus (50 stories), dominated by the Border Mail's output (30), followed by the Free Press (eight), Courier (six), ABC and News (three each). The Border Mail profiled local musicians, artists, students and immigrants. The ABC published a feature on homelessness in the local community.

There was some crossover between community individual stories and sport stories, particularly at the Border Mail, which regularly profiled individuals alongside its local sport reporting. The Corowa Free Press profiled a local man who made the Victorian state darts team and a member of the local rowing team after they competed at a state championship. Similarly, the Courier profiled a local footballer after she made her debut in the VFLW during the month.

Some of the focus on community stories related to obituaries: the Corowa Free Press published two and the Border Mail one.

Other categories of community story received less attention: organisations (28 stories), events (24) and community health (19) were the largest remaining groups.

Organisation stories were primarily spread across the Free Press, Courier and Mail. The Free Press covered a cancer fundraiser held by the Corowa and Wodonga Lions Clubs and the local RSL announcing a record-breaking profit. The Courier covered the launch of a Learner Driver Program by the Corryong Neighbourhood Centre and a tree-planting effort along the Thowgla Creek by the Australian Trout Foundation. The Border Mail covered a local charity supporting homelessness and syndicated a story about Jewish groups welcoming new federal laws to ban Nazi symbols.

The Roam Rutherglen Winery Walkabout took place in June and was the subject of two stories in the Free Press, while the Courier covered 'Silly Sock Day', a fundraiser at the local kindergarten.

Across all outlets, government stories were relatively evenly split between local (27) and federal (23), with state governments (17) further behind. Some individual outlets displayed stronger editorial preferences: while the Border Mail mostly covered the federal government (17 stories, six state, four local) the Free Press focussed on local governments (15 stories) and less on state (two) and federal (zero). Other outlets were more evenly mixed.

In federal stories, the Border Mail covered the Voice to Parliament, the leadership of the Reserve Bank of Australia, and national security and defence. Multiple stories concerned a bill to establish a federal fund for social housing, with coverage of the Government's plan, its potential impact, and ongoing negotiations with the Greens over its passage. The ABC similarly covered the housing bill, with an additional local focus on homelessness in Wangaratta.

Mixing both federal and local governments, the Corryong Courier published stories about Towong Shire receiving federal funding for disaster resilience, and about local councillors travelling to Canberra to raise concerns about challenges facing the area.

Though it was the largest publisher of local government stories, most of the Corowa Free Press' reporting concerned Federation Council, which is not included in this sample. The only story from Indigo Shire reported on changes to speed limits in Rutherglen.

The Border Mail covered the City of Wodonga's budget, which projected a long-term deficit of \$37m and an Albury City Council meeting to discuss population pressures.

ABC Goulburn-Murray reported that despite requests from the local governments, the state governments of New South Wales and Victoria would not change the location of the Albury-Wodonga hospital as part of a jointly-funded redevelopment. In broader state government news, the public broadcaster also reported on the election of a new set of traditional owners to the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, and a new incentive scheme to get student teachers to take placements in rural and regional schools.

The Corryong Courier covered a Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) submission to the state government opposing the introduction of land tax as a replacement for stamp duty, as well as local opposition to a new windfall gains tax that took effect with the new financial year. The Free Press reported from a visit by the New South Wales Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education to the town.

Transport infrastructure was another major category of coverage, with 17 stories across the month. The Courier reported on a VFF call for a public inquiry into the state of regional roads and the reopening of the Wymah Ferry. The Border Mail reported that Victoria's regional train operator V/Line would undertake a review of its booking system following major increases in patronage that left some people sitting on the floor for long train rides.

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. Health services received the most coverage (22 stories), followed by police (16), education (13), care (10) and other (eight).

The Border Mail published 12 stories about health services over the month, including resistance to the takeover of Yackandandah Health by a national aged care provider, the quality of maternity care at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, the potential impact of climate change on the health system and a new chair for the Albury-Wodonga health board. The Courier covered the arrival of a new GP from the Sunshine Coast and an effort by Corryong Health to educate patients on its booking procedures. The ABC covered the inadequacy of regional health, including unavailability of opioid prescriptions for those with chronic pain, difficulty getting an appointment with GPs, and the story about the sale of Yackandandah Health.

In police stories, a 10-year-old girl who went missing in Lavington, a suburb of Albury, was covered by the ABC, as was an illegal hunting crackdown. Crossing both police and services stories, as well as transport infrastructure, there were a large number of articles in the Border Mail, Corowa Free Press and Courier about dangerous and unprepared driving. Both police and state emergency services issued warnings to drivers about the risk of injury and death ahead of the snow season, when tourist traffic is expected to increase at the same time as the roads conditions deteriorate. This attention was heightened following a bus crash in the Hunter Valley that left 10 dead, prompting calls from a local MP for the introduction of seatbelts on buses. In a separate incident, a 14-year-old girl from Benalla was charged by police after the car she was driving crashed, both the ABC and The Albury-Wodonga News reported. The latter published three stories about this incident, profiling the victims.



Education stories included the kindergarten fundraiser, NSW Ministerial visit and student teacher regional placements already described, as well as a new traineeship program in Corryong and a fundraiser at Corryong College for Motor Neurone Disease research.

Most outlets published few court and crime stories across the month, with the exception of the Border Mail, which was responsible for two-thirds in this category. The Albury-Wodonga News published the highest percentage of crime stories as a proportion of overall output. There was a near-even mix of non-violent (17) and violent (16) crime coverage across all outlets.

The Border Mail published court reports relating to a man jailed for violently threatening his former partner, a man who was spared jail on child sexual abuse charges, and a woman who lost her licence after crashing into a Wodonga shop.

#### 4.1.5 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 Goulburn-Murray	18	56	5	16	9	28	10	31
The Albury-Wodonga News	12	43	0	0	16	57	0	0
The Border Mail	115	46	30	12	31	12	81	32
Corowa Free Press	81	100	4	5	4	5	0	0
Corryong Courier	64	87	10	14	10	14	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>20</b>

Table 36: Scale of coverage of reported stories.

We found mixed results, with very high levels of local-scale news coverage at both independent outlets, and around half of all stories of local scale at the three titles in larger networks. The Border Mail published the highest number of local stories overall.

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		AWN		BM		CFP		CC	
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %
Albury	2	6	5	18	46	18	3	4	1	1
Indigo	1	3	1	4	6	2	24	30	0	0
Towong	1	3	0	0	9	4	0	0	59	80
Wodonga	4	13	7	25	27	11	2	2	2	3

Table 37: Localism of coverage of reported stories.

The localism of each story is presented in Table 37.

Both Albury and Wodonga received significant coverage across the month, with a strong focus from the Albury-Wodonga News and the Border Mail. These two titles were far less present outside of the border cities, however.

80 per cent of stories from the Corryong Courier were located in Towong Shire, while the Corowa Free Press, based across the river in Federation Council, nevertheless covered Indigo Shire for 30 per cent of its stories over the month.

The public broadcaster published far fewer stories from the sampled local government outlets than other titles: only eight stories across the month, half of these from Wodonga.

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 licence. 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.

#### 4.1.6 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 scale of the public broadcaster’s news production and geographic reach – but caution should be taken with comparisons to other outlets due to this difference in data quality. Separately, where the ABC lists the news team as the generic ‘ABC News’ rather than the name of the local newsroom, it is not marked as internally syndicated.

Outlet	Syndication						Original	
	Internal		Wire		Other		n	All %
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %		
ABC Goulburn-Murray	9	28	0	0	0	0	23	72
The Albury-Wodonga News	23	82	0	0	0	0	5	18
The Border Mail	5	2	100	40	0	0	145	58
Corowa Free Press	0	0	0	0	0	0	81	100
Corryong Courier	0	0	0	0	0	0	73	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>71</b>

Table 38: Syndication of reported stories.

Internal syndication was very high at The Albury-Wodonga News, with most content coming from elsewhere in the News Corp network. ABC Goulburn-Murray also internally syndicated some of its content, with stories from ABC Ballarat, Rural, Central Victoria, New England and Riverina.

The Border Mail syndicated heavily from Australian Associated Press for its coverage of federal government issues, national sport and international events.

## 4.2 Voice to Parliament

In June PIJl commenced collecting specific data about coverage of the upcoming referendum on establishing a Voice to Parliament in its sampled areas. The referendum is a major public interest issue that is expected to remain present in news content through to the end of 2023. The commencement of sampling in June was aligned to the passage of a bill to amend the constitution, a pre-requisite to a national referendum, on 19 June 2023.<sup>9</sup>

These results are reported separately as the data is different, encompassing any story about the Voice to Parliament in the sampled outlets across the month, even where it falls outside of any nominated sample days.

Voice to Parliament story origin								
Outlet	Syndication						Original	
	Internal		Wire		Other		n	All %
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %		
ABC Goulburn-Murray	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	100
The Albury-Wodonga News	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The Border Mail	4	27	4	27	0	0	7	47
Corowa Free Press	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	100
Corryong Courier	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>56</b>

In total we found 19 stories about the Voice to Parliament were published by the sampled outlets across the month. Two of these were excluded as they were not news pieces, both published by the Border Mail: one was a summary of reader responses indicating their likely vote; the other an opinion piece about the structure of the Voice.

The majority of items published – 17 of 19 – were published by the Border Mail. These stories covered both the passage of the legislation through both the House and the Senate, positions of a local priest and the church on the Voice, and coverage of the politics of the proposal at a federal level. An information event was announced for Wodonga toward the end of the month.

The Corowa Free Press published a single story which made only passing reference to the Voice: an event planned for the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Corowa Conference, an 1893 meeting that produced a roadmap for the federation of the colonies. An event at the July celebration would discuss the proposed Voice.

ABC Goulburn-Murray similarly only made passing reference to the Voice in an article about the election of a new First Peoples' Assembly in Victoria. The article was predominantly about treaty negotiations with the Victorian government, but referenced the Assembly as a version of the proposed Voice that has existed at the state level for three years.

The Albury-Wodonga News and Corryong Courier did not publish any stories about the Voice to Parliament in the sampled month.

<sup>9</sup> Parliament of Australia. 2023. Constitution Alteration (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice) 2023. <[https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Bills\\_Legislation/Bills\\_Search\\_Results/Result?bid=r7019](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Bills_Legislation/Bills_Search_Results/Result?bid=r7019)>

## 5 Data eligibility

The Australian News Data Project (ANDP) 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 the ANDP, a news outlet should primarily and regularly produce: (i) original public interest journalism for (ii) a local, metropolitan, state or national (iii) public audience, and (iv) adhere to identifiable professional and ethical standards. Each of these expectations are discussed below.

#### i. Public interest journalism

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

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

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

#### ii. Local, metropolitan, state or national

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

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

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

#### iii. A public audience

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

#### iv. Professional and ethical standards

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

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

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

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

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

#### Community news organisations

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

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

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

Despite sharing a common term, the community radio sector is categorised as local scale as it is regulated through its broadcast licence agreements with the Australian Communications and Media Authority and adheres to a set of professional standards.

#### 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 to reliably access radio or television news programming from outside of their broadcast areas. In almost all cases there are no public digital archives of news content available, meaning that assessments must 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, in part because it helps to identify where there may be undersupply. Content assessments are stronger evidence of this than availability alone.

### Data collection and maintenance

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

Data 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 as things change over time.

### Market changes

This project also monitors 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 collected, 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 caveats around this project are necessary to avoid misinterpretation of the data.

The first caveat is to acknowledge that the market 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 changes that have occurred. It is actively maintained by PIJJ 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 do not presume to have a complete log of all changes that have occurred 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 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 appears 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 assess for every change.

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, this project does not record any information about journalism job gains and losses.

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

## 6 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.

This research is supported with funding from the Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, and [PIJI's funders](#), including the Susan McKinnon Foundation, Jibb Foundation, Ruffin Falkiner Foundation and H&L Hecht Trust.

# [Public Interest Journalism Initiative]

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