

Senate Inquiry into Murdoch Media Inquiry Bill

Submission to the Senate Standing Committees
on Environment and Communications

Monday 18 September, 2023

[Public
Interest
Journalism
Initiative]

1 Introduction

The Public Interest Journalism Initiative (PIJI) welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee's consideration of the Murdoch Media Inquiry Bill 2023.

As an independent think tank, PIJI's interest lies in the health and long-term sustainability of public interest journalism and the public benefit it generates for all. We are platform-neutral and size-neutral with respect to news media. With no commercial interests, our activities focus on optimal fiscal and regulatory measures to support a diverse and pluralist news marketplace and enable news media to innovate, grow and serve in its role as a public good for the Australian community.

This submission is structured as follows:

1. Section 1 provides this brief introduction
2. Section 2 provides general comments
3. Section 3 outlines how PIJI measures news diversity and localism
4. Section 4 provides a summary of PIJI's key data on news production
5. Section 5 provides an overview of PIJI's key data on media ownership and holdings in Australia
6. Section 6 highlights options for consideration
7. Section 7 provides further information about PIJI
8. Section 8 provides information about the preparation of this submission

Appendix A: State and territory snapshot of news production

Appendix B: Tax concessions for Public Interest Journalism

Appendix C: Not-for-profit news markets

In preparing the following comments, PIJI has been guided by the key principles that inform our work: to act in the public interest; to ensure plurality of news production and neutrality of support; and to be independent, practical, and evidence-based in consideration of any option.

2 General comments

Public interest journalism is vital for a functioning modern democracy. All Australians deserve access to accurate, informed reportage of local, regional and national current affairs. International literature is clear: in those areas where local journalism is removed, there is a decrease in civic engagement and an increase in impost on the people, including for example, increases in rates and local charges. There is a strong link between quality journalism and accountable Government.

Public interest journalism plays a critical role in ensuring that the community is well- and fairly informed through holding powers to account and providing a public record; for example, reporting on courts and parliamentary sittings, advocating for social or policy changes and providing a forum for debate and discussion. It is also an essential part of keeping communities safe and resilient as we have seen through the increased frequency of bushfires, floods and drought. At national, regional and local levels, news publishers and broadcasters serve these purposes.

PIJI strongly supports a better understanding of news production and consumption across all regions of Australia to ensure its health as a public good and the benefit that it generates for all. We also note that it is an expensive, resource-intensive and time-consuming undertaking, and requires a mix of levers to deliver a sustainable, diverse news eco-system at all levels.

Australia's news market has changed significantly over the past few years. PIJI's [Australian News Mapping Project](#) shows almost 500 changes since 2019, including a loss of 140 news outlets versus 129 new outlets¹. The volume of market fluctuations is a sharp acceleration from ACCC data that showed 106 news closures over the previous 10 years (2008-18). Both metro and regional areas have suffered net declines in news production and availability. NSW and QLD were the most volatile markets, accounting for 65 per cent of all changes in news production.

PIJI's research shows regional and rural Australia has been most adversely affected, with emerging gaps in news coverage of local councils, courts and communities. Regional Australia accounts for 67 per cent of outlet closures and 49 per cent of service decreases². The data also identifies 30 local government areas without any local print or digital news, of which five also had no local radio news³. These areas experiencing an undersupply of local news are characterised by low population densities and as rural or remote communities.

¹ Dickson G. and Costa J. 2023. [Australian News Data Report: June 2023](#). Melbourne: Public Interest Journalism Initiative, p. 14.

² Ibid, p. 20.

³ Ibid, p. 13.

3 Measuring news diversity and localism

Robust, sustainable public interest journalism relies on a thriving, diverse media sector, including a spectrum of industry players: large and small, retail and wholesale, metro and regional, commercial, not-for-profit and public-service, existing businesses and start-ups.

A strong evidence base is necessary to assist policy design and delivery. [PIJI has long invested](#) in and advocated for longitudinal industry data⁴. We welcome the development of [a news measurement framework](#) by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), and look forward to future collaborations under such a framework.

3.1 Australian News Data Project

[The Australian News Data Project](#) is a body of work developed by PIJI over the past four years to assist with the assessment of media diversity and plurality across the country. Broadly, this project seeks to:

- identify key issues and trends in news supply,
- identify communities with news supply fragility, such regional and remote areas which have been adversely affected by news reductions,
- help market entrants and new business models identify and fill market gaps,
- measure and assess policy design and effectiveness in delivering public returns,
- assist broader community discussions around acceptable minimum levels of news coverage.

3.2 Australian News Index

As part of the above project, PIJI has also produced a searchable database of state/territory, national and non-geographic news producers, known as the [Australian News Index](#) (ANI). This data has been developed from sources including the Australian Business Register, the ACMA's Register of Radiocommunications Licences, as well as ongoing engagement with industry bodies such as Free TV Australia, Country Press Australia and Community Broadcasters Association Australia and PIJI's own independent research.

It categorises 'news outlets' by their primary format (print, digital, radio or television), scale (national, state/ territory, metro, local or community), and coverage area (by local government area or broadcast area). News outlets are [assessed against PIJI's eligibility criteria](#) of public interest journalism, the geographic scale of their coverage and adherence to identifiable professional and ethical standards.

The data also shows links between 'news outlets' (i.e., a business which produces public interest journalism) and 'news entities' (i.e., a business that has a direct, controlling interest in a news outlet) found across Australia. For example, Inner City News is listed as a news outlet and is linked to its operator, the private news entity, Hyperlocal News Pty Ltd. While the news entity data demonstrates ownership by news scale and format, it does not consider other key market metrics, such as market share, audience reach, productive capacity, or affiliation.

⁴ For example, see PIJI's submissions to the [regional newspaper inquiry](#) and [media diversity inquiry](#).

4 Key data: News production

The following summary data is drawn from PIJ's latest quarterly analysis, the [Australian News Data Report: June 2023](#).

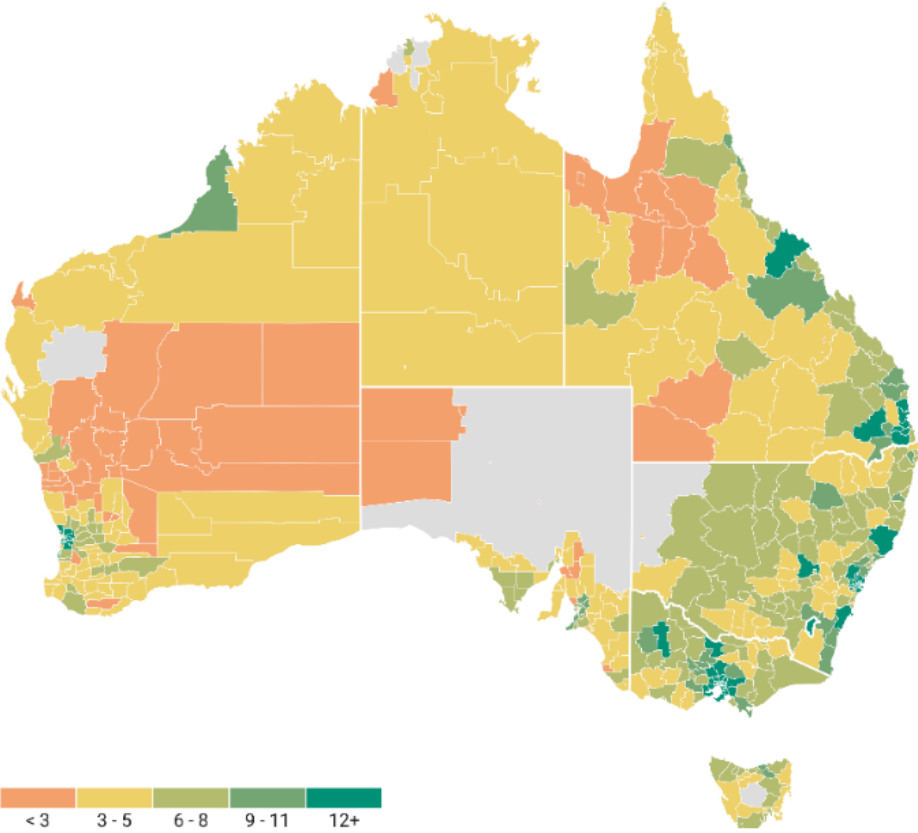
News production and availability across Australia is analysed by primary format (print, digital, radio and television) and news scale (national, state, metro, local and community):

- Australia has 1,212 news outlets across all formats and news scale (see Table 1)
 - Removing community news scale⁵, returns a total of 1,142 outlets across national to local news scale, split across print (478 outlets) and digital (216 outlets) while radio and television remain unaffected (395 and 53 outlets respectively).
- The baseline map of news availability around Australia suggests very high levels of news availability in 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 (see Figure 1). 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.
- A total of 486 market changes have been recorded since January 2019 - both positive and negative change types including new mastheads or newsrooms, service increases or decreases, mergers and closures, for a net loss of 148 (see Tables 2 and 3)
 - Continuing market volatility post COVID-19, in year-on-year analysis: a further 42 contractions in June 2023 from 106 contractions in June 2022 (Table 3)
- Regional and remote Australia has experienced the greatest market instability since 1 January 2019 (Table 4):
 - 61 per cent of total changes compared to 39 percent in major cities – a ratio disproportionate to their relative populations, where 72 per cent of Australians live in metropolitan areas and 28 per cent outside of them
 - 59 per cent of all contractions and 64 per cent of all expansions
- Of a total 546 LGAs across Australia, 24 per cent have fewer outlets now than at the beginning of 2019.
 - There are 30 LGAs without digital or print local news, of which five have no local print, digital or radio outlets. They are located in Queensland, Northern Territory, Tasmania and Western Australia, and all are rural/ remote with low population density.

⁵ While community news is important to map and track to provide a holistic understanding of the news ecosystem available to Australians, they do not necessarily meet all industry professional standards, and therefore, can arguably be removed from summary news industry data.

	Community	Local	Metro	State	National	Total
Print	64	456	8	5	9	542
Digital	6	166	3	6	41	222
Radio	0	394	0	0	1	395
Television	0	51	0	0	2	53
Total	70	1067	11	11	53	1212

Table 1: Active news outlets in Australia, 30 June 2023.



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

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 ⁶	141	92	+49
Total number of records	486	424	+62

Table 2: Count of records by change type since 1 January 2019, as at 30 June 2023 and 30 June 2022.

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

Table 3: Net change since 1 January 2019, as at 30 June 2023 and 30 June 2022.

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

Table 4: Net change by remoteness and region since 1 January 2019, as at 30 June 2023.

⁶ In the initial release of this submission, 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.

5 Key data: Media ownership and holdings

Ownership and holdings of news outlets is just one factor when it comes to the diversity of news in Australia and cannot be analysed in a vacuum. For example, an entity that owns a single local newspaper with a readership of 200 is not comparable in reach or market share to an entity operating one metropolitan television station.

Further, complete ownership interests or corporate structures are difficult to determine due to the complexity of market changes as well as lack of publicly available data on private companies. 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) which is the operator of the news outlet, The Daily Telegraph.

There is some additional complexity within broadcast news production holdings. The Index shows the news entity as the business entity that holds the broadcast licence according to [ACMA's Register of Radiocommunications Licences](#). It is common that the entity which holds a broadcast licence is a subsidiary of a parent news entity: for example, the broadcast licence for the television news outlet 10 Adelaide is assigned to Network Ten (Adelaide) Pty Limited, a subsidiary entity of Ten Network Holdings.

The Index also does not consider activities a news entity might have beyond those of public interest journalism. For example, Nine Entertainment Co. operates the news outlets The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age, as well as having interests in other media and streaming properties, such as Domain and Stan.

As of 30 June 2023, the Australian News Index shows the following data on Australian media ownership and holdings:

- 663 news entities, operating 1,212 print, digital, radio and television news outlets⁷.
- The overwhelming majority of business entities (525, 79 per cent) operate a single news outlet (Table 5)
 - 13 business entities are identified with more than six outlet holdings, although this range is large: i.e., anywhere between seven and 78 outlets per news entity.
- The business structures of news entities provided in Table 6 uses [entity types](#) as defined by the Australian Business Register.
 - The predominance of news entities that operate news outlets are private companies (54 per cent), by far the largest category within the data (Table 6)
 - There are a multitude of structures falling within each category. For example, 'other incorporated entity' and 'other unincorporated entity' entity types are the most common business structure for news entities operating community news outlets but include an array of different organisational structures, such as clubs, community resource organisations or unions.

⁷ PIJ's entity data is benchmarked from 1 January 2023 while its market changes data is benchmarked from 1 January 2019.

- Entity types which fall under the 'other' category, include family partnerships, other partnerships, fixed unit trusts, discretionary investment trusts, hybrid trusts, and commonwealth government entities (i.e. ABC and SBS).
- Table 7 shows the 15 news entities that operate the largest number of news outlets: seven or more⁸. Combined these 15 entities operate 48 per cent of the total news outlets in Australia.
 - Top 5 entities with largest number of outlet holdings collectively operate 32 per cent of the total outlets (387 outlets)⁹
 - It should be noted that Table 5 measures the number of holdings; it does not take into account other metrics such as affiliation, audience reach or productive capacity. For example, Ten Network Holdings Ltd with five outlet holdings, does not appear in Table 5, and yet is large in terms of its audience reach and 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, followed by Rural Press Pty Ltd, commonly known as Australian Community Media, which operates 84 outlets (7% of total outlets).
 - The Australian Broadcasting Corporation's ABC Local radio newsrooms appear individually in PIJI's data, which accounts for the high number of operated outlets (53) and allows for better understanding of the distribution of ABC locations and assessment of its local news coverage.
- State/Territory analysis shows different news entities' interests per region. Please refer to *Appendix C: States and territories* for detail.

⁸ Note this data does not fully reconcile to Table 3 because subsidiary news entities have been partially consolidated under their parent entity to provide greater clarity. For example, McPherson Media Group includes its subsidiary entities that each hold two or fewer news outlets. PIJI will release parent-subsidiary data in coming months. There are currently 21 news outlets not linked to a news entity. Some, but not all of these, may be published under individual or group efforts, led by volunteers and without any business entity or revenue.

⁹ Note: not a measure of audience share or coverage or other relevant metrics

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	663	100

Table 5: News entities according to the number of outlet holdings

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
Total	663	100

Table 6: Number of news business entities according to their company structure

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
Subtotal for entities with > 6 holdings	576	48
Outlets held by all other entities	636	52
Total	1212	100

Table 7: Parent entities by outlet holdings

Consolidated parent and subsidiary holdings are marked in the table with an asterisk (*).

6 Areas for consideration

To ensure media diversity and plurality in Australia, a mix of evidence and principles-based, fiscal measures is necessary to support industry transition, stimulate innovation and investment and encourage new entrants.

Support should also be tied directly to returns on quality news production and availability, something that has not always been the case in the Australian policy context.

6.1 Data investment

Data is key to developing and delivering efficient and effective public policy outcomes in news media. Quality, longitudinal data requires significant input from a range of sources including government, industry, academia, and civil society organisations, as well as long term investment.

PIJI looks forward to working with the ACMA, under its upcoming news measurement framework, to assist the considered development and consolidation of sector analysis, monitoring and reporting in Australia.

Consultations on this framework as well as past research^{10 11} have identified two persistent data gaps that inhibit analysis of the health of local news markets and the location of news production. The first is a lack of reliable, dynamic jobs data, as the long cycle between census data collection restricts market insights while the industry continues to change rapidly. The second gap is a lack of archival material of broadcast news, which for example, excludes analysis of the contribution of broadcast news content to public interest journalism in [PIJI's Australian News Sampling Project](#).

PIJI is currently collaborating with the Monash Business School on a socio-economic analysis of local news markets in Australia (by local government areas), to help better understand news supply and demand and which markets appear commercially viable and which are not. This study, to be released late 2023, can also assist with the identification and design of industry initiatives and policy measures to deliver a sustainable, diverse news landscape in Australia.

6.2 Tax rebate for public interest journalism

The introduction of a public interest journalism tax rebate alongside revenue mechanisms, such as the News Media Bargaining Code (NMBC), could incentivise long term investment in public interest journalism and provide a simple policy solution to deliver transparent, public benefit.

PIJI research shows conservative analysis of a potential \$356m benefit per annum, based on a 25 per cent rebate, or to up to \$711 million in public benefit, based on a 50 per cent rebate scheme.

¹⁰ Simons M., Dickson G. & Alembakis A. 2019. *The nature of the editorial deficit*. Melbourne: Public Interest Journalism Initiative. <<https://piji.com.au/research-and-inquiries/our-research/the-nature-of-the-editorial-deficit/>>

¹¹ Attard M., Dickson G., Jehangir A. & Radford T. 2022. *Regional News Media*. Sydney: Centre for Media Transition, University of Sydney. <<https://www.uts.edu.au/node/247996/projects-and-research/rural-and-regional-news>>

The broad application of this policy is attractive as it can deliver benefit to supporting public interest journalism, with or without the Code. Such a scheme was introduced by the Canadian government before the development of the Online News Act. Other jurisdictions are contemplating following suit. PIJI has also developed guidelines including eligibility criteria to assist policymakers in devising such a scheme.

In essence, a focussed rebate would:

- incentivise direct investment in public interest journalism, thereby helping to sustain this public good across Australian communities including areas that may otherwise be financially unviable
- provide direct, measurable public benefit
- require news businesses to publicly report on outcomes through the ATO
- be applicable for all news businesses, including eligible news businesses not covered by NMBC deals.

For more detail, please refer to Appendix B: Tax rebate for public interest journalism.

6.3 Development of a not-for-profit news sector

There is evidence from overseas, particularly the United States and, more recently, the UK and Canada, to suggest that a NFP news sector would increase media diversity and address market failure in commercially unviable practices such as investigative journalism or in geographical, cultural, and linguistic markets of undersupply¹². However, there has been little legislative reform or rule interpretation to drive the growth of not-for-profit news organisations in Australia.

PIJI's research suggests that there is real appetite to grow philanthropic funding for public interest journalism in Australia. News organisations that are registered charities and have DGR status have reported increased ability to engage and attract philanthropic funding interest over the last couple of years. Family foundations were seen as potentially more agile and open to such funding. Impact investment was also identified as an area of investigation in the emergence of new, for-purpose business models. PIJI has outlined these issues in [our submission to the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Philanthropy](#) and will be undertaking further research over the next 12 months, subject to funding, including:

- i. Analysis of Australia's current NFP news outlets
- ii. Trend analysis of philanthropic funding for news media in Australia
- iii. Legislative drafting guidelines to recognise 'public interest journalism' as a charitable and tax-deductible activity, including eligibility criteria.
- iv. NFP News Roundtable: to be held in 2024, bringing together policymakers, news media, philanthropy and civil society peaks for the release and discussion of the above investigations.

For a summary of PIJI's key findings, please see Appendix C: Not-for-profit news market research.

¹² Refer to Appendix A for further detail.

7 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 research and advocacy, 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 the ACNC under the charitable category of ‘advancing education’ (ABN 69 630 740 153). It is a philanthropically funded, non-profit company limited by guarantee governed by a Board of independent directors, advised by an Expert Research Panel and Policy Working Group and regulated by the ACNC, ATO and ASIC.

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Dr Margaret Simons, University of Melbourne
Professor Glenn Withers AO, Australian National University

8 Preparation of this submission

This submission was prepared by PIJl's Policy Working Group and project team.

[The Policy Working Group](#) consisted of four members of PIJl's Board: Richard Eccles (Chair), Professor Allan Fels AO, Virginia Haussegger AM and Professor Simon Wilkie.

The project team consisted of Anna Draffin (Chief Executive Officer), Gary Dickson (Head of Research) and James Costa (Research Coordinator).

Formal governance mechanisms ensured any PIJl directors or advisory committee members with perceived and/or actual conflicts of interest with regard to the content of this submission or this inquiry were not involved in its preparation or approval process.

Appendix A: State and territory snapshot of news production

The following analysis shows local news markets by local government areas (LGAs) per state and territory. Trends across states and territories generally followed population density trends. The analysis also shows news entities and their outlet holdings on a state-by-state basis and therefore excludes news outlets of national scale.

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
Total	0	16	0	0	16

Table 8: Count of local news producers in the Australian Capital Territory, 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 (1CBR). 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).



Figure 2: Count of local news producers in the Australian Capital Territory, excluding television, 30 June 2023.

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 PIJ 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.

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

Table 9: 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 focuses 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.

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
Total	3	365	2	2	372

Table 10: News producers in New South Wales, 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 the regions following larger company closures and mergers.

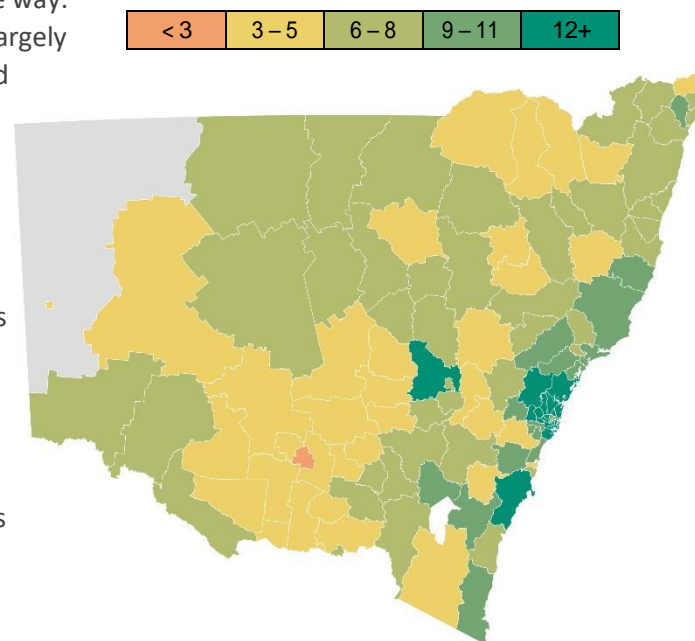


Figure 3: Count of local news producers in New South Wales, excluding television, by local government area, 30 June 2023

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.

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
Subtotal for entities with > 7 news outlets	153	41
Outlets held by all other entities	219	59
Total	370	100

Table 11: 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.

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 12: News producers in the Northern Territory, 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. PIJJ has no record of print publications on the Islands, but they do fall within ABC Darwin's broadcast area.

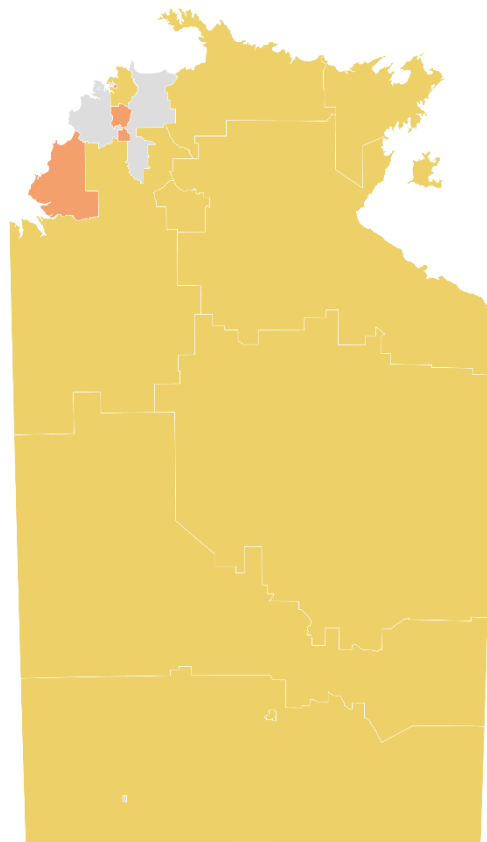
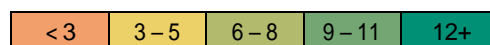


Figure 4: Count of local news producers in the Northern Territory, excluding television, by local government area, 30 June 2023

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

Table 13: 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.

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
Total	4	203	2	3	212

Table 14: News producers in Queensland, 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.

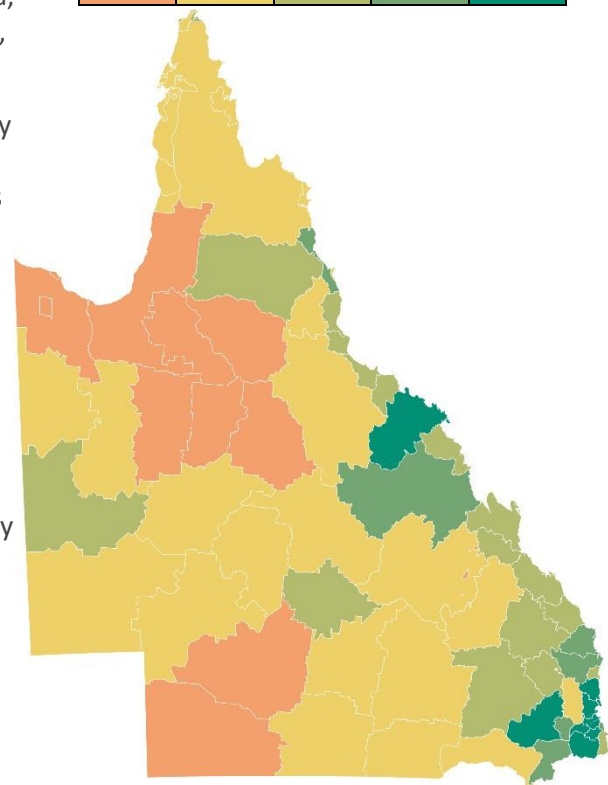
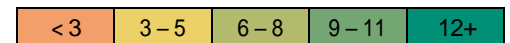


Figure 5: Count of local news producers in Queensland, excluding television, by local government area, 30 June 2023.

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
Subtotal for entities with > 7 news outlets	102	48
Outlets held by all other entities	110	52
Total	212	100

Table 15: 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).

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
Total	1	80	1	1	83

Table 16: News producers in South Australia, 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.

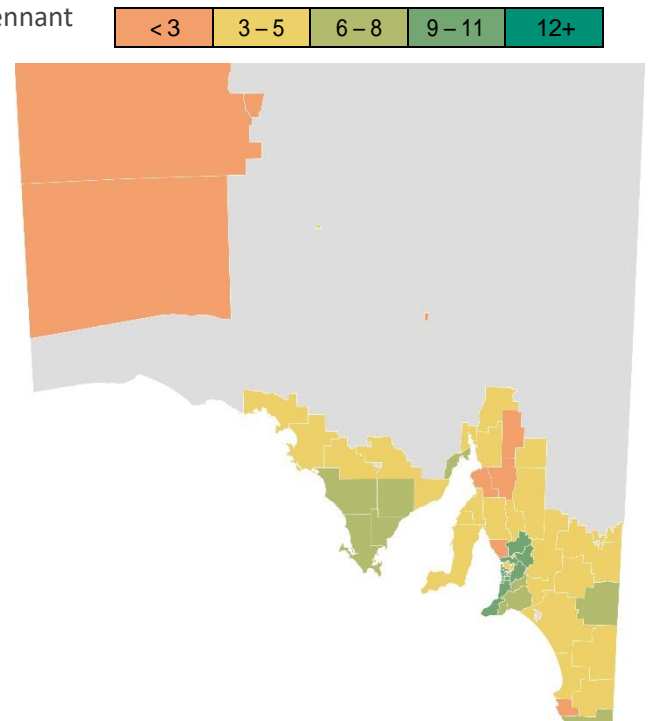


Figure 6: Count of local news producers in South Australia, excluding television, by local government area, 30 June 2023.

Due to a technical limitation this map (Figure 6) does not display Kangaroo Island, which is covered by SA Today's The Islander and remote radio service Flow FM (8SAT).

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
Subtotal for entities with > 4 news outlets	43	52
Outlets held by all other entities	40	48
Total	83	100

Table 17: 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).

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
Total	3	46	0	3	52

Table 18: News producers in Tasmania, 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

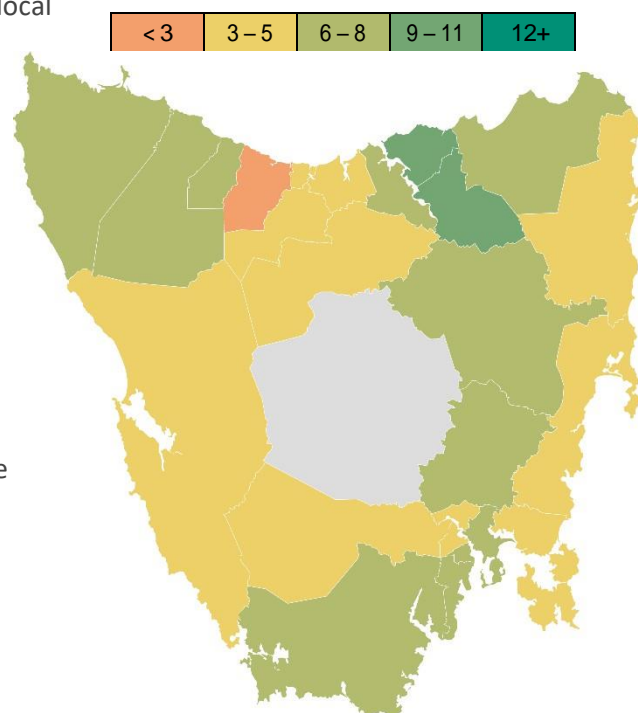


Figure 7: Count of local news producers in Tasmania, excluding television, by local government area, 30 June 2023.

Classifieds, The Mercury and Kingborough Chronicle cover other parts of the local government area.

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
Subtotal for entities with > 2 news outlets	25	48
Outlets held by all other entities	27	52
Total	52	100

Table 19: 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 state-wide News Corp magazine and an additional title that is not in PIJl's data, Tasmanian Business Reporter. Beyond those included in the table, Australian Community Media, the ABC and WIN Network operate two outlets each.

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
Total	43	220	3	2	268

Table 20: News producers in Victoria, 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

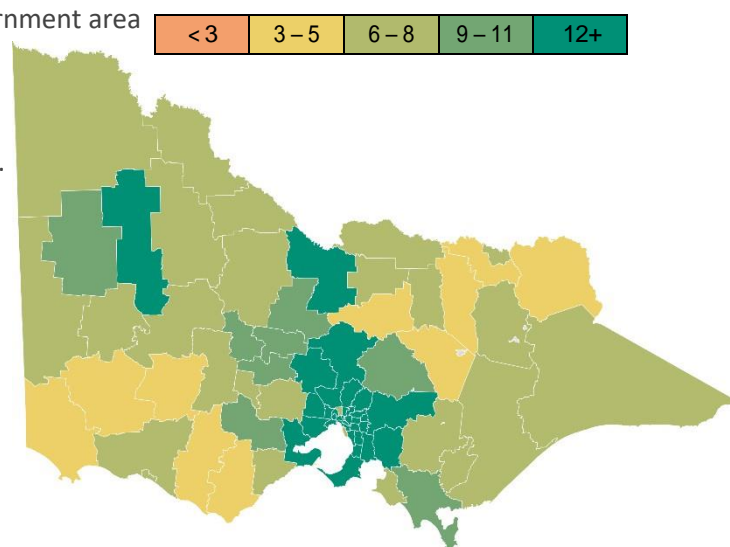


Figure 8: Count of local news producers in Victoria, excluding television, by local government area, 30 June 2023.

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.

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
Subtotal for entities with > 7 news outlets	71	26
Outlets held by all other entities	197	74
Total	268	100

Table 21: 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.

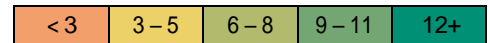
Western Australia

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

Table 22: News producers in Western Australia, 30 June 2023

Western Australia’s media landscape is dominated by Seven West Media (SWM). 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. PIJI 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.

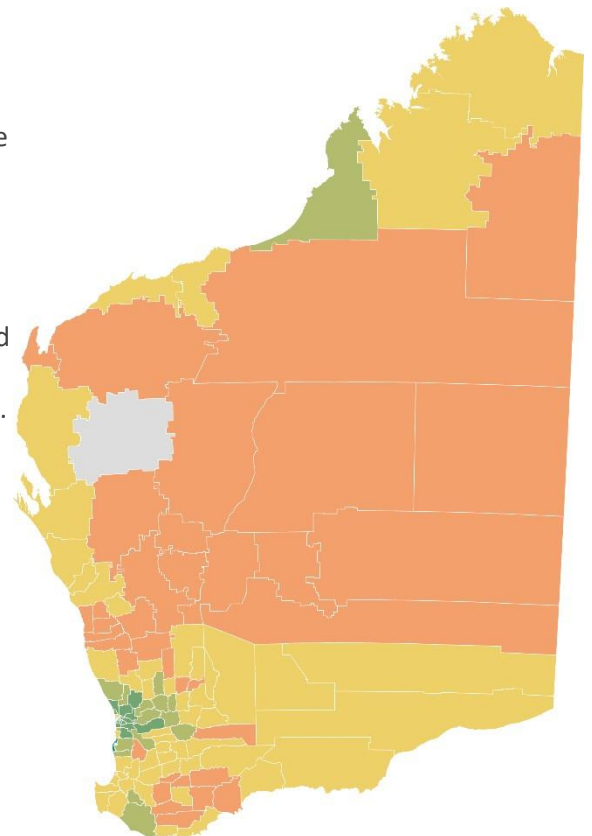


Figure 9: Count of local news producers in Western Australia, excluding television, by local government area, 30 June 2023.

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.

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
Subtotal for entities with > 3 news outlets	77	58
Outlets held by all other entities	56	42
Total	133	100

Table 23: 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 Australia 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 outlet.

Appendix B: Tax rebate for Public Interest Journalism

Tax concessions for Public Interest Journalism (November 2019)

This [report](#) conducted in late 2019 for PIJ, suggests that an R&D-style tax rebate for public interest journalism could have a significant positive investment impact. It finds that:

- conservative analysis suggests a tax rebate for public interest journalism could have a benefit cost ratio of between 0.97 and 1.90;
- modelling suggests:
 - a 50 per cent tax rebate (the highest scenario) could deliver up to \$711 million in public benefit, at a \$375 million cost to taxpayers, and
 - a 25 per cent tax rebate could deliver up to \$356 million in public benefit at a \$188 million cost to taxpayers*.

Such a scheme has been introduced by the Canadian government and other jurisdictions are contemplating following suit.

**Costings to taxpayers include gross value, compliance and administration costs.*

Guidebook to implement and claim a public interest journalism tax rebate (September 2020)

[This guide](#) outlines the types of activities and eligibility criteria for claiming a Public Interest Journalism Tax Rebate, and serves as a model for policymakers in designing such a scheme.

The Public Interest Journalism Tax Rebate is a self-assessment program designed to encourage industry to conduct public interest journalism activities. The program provides a tax rebate for industry organisations to conduct:

- Journalism activities that have the sole or dominant purpose of producing core news content, where 'core news content' is content produced by a journalist that records, investigates or explains:
 - issues of public significance to Australians;
 - issues relevant to engaging Australians in public debate and in informing democratic decision making; or
 - content which relates to community and local events

Appendix C: Not-for-profit news market research

Understanding the role that philanthropy can play in supporting public interest journalism and how to enable it (September 2021)

This report, [Understanding the role that philanthropy can play in supporting public interest journalism and how to enable it](#), draws on a series of interviews conducted with approximately forty stakeholders from news media organisations and philanthropy to provide insights into the motivations and mechanisms that impact philanthropic giving to public interest journalism. It finds that:

- there was a strong view that philanthropy does have a role to play in supporting the Australian news media industry, though participants did not anticipate that philanthropy would be likely to account for a substantial investment;
- a small but growing market of philanthropists is supporting public interest journalism, motivated by its nature as a public good; by its potential to further another cause they care about; and its importance to community infrastructure;
- philanthropic funders lack awareness of the need for support;
- current charity and taxation laws are a key constraint;
- philanthropists and news media organisations may have only limited exposure to examples of what is being funded and the rationale for it, hindering development;
- news media organisations do not have experience engaging with philanthropy and can struggle to articulate the social and civic impact of public interest journalism, and
- by addressing regulatory constraints and tapping into existing cause areas, there is potential to grow philanthropic support for the not-for-profit journalism sector.

A review of proposals to provide news organisations with access to tax deductible gifts in Australia (March 2021)

Developing a not-for-profit (NFP) journalism sector in Australia has been repeatedly recommended and considered in parliamentary and regulatory inquiries over the past decade. The comparison is often drawn to the United States, where philanthropy contributes around US\$500m every year.

This report, [A review of proposals to provide news organisations with access to tax deductible gifts in Australia](#) conducted a review of proposals to government inquiries over the past decade and found that:

- the two options consistently suggested are:
 - to create a new category of deductible gift recipient for journalism, and/or
 - create a central philanthropic trust to receive and distribution donations.
- Some indicators of likely demand for funding but no comprehensive study of the potential uptake of not-for-profit, charitable, deductible gift recipient status among news organisations.

[Public Interest Journalism Initiative]

CONTACT US

Public Interest Journalism Initiative


ABN 69 630 740 153

info@piji.com.au

www.piji.com.au

 [@piji_journalism](https://twitter.com/piji_journalism)

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