

[Public
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Initiative]

Australian News Data Report

Quarterly issue
September 2023

Australian News Data Report: September 2023

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<https://piji.com.au/news-mapping/reports-analysis/report-library/>

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

<https://piji.com.au/news-mapping/australian-news-data-project/>

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AUSTRALIAN NEWS DATA REPORT

Quarterly issue | September 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 September 2023 and content sampling in the Sunraysia region, Victoria and New South Wales.

Feedback

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

[Australian News Mapping Project]

Monthly results: September 2023

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 6: 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 Monthly results: September 2023

As of 30 September 2023, the Australian News Index lists 1,214 print, digital, radio and television news outlets of community, local, metropolitan, state/territory or national primary coverage. Table 1 provides the breakdown of outlets according to their primary format and scale.

	Community	Local	Metro	State	National	Total
Print	65	455	8	5	9	542
Digital	6	166	3	5	42	222
Radio	0	396	0	0	1	397
Television	0	51	0	0	2	53
Total	71	1068	11	10	54	1214

Table 1: Active news outlets, 30 September 2023.

1.1.1 Market changes, September 2023

No market changes were observed in the reporting month.

1.1.2 Changes to news outlet records

Six other changes were made to outlet records, all of which are record updates. Changes made to news entity records are reported separately in section 1.1.3.

#	Outlet		Description of change	Effective date
1	Albury 101.7 FM	NSW	○ Updated scale	31/12/2018
2	Geelong 99.5FM	VIC	○ Updated scale	31/12/2018
3	Radio Skid Row 88.9FM (2RSR)	NSW	○ Updated scale	31/12/2018
4	REG FM (3REG)	VIC	○ Updated scale	31/12/2018
5	Shepparton 100.1 FM	VIC	○ Updated scale	31/12/2018
6	Sunshine Valley Gazette	QLD	○ Operating entity changed	24/03/2020

Table 2: Other changes to outlet records, September 2023.

Albury 101.7 FM, Geelong 99.5 FM, Radio Skid Row 88.9 FM, Reg FM and Shepparton 100.1 FM were previously classified as commercial broadcasters in PIJl's data and have been changed to community radio stations. This reflects ongoing work to improve data related to radio news producers.

1.1.3 Changes to news entity records

Two new entity records were added to the data in September.

#	Entity		Description of change	Effective date
1	Australian Neighbourhood Media Pty Ltd	NSW	● New entity	08/02/2023
2	CM & TM Outridge Pty Ltd	QLD	○ Added to the database	24/03/2020

Table 3: Changes to news entity records, September 2023.

Two changes were made to news entity records. Australian Neighbourhood Media Pty Ltd was added to the database as the new operating entity of the Hawkesbury Post, which reopened in May 2023.

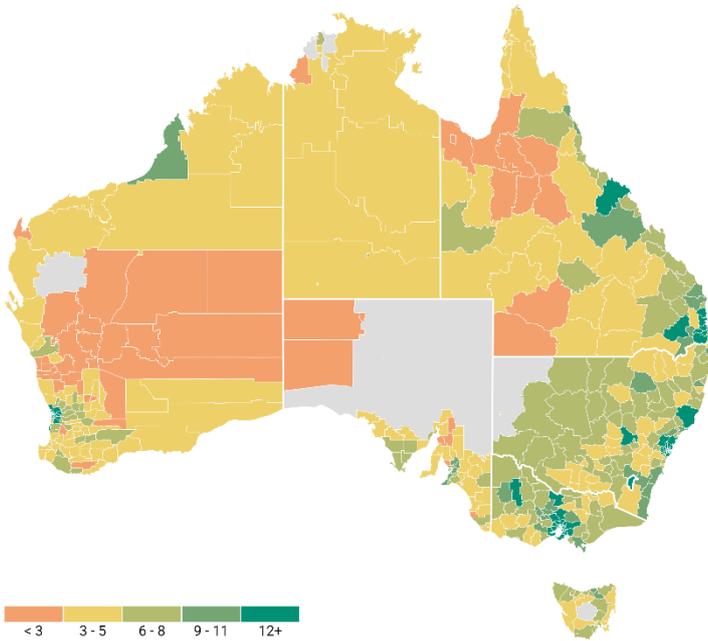
PIJl has also added the entity that publishes the Sunshine Valley Gazette into our database after receiving confirmation from the outlet's owners. In March 2020, Tanya Outridge and Cameron Outridge bought the outlet from Kerry Brown, who "revived" the outlet in 2012 after it closed in 2011 following more than 20 years of circulation¹.

¹ Sunshine Valley Gazette ND. About the Gazette. <<https://www.sunshinevalleygazette.com.au/about-1>>

[Australian News Mapping Project]

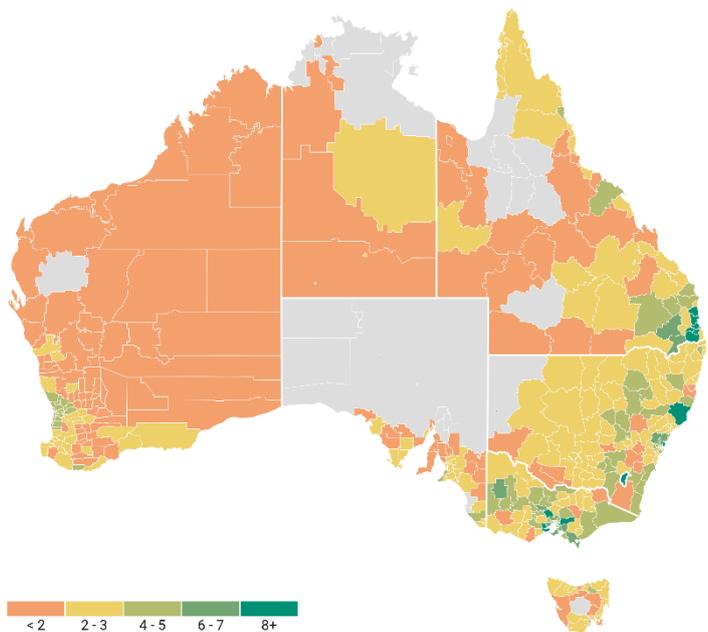
Quarterly results: Q3 2023

2 Quarterly results: news outlets



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

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



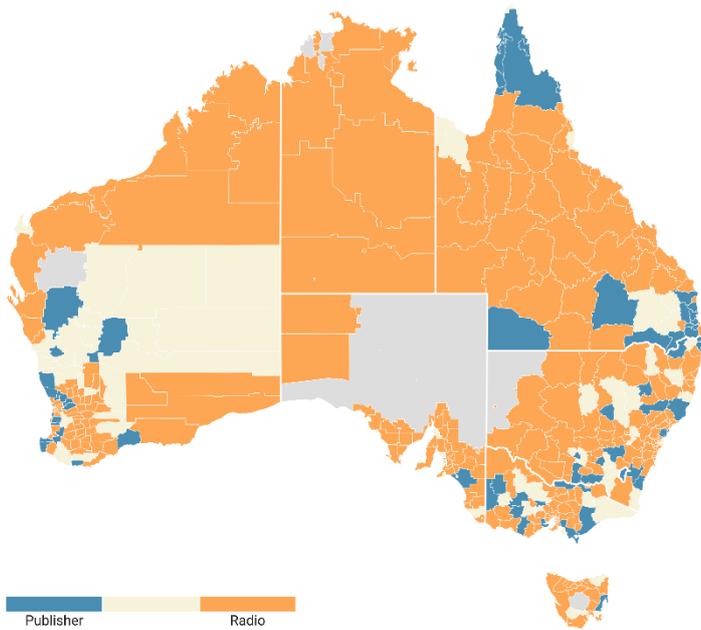
▲ Figure 1 shows the distribution of metropolitan, local, and community-scale news producers by local government area around Australia. It includes publishers (print and digital) and radio broadcasters.

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 September 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 local 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 (see section 5).

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 29 areas:

- Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara, SA
- Belyuen Shire, NT
- Carpentaria Shire, QLD
- Central Highlands Council, Tas
- 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
- Upper Gascoyne, Shire of, WA
- Wagait Shire, NT
- West Arnhem Region, NT
- West Daly Region, NT
- Woorabinda Aboriginal Shire, QLD

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

- Wagait Shire, NT

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

- Tiwi Islands Region, NT
- Coomalie Shire, NT

Each of these changes were made following content sampling in July 2023. Both Tiwi Islands and Coomalie were found to receive regular coverage from local media, and Wagait Shire was not.

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 4 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 5 groups those records according to their change category.

	This quarter	Year-on-year		Quarter-on-quarter	
Change type	Q3/23	Q3/22	Variance	Q2/23	Variance
Outlet opened	133	120	+13	131	+2
Newsroom opened	14	14	0	14	0
Increase in service	9	9	0	9	0
New print edition	15	15	0	15	0
Merger	25	24	+1	24	+1
End of print edition	101	99	+2	101	0
Decrease in service	45	45	0	45	0
Newsroom closed	6	6	0	6	0
Outlet closed	146	122	+24	143	+3
Total number of records	494	454	+40	488	+6

Table 4: Count of records by change type since 1 January 2019, this quarter, year-on-year and quarter-on-quarter.

	This quarter	Year-on-year		Quarter-on-quarter	
Change category	Q3/23	Q3/22	Variance	Q2/23	Variance
Expansions	171	158	+13	169	+2
Contractions	323	296	+27	319	+4
Net change	(-152)	(-138)	(-14)	(-150)	(-2)

Table 5: Net change by change category since 1 January 2019, this quarter, year-on-year and quarter-on-quarter.

PIJI'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 quarter, but will be adjusted with any new information.

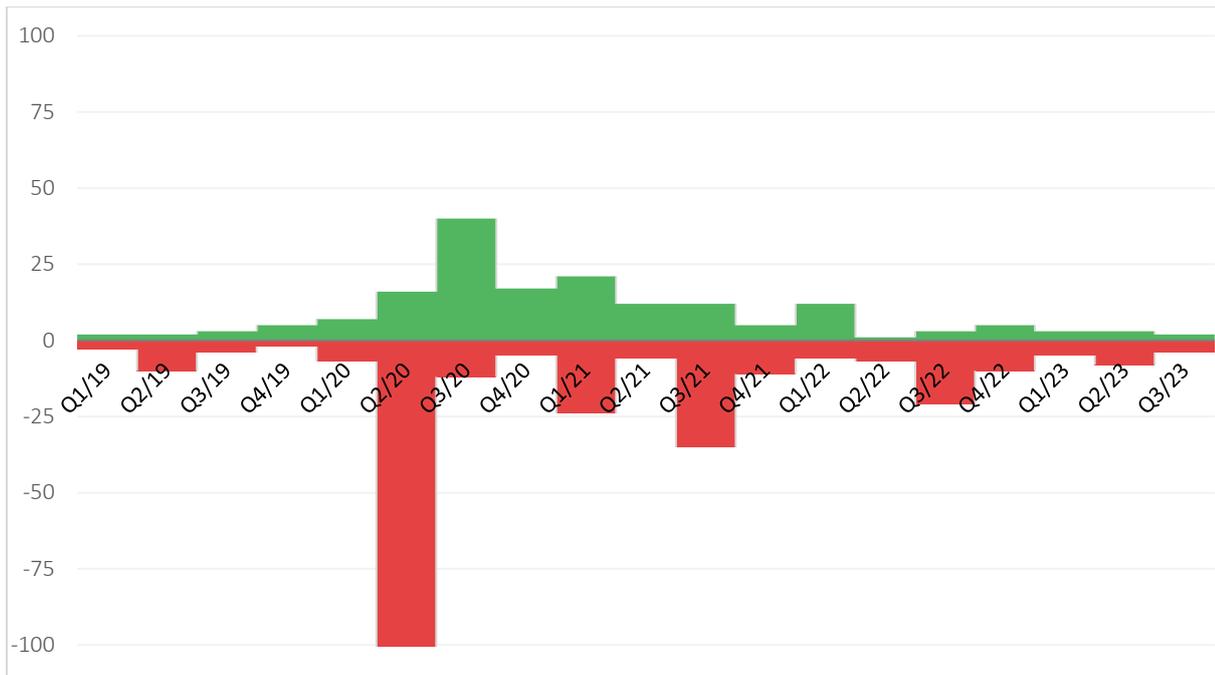


Figure 4: Change types by quarter, three years ending 30 September 2023.

Plotting changes types by quarter immediately highlights the impact of the onset of COVID-19 (Figure 4). PIJ marks 25 March 2020 as the beginning of the economic impact of COVID-19, being the date that non-essential businesses were first ordered closed across the country. This project does not systematically collect information about the causal factors that lead to changes, but in the immediate aftermath of that order we observed significant decreases in news production and availability before the sector stabilised and began to rebound in June 2020, and more strongly in the following quarter (Q3/20).

There are some key events that account for many of the changes in the early COVID-19 period.

- In Q2/20, News Corp Australia significantly accelerated its shift to digital-only publishing by ending its print newspapers for 96 community and regional news titles across Victoria, New South Wales and particularly in Queensland, where it also closed more than a dozen papers.
- Also in Q2/20, Australian Community Media announced that it would temporarily suspend the majority of its regional non-daily newspapers. Many of those papers only partially returned; some without a print edition and many that no longer conduct original, local news production. In the period since, many of these titles have been closed or sold to other news entities.
- In Q3/20, we observed that many independent news publishers emerged, particularly in markets in Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia where large media companies had exited in the previous quarter. In some cases, furloughed or sacked journalists in these regions continued their reporting through new local business ventures; in others, existing media companies expanded into neighbouring regions.
- Over the subsequent quarters, many of those independent news outlets have failed.



Figure 5: Change types by quarter, three years ending 30 September 2023.

Figure 5 provides deeper detail about the types of changes observed over the three years to the current quarter.

Other major changes across the reporting period include:

- In Q1/21 ACM retired nearly two dozen of its mastheads, closing their individual websites and social media presences.²
- 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.³
- Also in Q3/21, further Australian Community Media newspapers were recorded as ‘Decrease in service’ following reductions to their publishing schedules.⁴
- 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.⁵
- 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.

² 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.

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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/>>

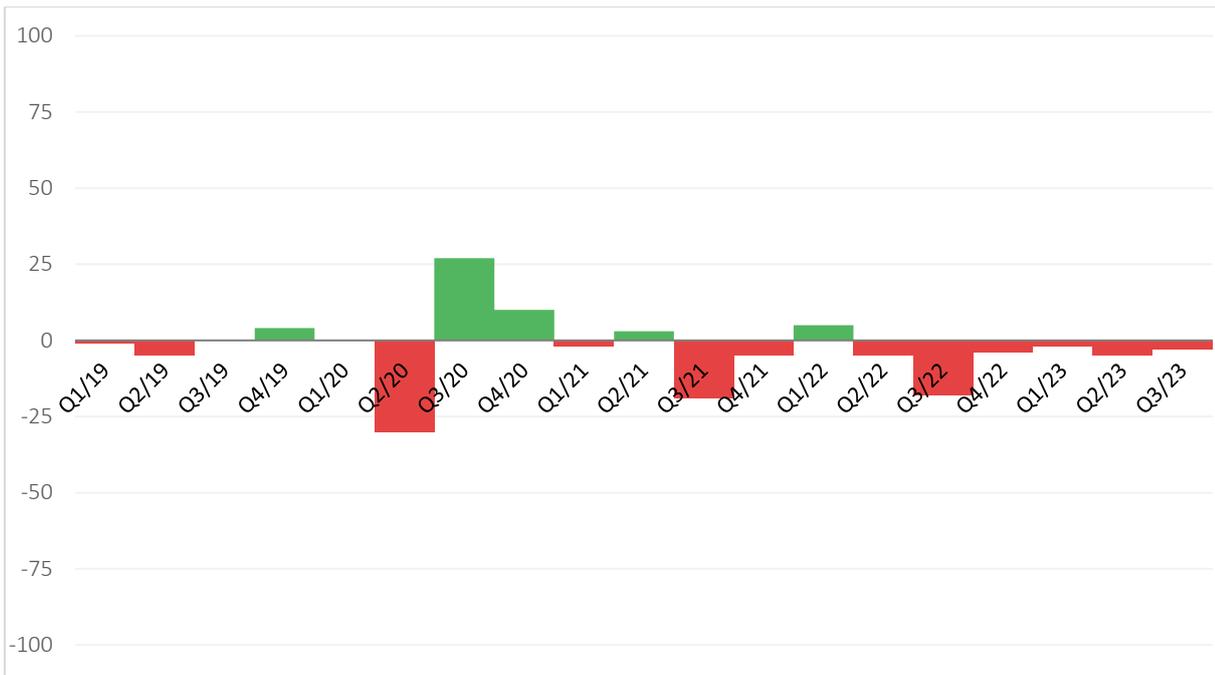
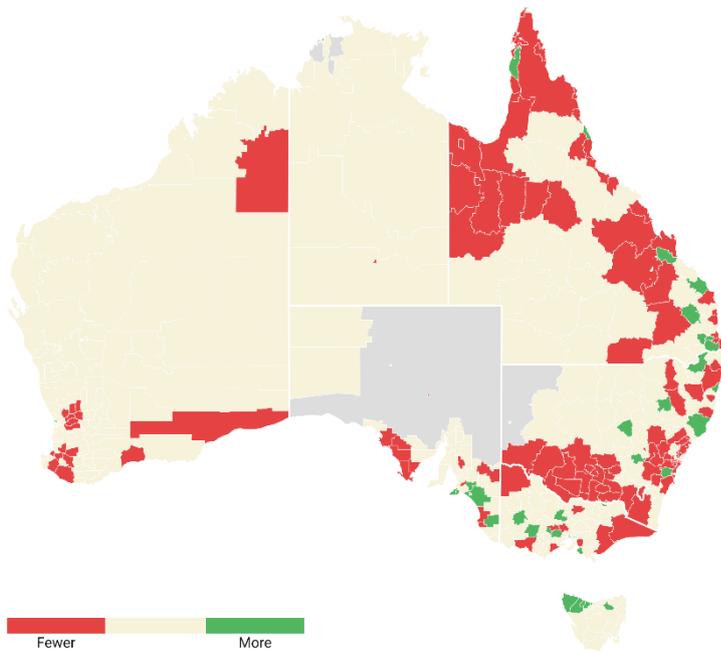


Figure 6: Net changes in news production by quarter, 1 January 2019 - 30 September 2023.

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 6 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 confirms ongoing volatility, with 151 expansions compared to 201 contractions since January 2019, a negative variance of -50. The variance is similar within the reporting period: 79 expansions to 124 contractions, a net loss of 45.

Isolating the data further to only the outlets that have opened or closed since 1 January 2019 shows a negative variance of -13. Within the reporting period, this variance is considerably worse: 100 outlets have closed and only 66 have opened, a net loss of 44.



◀ *Figure 7: Net loss and gain of news outlets since 1 January 2019 by local government area, 30 September 2023*

According to PIJl’s data, of 547 local government areas with at least one news producer, more than a quarter (154, 28 per cent) have fewer outlets now than at the beginning of 2019. Only 53 (10 per cent) have more producers over the same period. The remainder (347, 63 per cent) have the same number, though the active producers may have changed over time. ◀ Figure 7 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 Structure⁶ to make this determination, which allocates local government areas to one of five categories⁷ 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 6: 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.

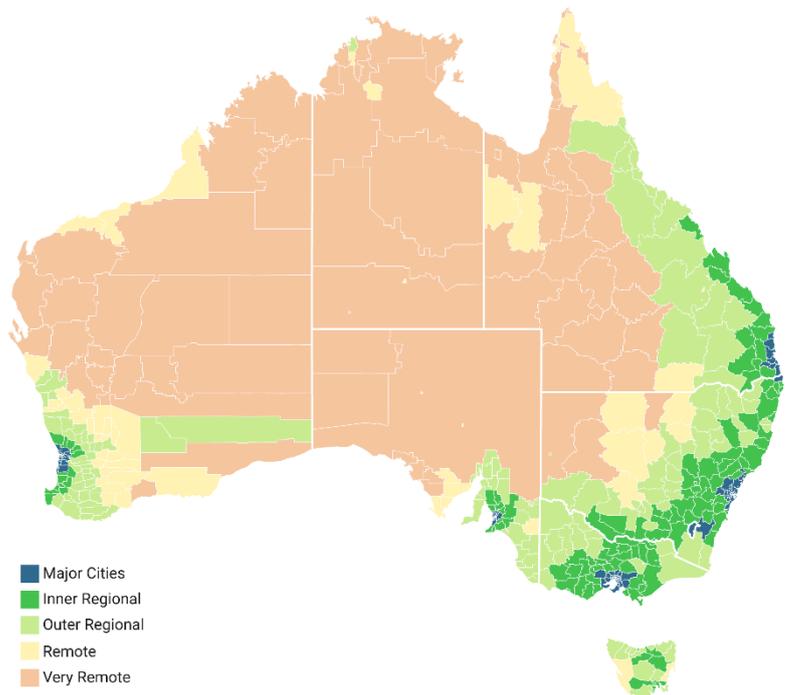


Figure 8: Distribution of remoteness areas by local government area.

⁶ 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>>

⁷ 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		62	70	26	6	7	109
Contractions		132	112	61	12	6	191
Total change		194	182	87	18	13	300
Net change		(-70)	(-42)	(-35)	(-6)	+1	(-152)

Table 7: Net change by remoteness and region since 1 January 2019, 30 September 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 9). 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	47	56	21	6	3	86	133
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	10	1	1	18	25
End of print edition	70	19	8	2	2	31	101
Decrease in service	4	24	16	1	0	41	45
Newsroom closure	2	4	0	0	0	4	6
Masthead or station closure	49	59	27	8	3	97	146
Total number of records	194	182	87	18	13	300	494

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

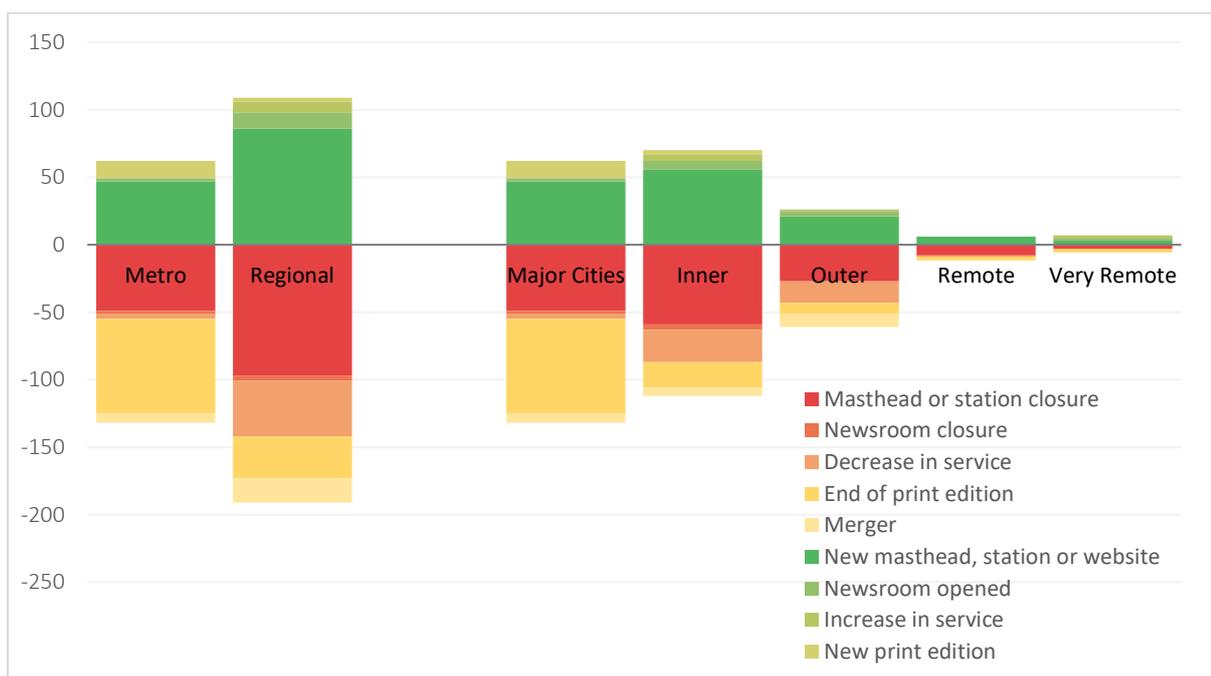


Figure 9: Change types by remoteness and region since 1 January 2019, 30 September 2023.

Figure 10 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.

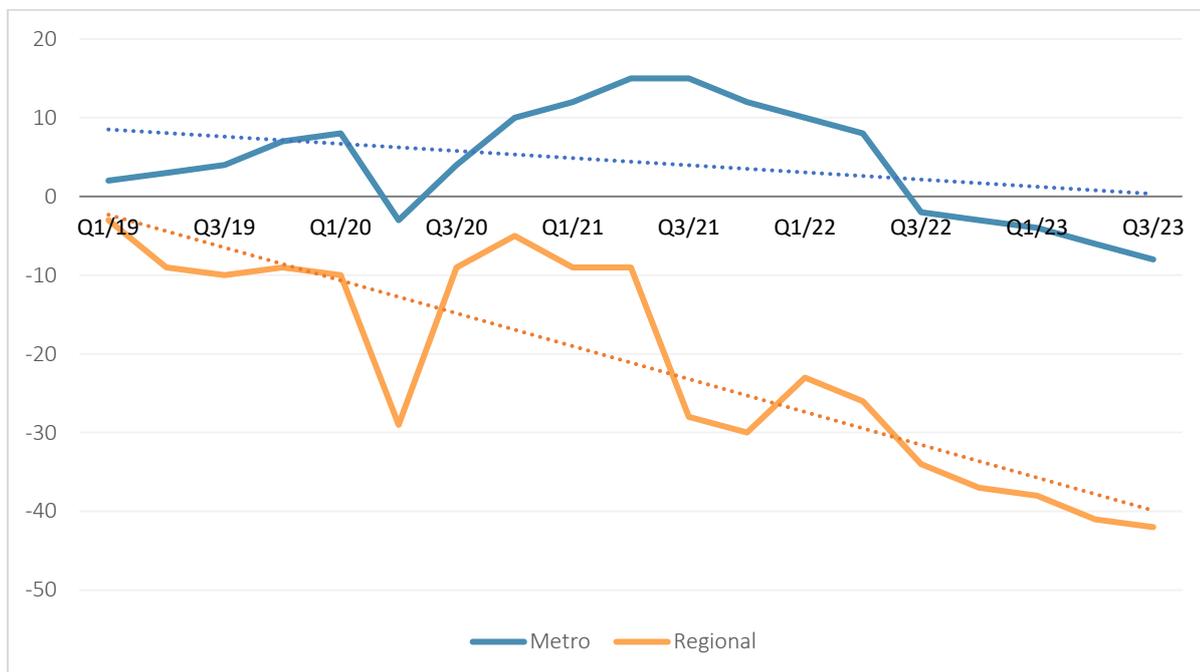


Figure 10: Net change in news production by region since 1 January 2019, 30 September 2023.

3 Quarterly results: news entities

PIJ 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 entity data reflects 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, PIJ 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, PIJ 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 6.

3.1.2 Results

As of 30 June 2023, the Australian News Index lists 675 news entities which operate 1,214 print, digital, radio and television news outlets. This is a modest increase in the number of recorded news entities, up from 663 in June 2023, a positive variance of 12. This does not entirely reflect an increase in the number of news outlets operating in Australia, however, and is at least partially a result of PIJ’s ongoing effort to reflect parent-subsidiary relationships between news entities.

Table 9 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.

The overwhelming majority of business entities (530, 79 per cent) only operate a single news outlet.

There were only a few changes to news outlet holdings since June 2023. Notably, the number of news entities that held one or two outlets increased by 10, equally split across both categories. The number of entities which held six outlets halved from six to three entities.

News outlet holdings	Subtotal	%
One outlet holding	530	79
Two outlet holdings	87	13
Three outlet holdings	17	3
Four outlet holdings	14	2
Five outlet holdings	8	1
Six outlet holdings	3	0
Seven or more outlet holdings	16	2
Total	675	100

There are now 16 business entities that are linked to seven or more outlets, up from 13 in June 2023. The number of outlets operated by this category has a very large range: between seven and 61 per news entity. This range has continued to narrow from prior quarterly reports (April, June 2023) due to ongoing work

Table 9: News entities according to the number of outlet holdings, 30 September 2023

identifying subsidiary companies and updating the data to reflect this.

3.1.3 Types of news entities

The business structures of news entities are provided in Table 10 using the entity types as defined by the Australia Business Register, found [here](#), and described in Section 6.

Entity Type	Subtotal	%
Australian private company	369	55
Other incorporated entity	171	25
Individual/sole trader	29	4
Discretionary trading trust	28	4
Australian public company	27	4
Other unincorporated entity	17	3
Co-operative	13	2
Other	21	3
Total	675	100

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 operating community news outlets. However, these entity types included different organisational structures, such as clubs, community resource organisations or unions.

Table 10: Number of news business entities by company structure, 30 September 2023

55 per cent of news entities operate as private companies, up one percentage point from June

2023, and by far the largest category within the data. There was a slight decrease (one entity) in the other incorporated entity type, and a slight increase of one entity each in the 'individual/sole trader', 'Australian public company', and 'other' entity types.

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 11 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	9
Southern Cross Austereo*	98	8
Australian Community Media*	72	6
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	53	4
Australian Radio Network*	53	4
Seven West Media*	45	4
Today News Group*	34	3
Star News Group*	24	2
Broadcast Operations Group*	18	1
Ace Radio Broadcasters*	18	1
Nine Entertainment Co.*	18	1
WIN Network*	17	1
McPherson Media Group*	11	1
Surf Coast News Australia	8	1
Vision Australia	8	1
Capital Radio Network*	7	1
Regional Media Corp	7	1
Font Publishing	7	1
Joint Venture duplicate entities ⁸	-6	-0
Subtotal for entities with > 6 holdings	607	50
Outlets held by all other entities	607	50
Total	1214	100

Table 11: Parent entities according to their outlet holdings, 30 September 2023

Table 11 shows 18 news entities that operate more than six news outlets. This does not reconcile with the number of news entities with seven or more outlets displayed in Table 9 because PIJ 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 607, or 50 per cent, of the total outlets in Australia at 30 September 2023. This has increased slightly from June 2023 (576 outlets, 48 per cent), but mostly

⁸ Table 11 includes entities classified as 'Joint Ventures' that operate outlets for which more than one parent entity holds an interest. To eliminate any duplicate outlets held by these joint ventures, PIJ has deducted them from the total number of outlets in this table.

represents the inclusion of three additional news entities in this table, up from the 15 news entities displayed in the June 2023 quarterly report. The three additional entities included in this table are Vision Australia (eight outlets), Capital Radio Network and Regional Media Corp (seven outlets each).

The top five news entities collectively operate 391 outlets, or 32 per cent of the total outlets. There has been little change in since June 2023 (381 outlets, or 31 per cent), with the ownership of total outlets up only one percentage point.

Most significant was a decrease in outlets held by Australian Community Media (72 outlets or six per cent), down 12 outlets from 84 in June 2023. This was largely due to the finalisation of the sale of seven outlets to Regional Media Corp, two outlets to Sports Entertainment Group, the closure of the Shoalhaven & Nowra News and the Hawkesbury Gazette, and the merging of the Mid-Coast Observer into the Macleay Argus.

Additionally, there were increases in news outlets held by Australian Radio Network, from 44 outlets (four per cent) in June 2023, to 53 outlets, and Southern Cross Austereo from 91 outlets (seven per cent) to 98 outlets (eight per cent).

PIJI notes again that these 18 news entities are listed by their outlet holdings, and that Table 11 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 11, but that it would be considered large in terms of its audience reach or productive capacity relative to other news entities.

Table 12 now displays joint venture entities (see footnote 8 above). There are currently six entities which operate news outlets as joint ventures included in the table, all of which are in the broadcasting sector. While some parent entities hold an equal 50 per cent interest in these joint ventures, there are some cases where interests may not be equally split. Due to a lack of publicly available data, PIJI has not included the percentage interest that each parent entity holds within these joint ventures.

PIJI has listed these joint ventures against both of the parent entities that hold an interest in them. In order to eliminate any duplicate outlets, PIJI has deducted these joint ventures from the total number of outlets in this table.

News Corp Australia operates the largest number of outlets, with 115, around nine per cent of outlets in the database.

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.

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 12 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 (54), only about four per cent of the total outlets. Five entities are listed as operating more than one national scale outlet, while a further 40 operate one national scale outlet each.

Parent entity	Outlet holdings of national scale	% total outlets of national scale
News Corp Australia*	4	7
Special Broadcasting Service	4	7
Nine Entertainment Co.*	2	4
Private Media*	2	4
Schwartz Media*	2	4
Subtotal for entities with > 1 news outlets	14	26
Outlets held by all other entities	40	74
Total	54	100

Table 12: Parent entities with more than one outlet holding operating at a national scale, 30 September 2023

The total number of national outlets has increased by one due to the launch of the politics and business focussed outlet, Capital Brief, by Scire Business in August 2023.

4 Quarterly results: states and territories

The following tables show outlets and entities by state or territory at the end of the September 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	4	0	4	1	3	43	16	71
Local	16	363	24	205	80	46	219	115	1068
Metropolitan	0	2	0	2	1	0	3	3	11
State/territory	0	2	0	3	1	2	2	0	10
Subtotal	16	371	24	214	83	51	267	134	1160
National									54
Total									1214

Table 13: Count of outlets by coverage scale and state/territory, 30 September 2023.

Change category	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Total
Expansions	1	54	3	46	14	4	42	7	171
Contractions	1	125	2	97	21	1	62	14	323
Total change	2	179	5	143	35	5	104	21	494
Net change	0	(-71)	+1	(-51)	(-7)	+3	(-20)	(-7)	(-152)

Table 14: Net change by change category and state/territory since 1 January 2019, 30 September 2023.

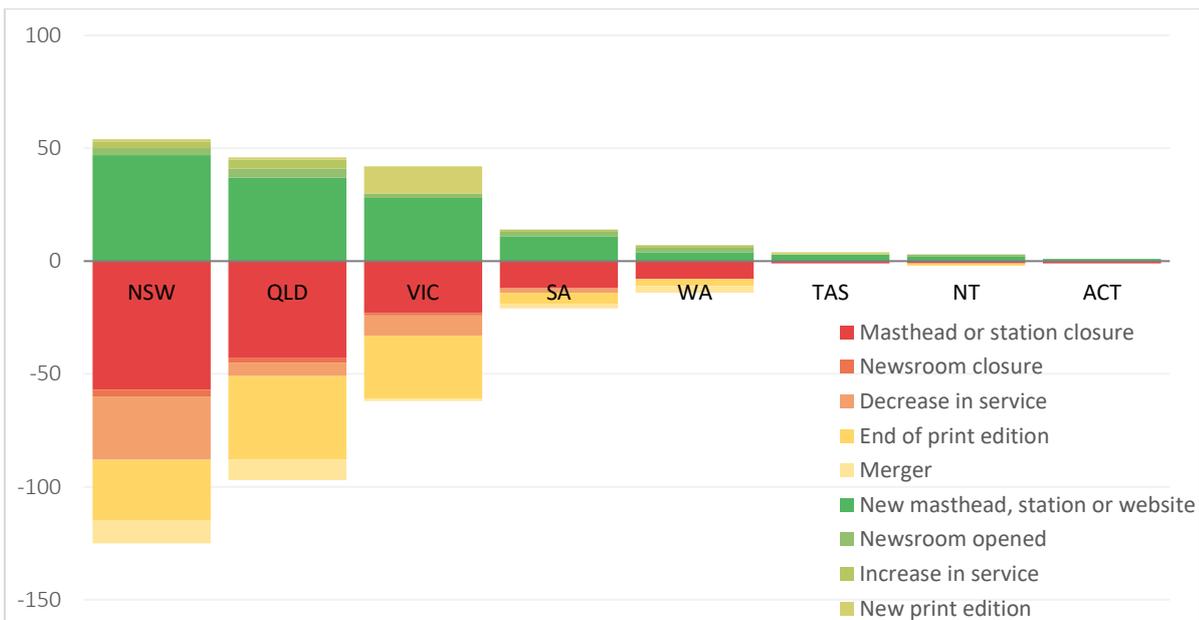


Figure 11: Change types by state or territory since 1 January 2019, 30 September 2023.

4.1.1 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
Total	0	16	0	0	16

◀ Table 15: Count of local news producers in the Australian Capital Territory, 30 September 2023.

▼ Figure 12: Count of local news producers in the Australian Capital Territory, excluding television, 30 September 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.

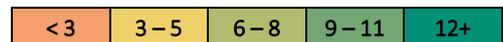


Table 17 shows the entities which operate more than one news outlet in the ACT.

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in ACT	% total outlets in ACT
Australian Radio Network*	3	19
Southern Cross Austereo*	3	19
Capital Radio Network*	2	13
Region Group	2	13
Joint Ventures	-2	-13
Subtotal for entities with > 1 news outlets	8	50
Outlets held by all other entities	8	50
Total	16	100

Table 16: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in the Australian Capital Territory, 30 September 2023

Though many outlets have a presence in Canberra to cover the federal government, PIJI's data focusses on outlets which cover local issues such as the ACT Legislative Assembly and other issues.

The ACT has 16 of those local outlets, or around one percent of the total outlets across the country. Three news entities, Australian Radio Network, Southern Cross Austereo, and Capital Radio Network, hold more than one outlet in the ACT.

Two of the three outlets held by Australian Radio Network and Southern Cross Austereo are operated as a joint venture by the two companies.

Region Group publishes two outlets in the ACT, RiotACT and My Gungahlin.

4.1.2 New South Wales

	Community	Local	Metro	State	Total
Print	4	158	2	1	165
Digital	0	68	0	1	69
Radio	0	125	0	0	125
Television	0	12	0	0	12
Total	4	363	2	2	371

◀ Table 17: News producers in New South Wales, 30 September 2023.

▼ Figure 13: Count of local news producers in New South Wales, excluding television, by local government area, 30 September 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, PIJL 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.

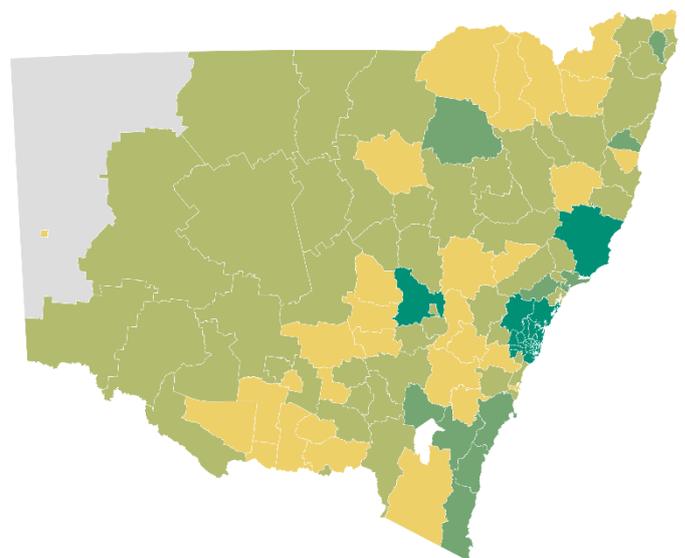
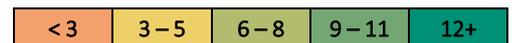


Table 19 below shows the entities in New South Wales which operate more than seven news outlets.

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in NSW	% total outlets in NSW
Australian Community Media*	57	15
News Corp Australia*	36	10
Southern Cross Austereo*	19	5
Broadcast Operations Group*	17	5
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	14	4
Australian Radio Network	8	2
Subtotal for entities with > 7 news outlets	151	41
Outlets held by all other entities	220	59
Total	371	100

Table 18: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in New South Wales, 30 September 2023

New South Wales has the highest number of outlets in the country, with 371 or about 31 per cent of the total outlets. Six new entities collectively operate 151 outlets, or 41 per cent of all outlets in NSW. Australian Community Media operates the most outlets, 57, down 10 outlets from 67 in June 2023.

Combined, Australian Community Media and News Corp Australia collectively operate 25 per cent of total NSW outlets, or 93 outlets.

Entities not listed but with considerable outlet holdings include Regional Media Corp (7), Win Network (6), and Community Broadcast Network (5).

4.1.3 Northern Territory

	Community	Local	Metro	Territory	Total
Print	0	5	0	0	5
Digital	0	1	0	0	1
Radio	0	13	0	0	13
Television	0	5	0	0	5
Total	0	24	0	0	24

◀ Table 19: News producers in the Northern Territory, 30 September 2023.

▼ Figure 14: Count of local news producers in the Northern Territory, excluding television, by local government area, 30 September 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.

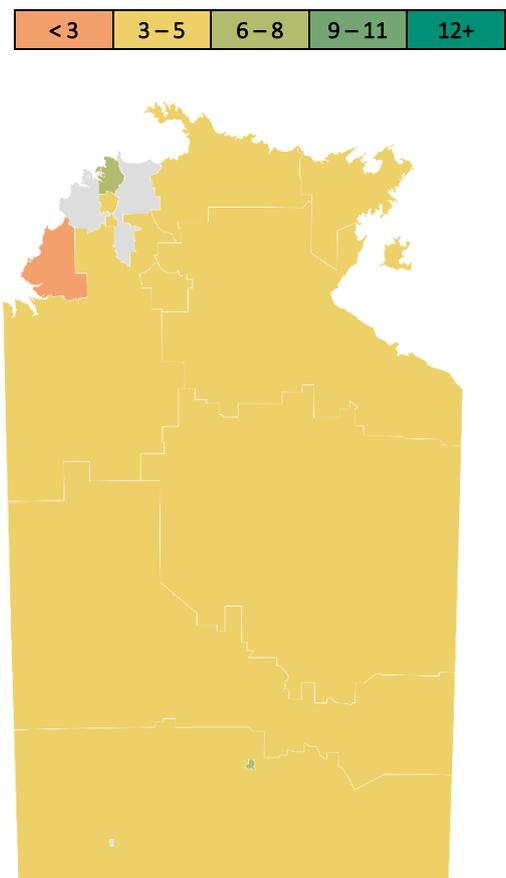


Table 21 below shows the entities in the Northern Territory which operate more than one outlet.

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in NT	% total outlets in NT
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	3	13
Southern Cross Austereo*	3	13
Australian Radio Network*	2	8
Nine Entertainment Co*	2	8
Joint Ventures	-1	-4
Subtotal for entities with > 1 news outlets	9	37
Outlets held by all other entities	15	63
Total	24	100

Table 20: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in the Northern Territory, 30 September 2023

The Northern Territory has 24 outlets, or two per cent of total outlets, up one outlet from June 2023 due to the launch of the Centralian Today by Today News Group.

Four entities in the Northern Territory operate more than one outlet, with the ABC and Southern Cross Austereo both holding three outlets each, or a combined 26 per cent of total outlets in the NT.

Nine Entertainment Co and Southern Cross Austereo operate one entity under a joint venture agreement, and therefore one outlet has been deducted from the total number of outlets in the Northern Territory.

4.1.4 Queensland

	Community	Local	Metro	State	Total
Print	3	72	1	2	78
Digital	1	48	1	1	51
Radio	0	79	0	0	79
Television	0	6	0	0	6
Total	4	205	2	3	214

◀ Table 21: News producers in Queensland, 30 September 2023.

▼ Figure 15: Count of local news producers in Queensland, excluding television, by local government area, 30 September 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.

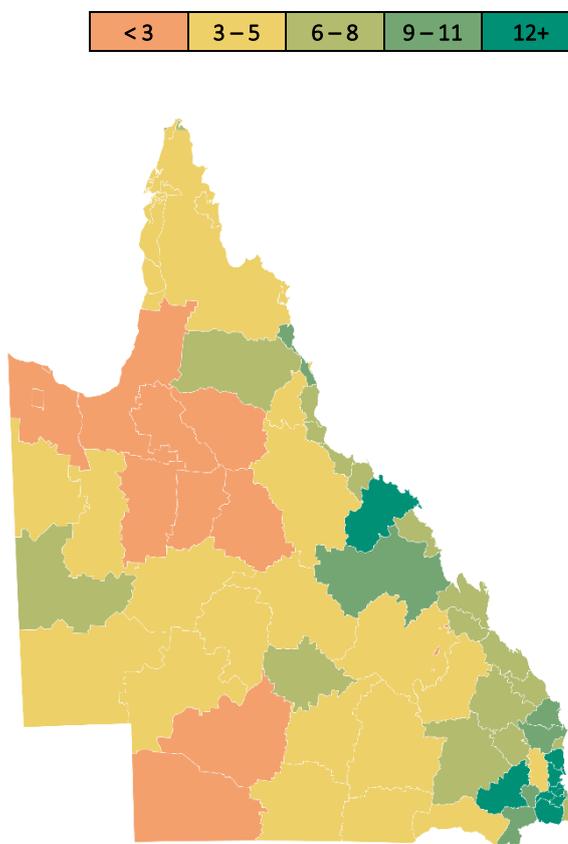


Table 23 shows the entities in Queensland which operate more than seven outlets.

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in QLD	% of total outlets in QLD
News Corp Australia*	42	20
Southern Cross Austereo*	23	10
Today News Group*	17	8
Australian Radio Network*	14	7
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	11	5
Subtotal for entities with > 7 news outlets	107	50
Outlets held by all other entities	107	50
Total	214	100

Table 22: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in Queensland, 30 September 2023

In Queensland, there were a total of 214 associated outlets (18 per cent of total outlets). Five news entities collectively operate 107 outlets or 50 per cent of QLD outlets.

News Corp Australia operates 42, or 20 per cent of, Queensland outlets, almost double the holdings of the next news entity.

Southern Cross Austereo has increased its holdings by two outlets since June 2023, due to the inclusion of additional broadcasters in PIJ's data.

4.1.5 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
Total	1	80	1	1	83

◀ Table 23: News producers in South Australia, 30 September 2023.

▼ Figure 16: Count of local news producers in South Australia, excluding television, by local government area, 30 September 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).

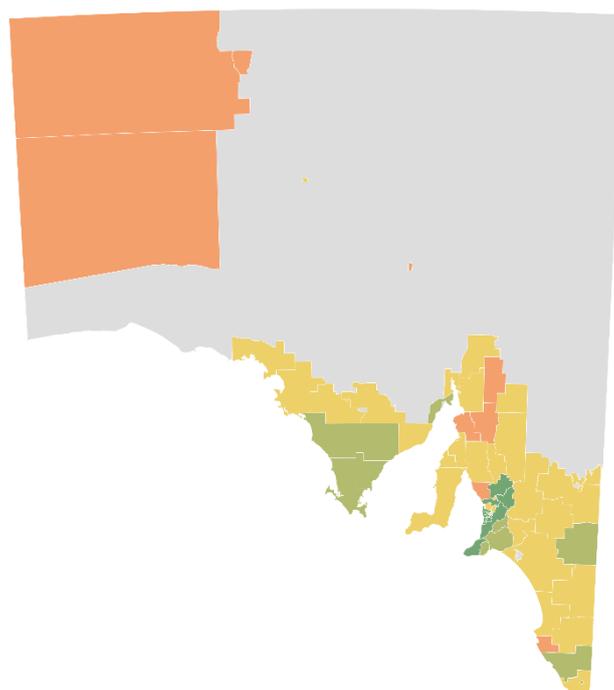
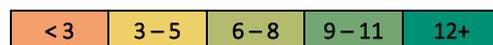


Table 25 below shows the entities in South Australia which operate more than three outlets.

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in SA	% total outlets in SA
Today News Group*	16	19
News Corp Australia*	11	13
Australian Radio Network *	9	11
Southern Cross Austereo*	7	8
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	5	6
Subtotal for entities with > 3 news outlets	48	57
Outlets held by all other entities	35	43
Total	83	100

Table 24: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in South Australia, 30 September 2023

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 48 outlets or 58 per cent of total outlets in South Australia.

Today News Group holds 16 outlets, or 19 per cent of South Australian outlets, unchanged since June 2023.

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.

4.1.6 Tasmania

	Community	Local	Metro	State	Total
Print	3	22	0	1	26
Digital	0	4	0	1	5
Radio	0	17	0	0	17
Television	0	3	0	0	3
Total	3	46	0	2	51

◀ Table 25: News producers in Tasmania, 30 September 2023.

▼ Figure 17: Count of local news producers in Tasmania, excluding television, by local government area, 30 September 2023.

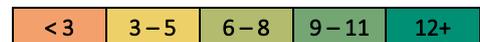
Tasmania has a higher proportion of independent news producers to large media companies compared to other states and territories, with News Corp and Australian Community Media present in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie, and the island otherwise covered by small-medium companies.

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.

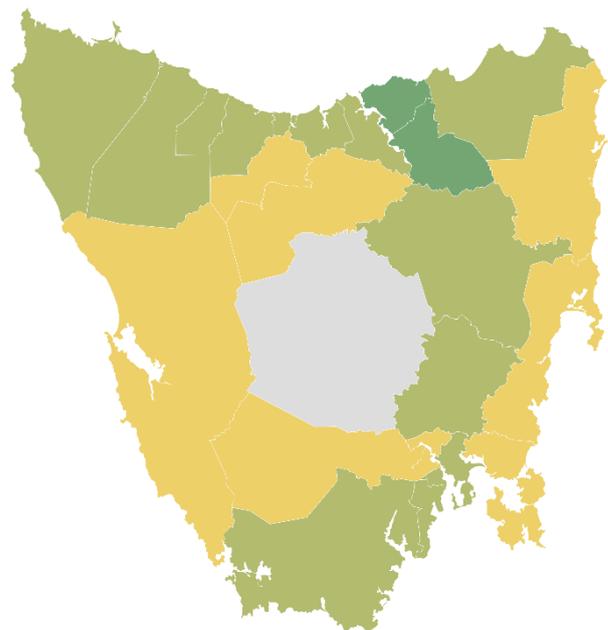


Table 27 below shows the entities in Tasmania which operate more than two outlets.

News entity	Outlet holdings in TAS	% total outlets in TAS
Australian Radio Network	9	18
Font Publishing	7	14
Southern Cross Austereo*	4	8
News Corp Australia*	3	6
Corporate Communications (Tas.)	3	6
Subtotal for entities with > 2 news outlets	26	52
Outlets held by all other entities	25	48
Total	51	100

Table 26: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in Tasmania, 30 September 2023

Tasmania has 51 outlets, or 4 per cent of the total outlets across Australia. Five entities operate 26 outlets or 51 per cent of the total Tasmania outlets.

Australian Radio Network operates the largest number of news outlets in the state, with 9 outlets or 18 per cent of the total Tasmania outlets. ARN's holdings have increased by an outlet due to the inclusion of a broadcasting outlet not previously in PIJ's data.

Font Publishing, also known as Font Public Relations, continues to have a significant presence in Tasmania, operating 7 outlets, or 14 per cent.

4.1.7 Victoria

	Community	Local	Metro	State	Total
Print	39	118	3	1	161
Digital	4	22	0	1	27
Radio	0	70	0	0	70
Television	0	9	0	0	9
Total	43	219	3	2	267

◀ Table 27: News producers in Victoria, 30 September 2023.

▼ Figure 18: Count of local news producers in Victoria, excluding television, by local government area, 30 September 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.

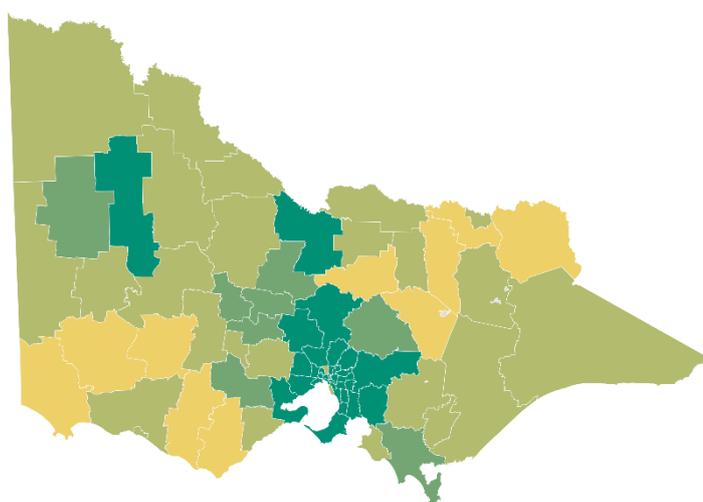
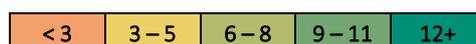


Table 29 shows the entities in Victoria which operate more than seven outlets.

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
McPherson Newspapers*	8	3
Surf Coast News Australia	8	3
Subtotal for entities with > 7 news outlets	87	32
Outlets held by all other entities	180	68
Total	267	100

Table 28: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in Victoria, 30 September 2023

Victoria has 267 associated outlets or 22 per cent of the total outlets. The listed seven news entities operate 87 outlets or 33 per cent of the total Victorian outlets, considerably less than in other states, indicating a more even spread of outlet holdings across Victorian news entities.

Star News Group, which had the highest outlet holding in Victoria with 20 outlets or seven per cent of total VIC outlets, is the sister company of Today News Group and operates outlets predominately within Melbourne’s suburbs and surrounding areas such as the Yarra Ranges.

McPherson Newspapers, also known as McPherson Media Group, operates the majority (eight out of 11) of its outlets in Victoria, mostly in the Hume region.

North East Media (six outlets), Hyperlocal News (five outlets) and the McCullough Family Trust (five outlets) are not included in this table but have notable outlet holdings in Victoria.

4.1.8 Western Australia

	Community	Local	Metro	State	Total
Print	15	52	1	0	68
Digital	1	5	2	0	8
Radio	0	52	0	0	52
Television	0	6	0	0	6
Total	16	115	3	0	134

◀ Table 29: News producers in Western Australia, 30 September 2023.

▼ Figure 19: Count of local news producers in Western Australia, excluding television, by local government area, 30 September 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.

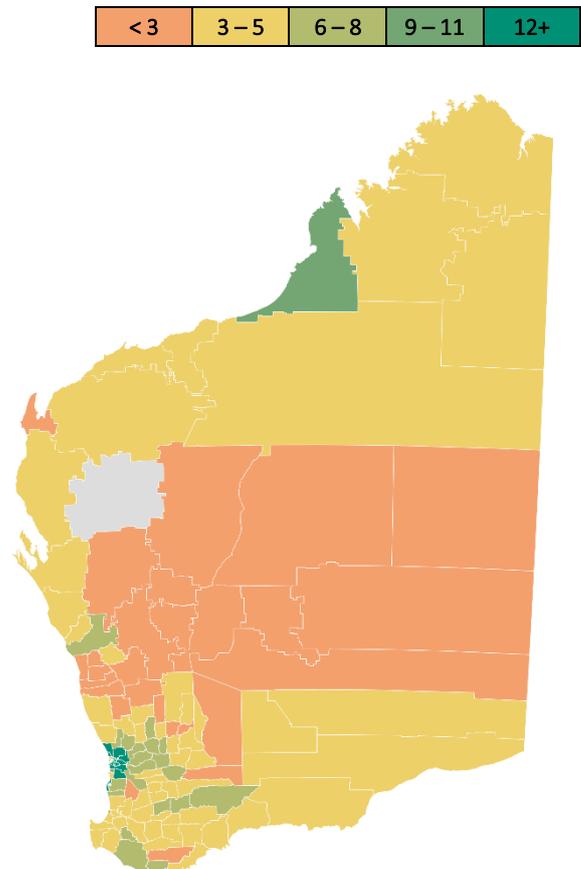


Table 29 below shows the entities in Western Australia which operate more than four outlets.

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in WA	% total outlets in WA
Seven West Media*	35	26
Southern Cross Austereo*	29	22
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	7	5
The Herald Publishing Company	5	4
Subtotal for entities with > 4 news outlets	76	57
Outlets held by all other entities	58	43
Total	134	100

Table 30: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in Western Australia, 30 September 2023

Western Australia has 134 associated outlets or 11 per cent of total outlets across Australia. The four listed news entities operate 76 outlets or 57 per cent of total outlets in WA. The slight increase of one outlet each for Seven West Media and Southern Cross Austereo from June 2023 represents a review of PIJJ's data and the inclusion of already established outlets in our database, rather than new outlets opening in the state.

Just two entities combined, Seven West Media and Southern Cross Austereo, operate 48 per cent (64 outlets) of the total outlets in Western Australia.

Australian Community Media, which previously had four outlets in the state, has finalised the sale of two of its titles to Sports Entertainment Network, which holds only those two outlets in PIJJ's database.

[Australian News Sampling Project]

Case study, September 2023:

Sunraysia region

Victoria and New South Wales

5 Australian News Sampling Project

The results presented here are from a September 2023 survey of four local neighbouring government areas in Victoria and New South Wales: the rural cities of Mildura and Swan Hill and the shires of Wentworth and Balranald.

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 (LGA) 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.

5.1 Sunraysia region, Victoria & New South Wales

Mildura is the main centre of Sunraysia, a region that also includes the town of Swan Hill on the Victorian side of the border, and the New South Wales towns of Wentworth and Balranald. The four LGAs that Sunraysia covers have a collective population of just under 90,000 residents.



Region

Land area	7 641 414 ha
Residents	88 036

Population centres

Mildura	Wentworth
Swan Hill	Balranald
Robinvale	Euston

News outlets (September 2023)

Print	5
Digital	1
Radio	9
Television	9

The Sunraysia region has high news outlet density.

The Elliot Newspaper Group publishes the two major newspapers in the region – the Sunraysia Daily in the Mildura region and The Guardian in Swan Hill. News Corp has a hyperlocal digital presence in The Mildura News. The Robinvale Sentinel is an independent local newspaper in Swan Hill Rural City, while The Riverine Grazier, based in the unsampled New South Wales local government area Hay Shire Council, also provides coverage of the broader Riverina region including Balranald Shire. The North West Express, based in Ouyen, covers a region west along the Mallee Highway to the South Australian border, north to Merbein and south to Mittyack and Patchewollock.

Southern Cross Austereo’s Triple M and hit brands are both present, as is Australian Broadcasting Corporation with a newsroom dedicated to Mildura-Swan Hill and the Riverina. ACE Radio Broadcasters operates 1332 3SH and Mixx 107.7 FM from Swan Hill. Flow FM holds a license to broadcast across most of central regional Australia and the Australian Radio Network operates River 1467 from Mildura. The Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association radio is Australia’s first Aboriginal station and is based in Alice Springs.

Wentworth (town only, excluding the rest of Wentworth LGA) and Mildura are part of the Mildura/Sunraysia TV1 licence area which is covered by Nine Mildura, Prime 7 Mildura and 10 Mildura. Balranald (town only, excluding the rest of Balranald LGA) and Swan Hill are part of the Regional Victoria TV1 licence area which is covered by WIN, Prime7 and 10 networks. The local government areas of Wentworth and Balranald, excluding the town centres, are part of the Remote Central & Eastern Australia TV1 and TV2 licence areas and are covered by Imparja Television, as well as 10 and Seven Central.

5.1.1 Local news producers

Outlet	Format	Operating entity	Scale	Total
10 (CDT, IDQ)	Television	Central Digital Television Pty Limited	Local	0
10 (GLV, BCV)	Television	Southern Cross Communications Pty Limited	Local	0
10 Mildura (MDV)	Television	Mildura Digital Television Pty Ltd	Local	0
1332 3SH (3SH)	Radio	Ace Radio Broadcasters Pty Limited	Local	0
ABC Mildura-Swan Hill (3MIL)	Radio	Australian Broadcasting Corporation	Local	32
ABC Riverina (2CO)	Radio	Australian Broadcasting Corporation	Local	40
CAAMA Radio (8KIN)	Radio	Central Australia Aboriginal Media Association	Local	0
Flow FM (8SAT)	Radio	W & L Phillips Pty Limited	Local	0
hit99.5 Sunraysia (3MDA)	Radio	Radio 3MA Pty Ltd	Local	0
Imparja Television (IMP)	Television	Imparja Television Pty Ltd	Local	0
Mixx 107.7 FM (3SHI)	Radio	Ace Radio Broadcasters Pty Limited	Local	0
Nine Mildura (STV)	Television	WIN Television Mildura Pty Ltd	Local	0
North West Express	Print	Mallee Printers	Local	0
Prime7 Mildura (PTV)	Television	Prime Television (Victoria) Pty Limited	Local	0
Prime7 Regional Victoria (AMV)	Television	Prime Television (Victoria) Pty Limited	Local	0
River 1467 (3ML)	Radio	Radio Central Victoria Pty Ltd	Local	0
Robinvale Sentinel	Print	Robinvale Printers Pty Ltd	Local	65
Seven Central (QQQ, ITQ)	Television	Regional Television Pty Limited	Local	0
Sunraysia Daily	Print	Elliott Newspaper Group Proprietary Limited	Local	212
The Guardian (Swan Hill)	Print	Elliott Newspaper Group Proprietary Limited	Local	175
The Mildura News	Digital	News Corp Australia Pty Limited	Local	85
The Riverine Grazier	Print	Riverine Grazier Pty Ltd	Local	159
Triple M 97.9 Sunraysia (3RMR)	Radio	Radio 3MA Pty Ltd	Local	0
WIN Regional Victoria (VTV)	Television	WIN Television VIC Pty Ltd	Local	0
Total				768

Table 31: News producers in Sunraysia and the total number of articles assessed, September 2023

5.1.2 Changes observed in the Sunraysia region

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

The Elliott Newspaper Group temporarily closed the Sunraysia Daily, The Guardian and Sunraysia Life, along with another paper in a neighbouring region. Sunraysia Daily and The Guardian reopened shortly after, resulting in a decrease in service for both outlets. However, Sunraysia Life closed permanently.

Date	Change observed
28/03/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sunraysia Daily decreased in service ● The Guardian (Swan Hill) decreased in service
18/09/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sunraysia Life closed
25/03/2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Mildura News opened
27/03/2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Swan Hill ABC newsroom opened
31/12/2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mildura Independent closed ● Mildura Weekly closed

Table 32: Changes observed in the Sunraysia region since 1 January 2019.

News Corp opened a digital outlet, The Mildura News, in August 2020. In 2022 the ABC opened a new newsroom in Swan Hill and both the Mildura Independent and the Mildura Weekly closed.

5.1.3 Sample

Of the 24 outlets across the region, the digital output of the five publishers and the two ABC newsrooms were assessed between 1 – 30 September 2023. For most outlets this represented the total of their digital output across that period. For the Sunraysia Daily, which publishes four times per week, editions on Friday 1, Wednesday 6, Monday 11, Saturday 22 and Wednesday 27 September were coded. For The Guardian, which publishes bi-weekly, editions on Friday 1, Tuesday 5, Friday 15, Tuesday 19, Friday 22 September were coded.

A total of 768 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.

The North West Express, based in Ouyen, was not included in the sample. It does not have a digital edition and was therefore not available for assessment.

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

Overall, we found most outlets produced high levels of public interest journalism, with community as the largest focus for all outlets except the two ABC newsrooms, which published more stories about government, and the News Corp hyperlocal, which published more stories about courts and crime. Schools and other education services received considerable coverage, as did health and police. We found mixed levels of localism, with strong local coverage by the independent outlets, and original local coverage combined with state, national and international news syndicated from wire services at the Elliott Newspapers. Relatively high regional coverage from most outlets was noted. The ABC newsrooms provided more focus on state and national-scale stories.

Separately, we found that coverage of the national referendum on establishing a Voice to Parliament was rare at most outlets. The majority – 18 of 26 – were published by the Swan Hill Guardian, with little at other titles.

5.1.4 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				Subtotal	Excluded	Total
	PIJ		Other				
	n	%	n	%			
ABC Mildura-Swan Hill	27	90	3	10	30	2	32
ABC Riverina	38	97	1	3	39	1	40
Robinvale Sentinel	46	100	0	0	46	19	65
Sunraysia Daily	136	68	64	32	200	12	212
The Guardian (Swan Hill)	122	86	20	14	142	33	175
The Mildura News	20	95	1	5	21	64	85
The Riverine Grazier	128	95	7	5	135	24	159
Total	517	84	96	16	613	155	768

Table 33: Stories by whether they are public interest journalism, other journalism, or excluded from the sample, September 2023

Table 33 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 Mildura 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. All 64 excluded stories from this new outlet's sample are of this type.

Stories can be allocated up to four subjects each. As such, Table 34 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).

Outlet	Public interest journalism											
	Government			Courts and crime			Community			Public services		
	All	U	% U	All	U	% U	All	U	% U	All	U	% U
ABC Mildura-Swan Hill	31	18	60	5	4	13	10	8	27	6	6	20
ABC Riverina	30	21	54	7	7	18	19	13	33	13	11	28
Robinvale Sentinel	11	8	17	0	0	0	55	40	87	13	9	20
Sunraysia Daily	79	63	32	22	17	9	87	62	31	30	27	14
The Guardian (Swan Hill)	75	40	28	6	6	4	106	78	55	32	27	19
The Mildura News	2	1	5	27	14	67	5	5	24	3	3	14
The Riverine Grazier	34	22	16	41	16	12	154	94	70	14	14	10
Total	262	173	28	108	64	10	436	300	49	111	97	16

Table 34: Breakdown of public interest journalism by topic category, September 2023

Community was the largest focus for all outlets except the two ABC newsrooms, which published more stories about government, and the News Corp hyperlocal, which published more stories about courts and crime.

Overall, local sport was the largest community focus, with 147 stories coded to this category. For outlets where community coverage was the strongest public interest focus, local sport made up the biggest number of these stories. This was particularly true at The Guardian (49 stories), The Riverine Grazier (42), Sunraysia Daily (27) and Robinvale Sentinel (23).

Although not the largest focus of community coverage, The Mildura News and ABC Riverina each published three stories about sport across the month. These stories mostly reported on local football and rugby grand finals. ABC Mildura-Swan Hill did not publish any stories about sport across the month.

Individuals were the next biggest focus (67 stories), dominated by The Riverine Grazier's output (31), followed by The Guardian (12), Daily (10), ABC Mildura-Swan Hill and Robinvale Sentinel (5 each), ABC Riverina (3) and the News (1). The Grazier profiled local small business owners and recognised the work of locals in mental health advocacy and high school student support staff. Most of the individuals profiled by ABC Riverina were involved in arts and culture, whereas ABC Mildura-Swan Hill profiled volunteers – one running a weather station, and another rescuing books that would otherwise have been thrown away. There was some crossover between community individual stories and community history at this outlet, with reports on a cold case in Renmark and a statue near Swan Hill commemorating of Australia's first female riverboat skipper. The latter story also received coverage from The Guardian. Profiling individuals alongside local sport reporting extended to other outlets.

Some of the focus on community stories related to community events, with 58 stories coded to this category. The Grazier contributed the most to community event stories (26), along with the two Elliott Group newspapers. The Hay annual show took place in September and was the subject of four stories in the Grazier, which also covered events such as the Girl Guides' centenary event and local school events, accompanied by original photography. The Daily covered arts and culture events, a fundraiser for the local hospital and a torch relay for Legacy clubs around the world in Mildura. There were also a number of local sports events, such as a multicultural soccer tournament supported by AMES Australia and the Sunraysia Football and Netball League awards night covered. The Guardian covered events linked to Swan Hill primary and secondary schools, such as a Fathers' Day event and a regional cooking competition for hospitality students.

Other categories of community story received less attention: community history and organisations (19 stories each), community health and small, local businesses (15 stories each), and facilities (10) were the largest remaining groups.

Across all outlets, government stories were relatively evenly split between state (39) and federal (31), with local governments (25) slightly further behind. Some individual outlets displayed stronger editorial preferences. The two ABC newsrooms showed a strong preference for state stories (15 stories, four federal, three local combined). The Sentinel and Grazier focussed on local government – The Sentinel with six local stories and four state, and the Grazier also with six local stories, four federal and three state. The News only published one government story, which was local. The Sunraysia Daily and Guardian were more evenly mixed – the Daily with 13 federal, 6 state and 5 local, and the Guardian with 11 state, 10 federal and 4 local.

In state stories, the ABC covered the management of varroa mite, the resignation of former Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews, Victoria's Indigenous truth-telling inquiry, and the NSW birth trauma inquiry. The Sentinel and The Guardian also covered the detection of varroa mite in NSW.

The print outlets covered housing policy announcements in Victoria to tackle the housing crisis as well as provisions in the NSW budget for a hydrotherapy pool in Hay, and health and education spending in the Murray electorate. State government stories in the Daily and Sentinel concerned health services, such as a new sexual and reproductive hub in Mildura and a new Emergency Department in Swan Hill.

The Guardian tended to focus on state-wide government funding announcements across Victoria, including the Swan Hill region, such as grants for local sports clubs, combatting fruit fly, scholarships for teaching degrees, and construction of community batteries.

The Elliott Group newspapers dominated federal government stories. National coverage centred on topics of the Voice to Parliament referendum and the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

The Sentinel and Grazier covered local government more than other levels of government. Both outlets tended to focus on council meetings, the functioning of local government. For example, the Sentinel provided coverage of a Balranald Shire Council meeting, flagging an election date next year for local government elections, and a Swan Hill Rural City Council meeting where a petition was tabled calling for better maintenance of the retail strip in Robinvale. Similarly, the Grazier reported on Balranald Shire Council meetings, updates to internal policies of Hay Shire Council and their completion of a housing audit. Some local government stories involved councils welcoming state government funding or planning announcements.

Sunraysia Daily provided strong coverage of Mildura City Council, including a Mildura councillor joining other leaders to rally in Melbourne for renewable energy. The paper also provided some coverage of Wentworth Shire Council's newly appointed mayor. Another story reported on the Mildura council-led upgrades to a local community complex. The Guardian published three stories on Swan Hill Rural City Council, including a council meeting and the same petition regarding the amenity of the shopping district also covered by the Sentinel.

At the public broadcaster, the Mildura-Swan Hill newsroom published two stories involving local government – both where Swan Hill Rural City Council had commented – one in response to union accusations of bullying within the council, and another in response to the restoration of a commemorative statue. The Riverina newsroom only published one local government story about the Campaspe Shire Council approving a housing development on floodplains.

The Mildura News published one story involving local government, though the reporting was limited to a spokesperson for Wentworth Shire Council's comments on the proposed relocation of the flying academy from Mildura Airport to Wentworth.

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. Education received the most coverage (36 stories), followed by health services (25), police (22), fire (10), other (seven) and care (three).

The Guardian published 15 stories about education over the month, featuring a number of profiles and interviews of schools in Swan Hill, as well as a TAFE careers open day, a day for primary school students to wear the colours of their favourite AFL teams, and the Minister for the Murray electorate welcoming increased education spending from the NSW budget. The Riverine Grazier published nine stories about education, covering student achievements, such as the winners of a public speaking competition and events, such as the last day of school for year 12 students.

Health services were mostly reported in Sunraysia Daily (seven stories), The Guardian, and The Sentinel (five each). The stories ranged from news about regional health care policy, upgrades to electronic medical records, recognising the dedicated service of first responders, and a Robinvale preschool dental visit. The ABC covered the inadequacy of regional health, including challenges accessing health services in regional areas, and shortages of regional dermatologists.

In police stories, concerns that regional Victorian towns such as Mildura and Swan Hill would lose their one-person police stations to fill vacant shifts at larger regional stations were covered by both Elliott Group newspapers, as were road safety warnings from Mildura and Swan Hill police for drivers over the AFL grand final weekend. Upgraded tasers for Swan Hill police and police reports tied to violent and non-violent crime was covered by The Guardian, while the Daily reported on a Blue Ribbon Remembrance Day service in Mildura and tended to publish state and nation-wide police reports on car crashes and arrests. Police stories from ABC Riverina in particular related to a manhunt for a fugitive by Victoria Police.

Although courts and crime was the least covered public interest category, there were higher levels of courts and crime reporting compared to other sampled regions to date. However, coverage varied between outlets. The News Corp hyperlocal focussed 14 of its 21 reported articles (67 per cent) on courts and crime – the majority of these articles reported on non-violent crimes such as shoplifting and theft, and the associated appearances at the Mildura Magistrates Court. There was one court appearance for violent crime reported. On the other hand, the Sentinel published no courts and crime stories across the month.

ABC Riverina published five crime and two court stories, including the spike in technology-facilitated stalking and a NSW Supreme Court decision granting powers to police to fly an at-risk teenager to a safe house. A cold case in Renmark, a scheduled hearing at Shepparton Magistrate's Court with WorkSafe, arrests over an alleged organised crime syndicate in Mildura, and a state-level story about a high court challenge to an electric vehicle tax were covered by the Mildura-Swan Hill newsroom.

The Grazier provided strong coverage of local courts by publishing a dedicated page of Hay Local Court reports each week. These summaries were also the only reporting of crime in each edition. The Daily also provided a relatively high volume of courts and crime coverage, though with a state or national focus rather than local.

The Guardian provided some crime reporting in the form of short descriptions of non-violent police reports. There were no court stories sampled.

5.1.5 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 Mildura-Swan Hill	12	40	5	17	13	43	10	33
ABC Riverina	17	44	8	21	23	59	15	39
Robinvale Sentinel	42	91	6	13	2	4	1	2
Sunraysia Daily	78	39	20	10	20	10	62	31
The Guardian (Swan Hill)	110	78	40	28	21	15	14	10
The Mildura News	18	86	4	19	0	0	0	0
The Riverine Grazier	127	94	6	4	3	2	3	2
Total	404	66	88	14	83	14	105	17

Table 35: Scale of coverage of reported stories, September 2023

We found mixed results, with very high levels of local-scale news coverage at both independent outlets – the Grazier and Sentinel, and high levels at the Guardian and News. Just under half of all stories were of local scale at the public broadcaster. Sunraysia Daily had the lowest proportion of local-scale news coverage, but published the third highest number of local stories overall.

Most outlets were fairly regional in focus, covering the sampled region of north-west Victoria, including Sunraysia, Millewa and the broader Mallee district. The Guardian also covered the central Murray, particularly in sports stories, while the ABC positioned its stories across agricultural regions such as the Murray-Darling Basin and Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area. The Riverina region in south-west New South Wales was also covered, largely due to the presence of ABC Riverina and The Riverine Grazier in the sample.

The two ABC outlets had a strong state focus, with roughly half of their news reporting on the state-scale. Around one-third of their coverage was at the national-scale, as was the coverage of Sunraysia Daily.

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

Outlet	LGA							
	Balranald		Mildura		Swan Hill		Wentworth	
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %
ABC Mildura-Swan Hill (3MIL)	1	3	5	17	3	10	0	0
ABC Riverina	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Robinvale Sentinel	18	39	6	13	38	83	0	0
Sunraysia Daily	5	3	60	30	8	4	13	7
The Guardian (Swan Hill)	16	11	2	1	88	62	1	1
The Mildura News	0	0	18	86	1	5	2	10
The Riverine Grazier	11	8	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 36: Localism of coverage of reported stories, September 2023

The localism of each story is presented in Table 36.

Each of the four LGAs samples received some level of coverage from a number of outlets. Mildura and Swan Hill received significant coverage. 86 per cent of stories from the News were located in Mildura. Together with Sunraysia Daily, both Mildura-based outlets also provided coverage of the bordering LGA of Wentworth in New South Wales. Swan Hill-based newspapers provided significant coverage of Swan Hill Rural City, as well as some coverage of Balranald Shire across the border.

Most outlets tended to cover more than one LGA, with the exception of ABC Riverina and the Riverine Grazier, which only covered Balranald. As outlets based outside of the sampled Sunraysia region, their inclusion was based on their coverage of Balranald, which they did provide local reporting of.

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

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.

5.1.6 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 (AAP), News Corp’s NCA Newswire or another agency, creative commons material from The Conversation or 360Info, 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 Mildura-Swan Hill (3MIL)	11	37	0	0	0	0	19	63
ABC Riverina	24	62	0	0	0	0	15	38
Robinvale Sentinel	0	0	0	0	0	0	46	100
Sunraysia Daily	0	0	91	46	35	18	73	36
The Guardian (Swan Hill)	2	1	4	3	1	1	134	95
The Mildura News	4	19	0	0	0	0	17	81
The Riverine Grazier	0	0	0	0	0	0	135	100
Total	41	7	95	16	36	6	439	72

Table 37: Syndication of reported stories, September 2023

Internal syndication was very high at both ABC newsrooms, especially ABC Riverina, with most content coming from elsewhere in the ABC network. The Mildura News also internally syndicated some of its content, with stories from elsewhere in the News Corp network.

Sunraysia Daily syndicated heavily from Australian Associated Press for its coverage of state, national and international events. This outlet was found to declare the origin of content in its digital editions, making it very easy to identify whether a story was syndicated from AAP and other wire or news sources. Similarly to the ABC, the syndication data at the Sunraysia Daily in this sample is robust relative to other outlets and therefore, may appear to syndicate more frequently.

The Guardian had low levels of syndicated content, while no syndication was found at the Grazier and Sentinel across the month.

5.2 Voice to Parliament

In June PIJ commenced collecting specific data about coverage of the October 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 2023.⁹

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 Mildura-Swan Hill (3MIL)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	100
ABC Riverina	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	100
Robinvale Sentinel	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	100
Sunraysia Daily	0	0	1	50	0	0	1	50
The Guardian (Swan Hill)	0	0	6	43	0	0	8	57
The Mildura News	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The Riverine Grazier	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	100
Total	0	0	7	35	0	0	13	65

Table 38: Syndication of reported stories, September 2023

In total we found 26 stories about the Voice to Parliament were published by the sampled outlets across the month. Six of these were excluded as they were not news pieces: four were opinion pieces about cultural heritage protection laws, the voting process and cases for and against; while the other two items were audience contributions.

The majority of items published – 14 of 20 – were published by The Guardian. These stories covered the referendum itself, arguments of local members of parliament and provided commentary on the yes and no campaigns. This outlet covered the position of various community organisations in the Mallee region, as did the Robinvale Sentinel.

Both The Guardian and ABC Mildura-Swan Hill covered an incident where letters sent to residents of Victoria's north-west were falsely claimed to be from the First Peoples' Assembly in Victoria.

Sunraysia Daily published two news stories: one about comments made by 'Yes' campaigner Noel Pearson about the federal opposition, and one about early voting locations in the Sunraysia region. The Grazier published a short summary on the announcement of the referendum date, while ABC Riverina reported that 'Yes' rallies had occurred around the nation.

The Mildura News did not publish any stories about the Voice to Parliament in the sampled month, though it is part of the broader Herald Sun and News Corp networks, which did.

⁹ 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>

6 ANDP 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.

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

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

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[Public Interest Journalism Initiative]

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