

[Public
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Australian News Data Report

Quarterly issue
December 2023

Australian News Data Report: December 2023

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Published by the Public Interest Journalism Initiative Limited, Melbourne, Australia.

For the data which informs this report, please visit:
<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/>

ISBN: 978-0-6459214-5-8

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Suggested citation

Dickson G. and Costa J. 2023. *Australian News Data Report: December 2023*. Melbourne: Public Interest Journalism Initiative. <<https://piji.com.au/research-and-inquiries/our-research/anmp/>>

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AUSTRALIAN NEWS DATA REPORT

December 2023

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1 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](#).

Further detail about the project, including eligibility, definitions and a methodology for categorising changes, can be found in Section 7: Data eligibility. We do not presume that this is complete data, but we do believe that this is the most comprehensive record of its kind.

This issue presents monthly and quarterly results as at 31 December 2023. No content sampling occurred in December as the closure of government, schools and courts across the month mean that content output is likely to be unrepresentative.

Feedback

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

[Australian News Data Report]

Monthly results: December 2023

2 ANDR Monthly: News outlets

As of 31 December 2023, the Australian News Index lists 1,211 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	451	8	5	9	538
Digital	6	165	3	5	43	222
Radio	0	397	0	0	1	398
Television	0	51	0	0	2	53
Total	71	1064	11	10	55	1211

Table 1: Active news outlets, 31 December 2023.

2.1.1 Market changes, December 2023

No changes were recorded in the reporting month.

PIJI is cautious about implementing market changes in December and January as many news outlets temporarily suspend or reduce their work over the summer.

2.1.2 Other changes to news outlet records

Two changes were made to other outlet records. This table does not include changes made to news entity records, which are reported separately in section 3.1.1.

#	Outlet		Description of change	Effective date
1	Yarrabilba Bulletin	QLD	Outlet closed	18/08/2023
2	Yass Phoenix	NSW	Outlet closed	30/06/2023

Table 3: Other changes to outlet records, November 2023.

The Yarrabilba Bulletin is a monthly news magazine published in the City of Logan, Queensland by Town Cryer Media. In June 2023 the Bulletin, alongside its sister title the Tamborine Bulletin, was suspended as the company introduced ‘more automated processes behind the scenes’, according to a notice on the site.¹ The Tamborine Bulletin returned in November 2023, but the Yarrabilba Bulletin remains closed. PIJI expects that this title will return to publication in the future and will restore it in the data when that occurs.

The Yass Phoenix was a digital news magazine in Yass, New South Wales, published by Roundbox Media. The most recent articles on the site were published in August 2023. The editor did not respond to emails sent in June and September, and PIJI has marked this outlet as closed. Roundbox Media’s three other Phoenix titles – in Hilltops, Hawkesbury and Griffith – continue to publish regularly.

¹ Yarrabilba Bulletin. 2023. Editor’s note. <<https://www.yarrabilbabulletin.com.au/>>

3 ANDR Monthly: News entities

As at 31 December 2023, the Australian News Index lists 678 news entities operating across Australia.

3.1.1 Changes to news entity records

No entity records were updated in December. The entities responsible for publishing the two entities listed as closed this month both maintain other titles and are thus unaffected.

[Australian News Data Report]

Quarterly results: Q4 2023

4 ANDR Quarterly: News outlets

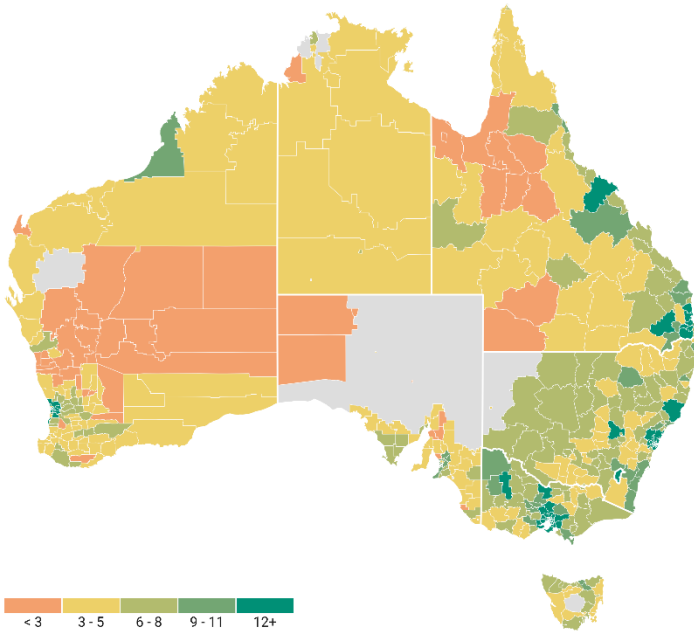


Figure 1: Count of local news producers, excluding television, by local government area, 31 December 2023.

Figure 2: Count of local news producers, excluding radio and television, by local government area, 31 December 2023.

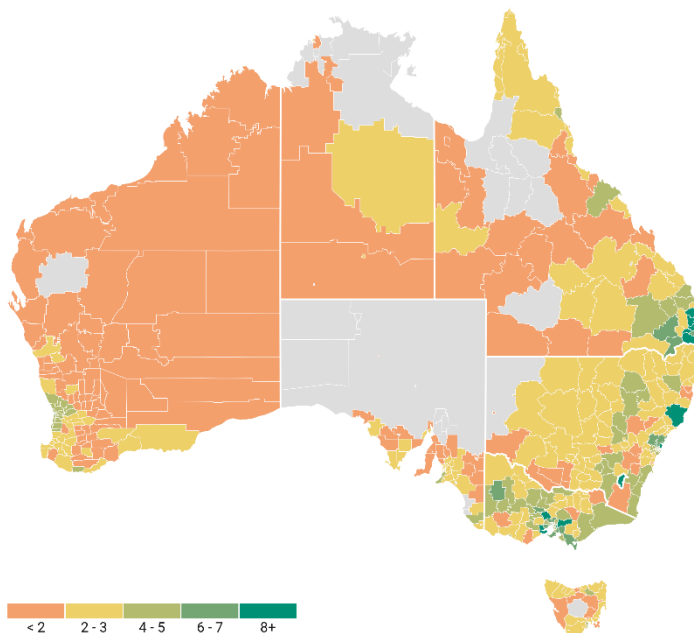


Figure 1 shows the distribution of metropolitan, local, and community-scale news producers by local government area around Australia. It includes publishers (print and digital) and radio broadcasters.

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.

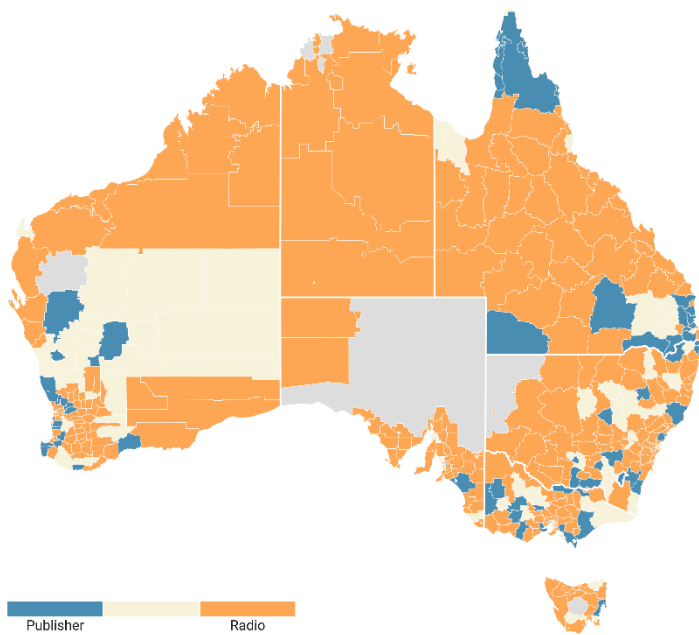


Figure 3: Local government areas according to whether they have more publisher outlets, radio outlets, or an equal number, 31 December 2023.

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 547 local government areas and other regions identified as having at least one news producer, more than two thirds (377, 69 per cent) have a greater number of radio outlets than publishers, only 80 have more publisher outlets (15 per cent) and

the remainder (91, 17 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.

4.1.1 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.

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

This list is unchanged from the previous quarter.

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

4.1.2 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 lists the changes as either expansions or contractions in news production and availability.

Table 2 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 3 groups those records according to their change category.

	This quarter	Year-on-year		Quarter-on-quarter	
Change type	Q4/23	Q4/22	Variance	Q3/23	Variance
Outlet opened	133	123	+10	132	+1
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	25	0
End of print edition	102	99	+3	101	+1
Decrease in service	44	44	0	44	0
Newsroom closed	6	6	0	6	0
Outlet closed	150	132	+18	150	0
Total number of records	498	466	+32	496	+2

Table 2: 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	Q4/23	Q4/22	Variance	Q3/23	Variance
Expansions	171	161	+10	170	+1
Contractions	327	305	+22	326	+1
Net change	(-156)	(-144)	(-12)	(-156)	0

Table 3: Net change by change category since 1 January 2019, this quarter, year-on-year and quarter-on-quarter.

PIJl'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.

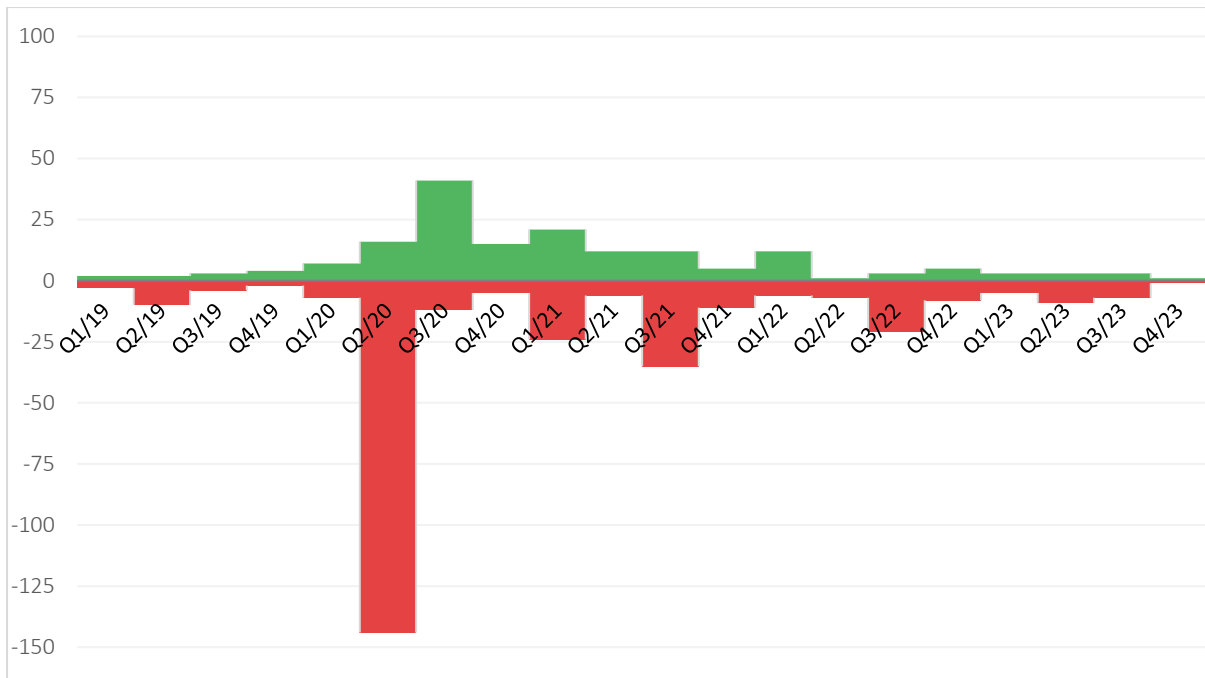


Figure 4: Change types by quarter, three years ending 31 December 2023.

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.

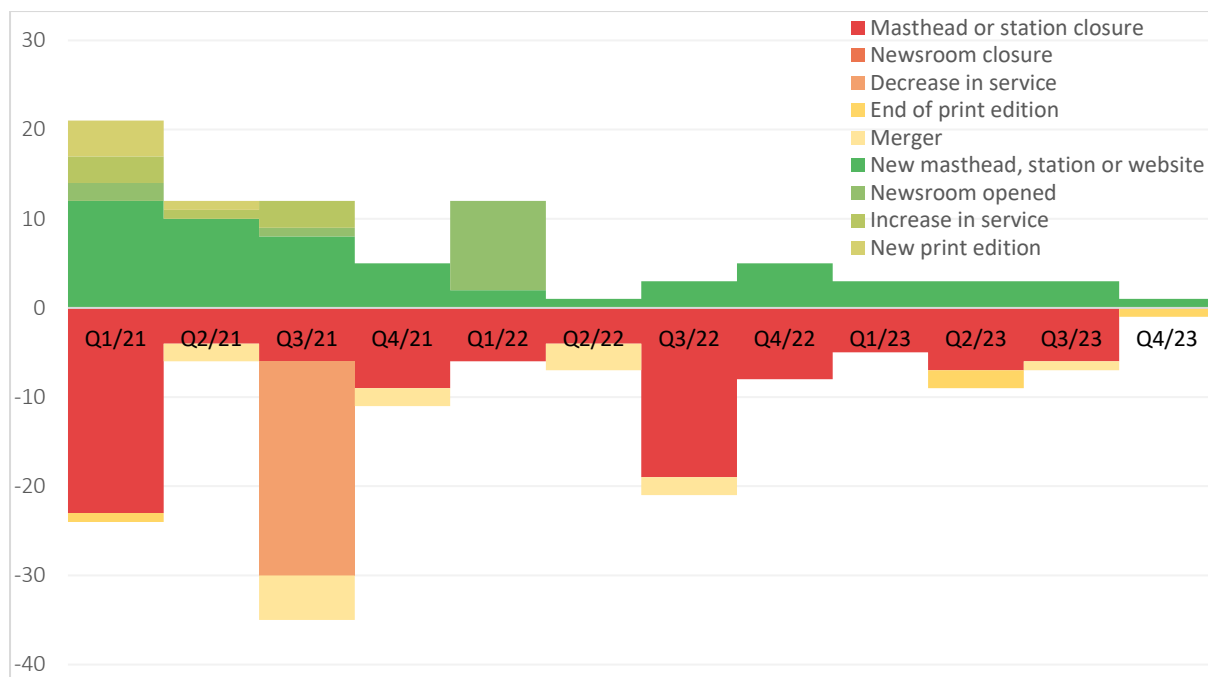


Figure 5: Change types by quarter, three years ending 31 December 2023.

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/>>

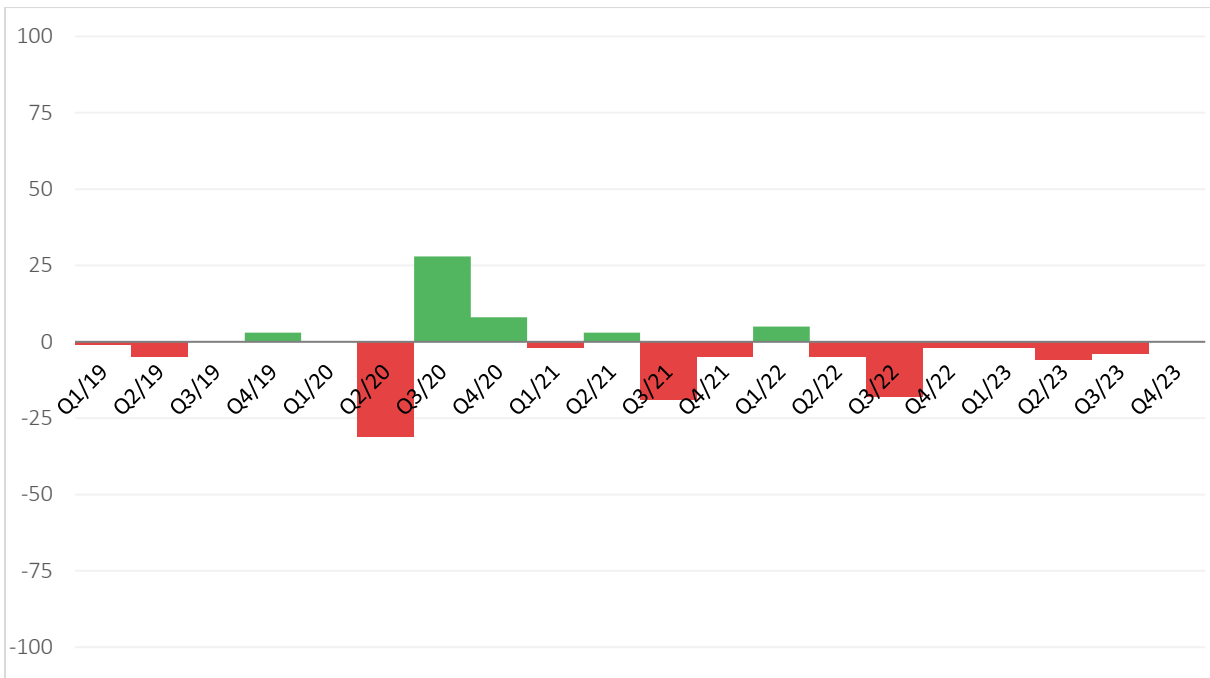


Figure 6: Net changes in news production by quarter, 1 January 2019 – 31 December 2023.

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 204 contractions since January 2019, a negative variance of -53.

Isolating the data further to only the outlets that have opened or closed since 1 January 2019 shows a negative variance of -17. Over the three years since 1 January 2021, this variance is considerably worse: 97 outlets have closed and only 56 have opened, a net loss of 41.

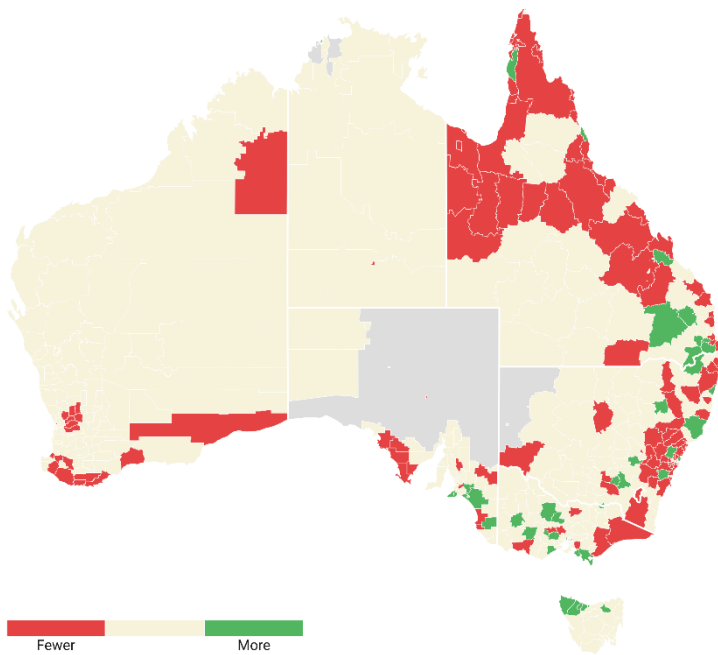


Figure 7: Net loss and gain of news outlets since 1 January 2019 by local government area, 31 December 2023

According to PIJ’s data, of 547 local government areas with at least one news producer, more than a quarter (156, 29 per cent) have fewer outlets now than at the beginning of 2019. Only 47 (9 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 PIJ believes that more news productive capacity has been lost than gained but this data does not speak to that.

4.1.3 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 4: 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.

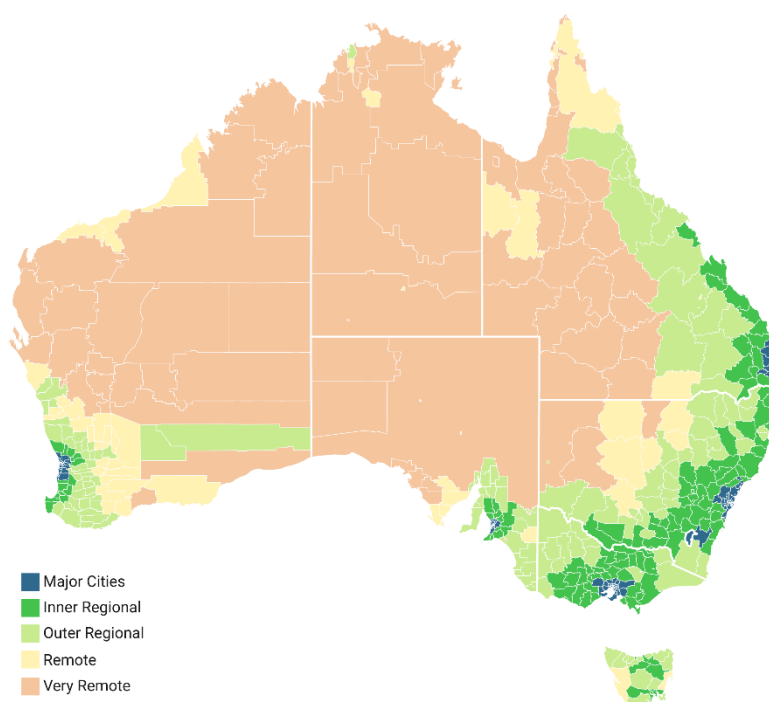


Figure 8: Distribution of remoteness areas by local government area.

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.

4.1.3.1 Changes in metropolitan, regional and remote Australia

		Metro	Regional				Total
Remoteness area		Cities	Inner	Outer	Remote	V. Remote	Subtotal
Expansions		61	71	26	6	7	110
Contractions		135	113	62	12	6	193
Total change		196	184	88	18	13	303
Net change		(-74)	(-42)	(-36)	(-6)	+1	(-157)

Table 5: Net change by remoteness and region since 1 January 2019, 31 December 2023.

Table 5 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 6, Figure 9). On the other hand, two thirds of the new outlets that have opened anywhere in Australia in regional Australia (87, 65 per cent); though this is outweighed by the number of closures (100).

The nature of changes experienced in metropolitan and regional areas is also different. 53 per cent (71) 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. Over a third of city contractions are closed titles (37 per cent), a share of the total that has been steadily increasing. In regional areas, more substantial changes to news provision occur as outlets close (51 per cent of regional contractions) or decrease their level of service by cutting frequencies or output (21 per cent). Cuts to print editions are only 16 per cent of changes in the regions.

		Metro	Regional				Total
Remoteness area	Cities	Inner	Outer	Remote	V Remote	Subtotal	
New masthead, station or website	46	57	21	6	3	87	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	71	19	8	2	2	31	102
Decrease in service	4	24	15	1	0	40	44
Newsroom closure	2	4	0	0	0	4	6
Masthead or station closure	51	60	29	8	3	100	151
Total number of records	196	184	88	18	13	303	499

Table 6: Count of records by change types and remoteness since 1 January 2019, 31 December 2023.



Figure 9: Change types by remoteness and region since 1 January 2019, 31 December 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 -11 variance in outlets and service, while regional areas end the current quarter with a -42 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.

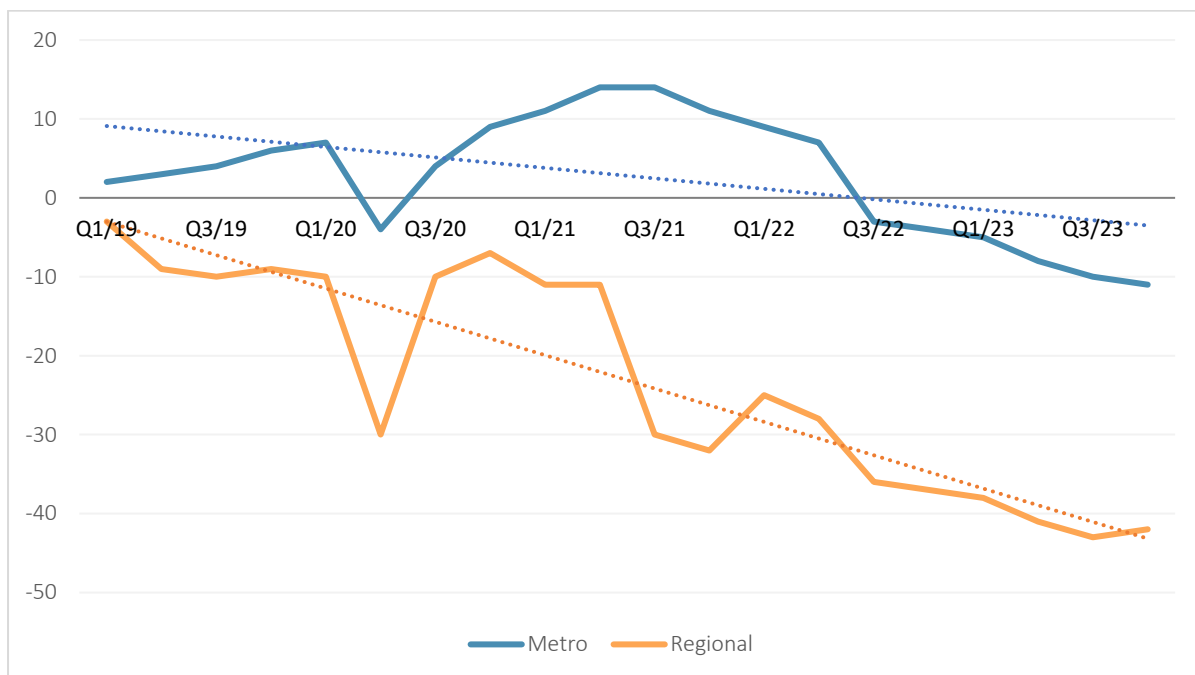


Figure 10: Net change in news production by region since 1 January 2019, 31 December 2023.

5 ANDR Quarterly: 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.

5.1.1 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 7.

5.1.2 Results

As of 31 December 2023, the Australian News Index lists 678 news entities which operate 1,211 print, digital, radio and television news outlets. This is a small increase in the number of recorded news entities, up from 675 in September 2023, a positive variance of 3. 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 7 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 (534, 79 per cent) only operate a single news outlet.

News outlet holdings	Subtotal	%
One outlet holding	534	79
Two outlet holdings	86	13
Three outlet holdings	18	3
Four outlet holdings	13	2
Five outlet holdings	8	1
Six outlet holdings	3	0
Seven or more outlet holdings	16	2
Total	678	100

There were only a few changes to news outlet holdings since September 2023. There was an increase of four in entities with one outlet holding, and an increase of one entity with two outlet holdings.

There was a decrease of one entity with three outlet holdings, as well as for entities with four holdings.

There are 16 business entities that are linked to seven or more outlets, unchanged from September 2023. The number of outlets operated by this category

Table 7: News entities according to the number of outlet holdings, 31 December 2023

has a very large range: between seven and 57 per news entity. This range has continued to narrow from prior quarterly reports (September, June, March 2023) due to ongoing work identifying subsidiary companies and updating the data to reflect this.

5.1.3 Types of news entities

The business structures of news entities are provided in Table 8 using the entity types as defined by the Australia Business Register, found [here](#), and described in Section 7.

Entity Type	Subtotal	%
Australian private company	371	54
Other incorporated entity	173	26
Individual/sole trader	29	4
Discretionary trading trust	27	4
Australian public company	27	4
Other unincorporated entity	17	3
Co-operative	13	2
Other	21	3
Total	678	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 8: Number of news business entities by company structure, 31 December 2023

55 per cent of news entities operate as private companies, with an increase of two entities

from September 2023, and by far the largest category within the data. Apart from a decrease of one entity in the discretionary trading trust type, there were no other changes since September 2023.

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.

5.1.4 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 9 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*	68	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
Times News Group*	9	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	604	50
Outlets held by all other entities	607	50
Total	1211	100

Table 9: Parent entities according to their outlet holdings, 31 December 2023

Table 9 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 7 because PIJI 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.

⁸ Table 9 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, PIJI has deducted them from the total number of outlets in this table.

These entities combined operate 604, or 50 per cent, of the total outlets in Australia at 31 December 2023. This has decreased slightly from September 2023 (607 outlets, 50 per cent), mostly due to the removal of four Australian Community Media outlets from PIJI's database and other market changes.

The top five news entities collectively operate 387 outlets, or 32 per cent of the total outlets. There has been little change in since September 2023 (391 outlets, or 32 per cent).

The only change to Table 9 since September 2023, was Australian Community Media's outlet holdings (68 outlets, or 6 per cent), down four outlets from 72. This was due to the closure of the Camden Haven Courier, the Hunter Valley News, the Narromine News and Trangie Advocate, and The Observer in Coleambally in October 2023.

PIJI notes again that these 18 news entities are listed by their outlet holdings, and that Table 9 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 9, but that it would be considered large in terms of its audience reach or productive capacity relative to other news entities.

Table 9 shows 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.

5.1.5 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 10 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 (55), only about four and a half per cent of the total outlets. Five entities are listed as operating more than one national scale outlet, while a further 41 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	25
Outlets held by all other entities	41	75
Total	55	100

Table 10: Parent entities with more than one outlet holding operating at a national scale, 31 December 2023

The total number of national outlets has increased by one due to the inclusion of Michael West Media, a business and politics focused outlet, after it was assessed for public interest journalism in October 2023.

6 ANDR Quarterly: states and territories

The following tables show outlets and entities by state or territory at the end of the December 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	358	24	204	81	46	220	115	1064
Metropolitan	0	2	0	2	1	0	3	3	11
State/territory	0	2	0	3	1	2	2	0	10
Subtotal	16	366	24	213	84	51	268	134	1156
National									55
Total									1211

Table 11: Count of outlets by coverage scale and state/territory, 31 December 2023.

Change category	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Total
Expansions	1	53	3	45	15	4	43	7	171
Contractions	1	130	2	98	21	1	61	14	328
Total change	2	183	5	143	36	5	104	21	499
Net change	0	(-77)	1	(-53)	(-6)	3	(-18)	(-7)	(-157)

Table 12: Net change by change category and state/territory since 1 January 2019, 31 December 2023.

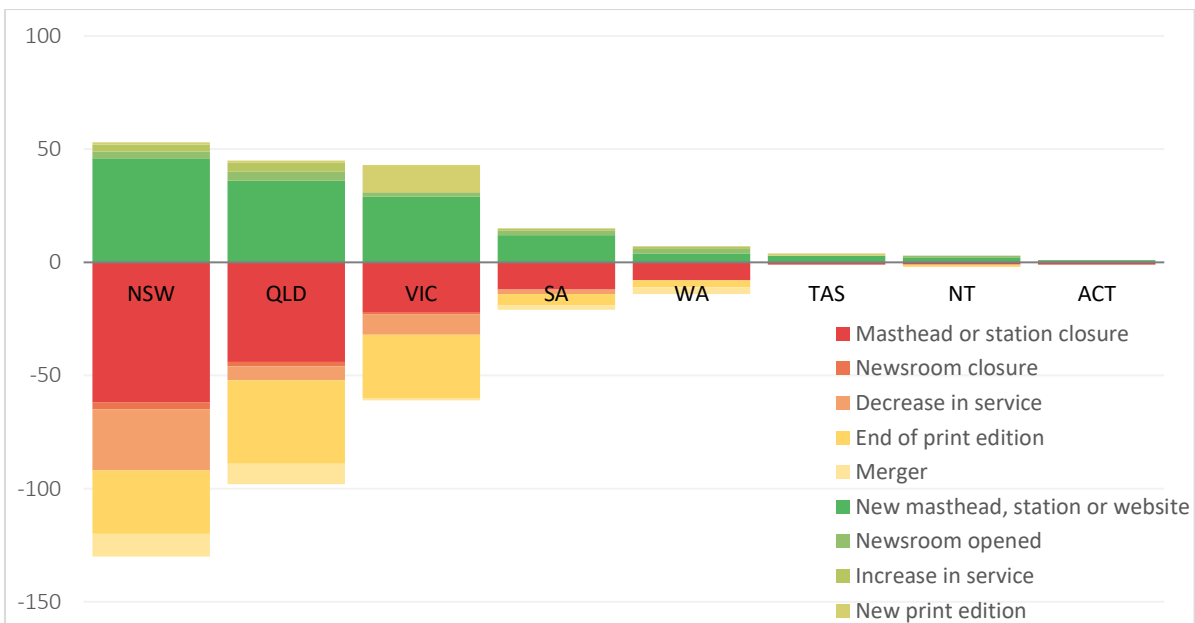


Figure 11: Change types by state or territory since 1 January 2019, 31 December 2023.

6.1.1 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 13: Count of local news producers in the Australian Capital Territory, 31 December 2023.

▼ Figure 12: Count of local news producers in the Australian Capital Territory, excluding television, 31 December 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.

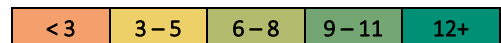


Table 14 shows the entities which operate more than one news outlet in the ACT.

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 14: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in the Australian Capital Territory, 31 December 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.

6.1.2 New South Wales

	Community	Local	Metro	State	Total
Print	4	154	2	1	161
Digital	0	67	0	1	68
Radio	0	125	0	0	125
Television	0	12	0	0	12
Total	4	358	2	2	366

◀ Table 15: News producers in New South Wales, 31 December 2023.

▼ Figure 13: Count of local news producers in New South Wales, excluding television, by local government area, 31 December 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.

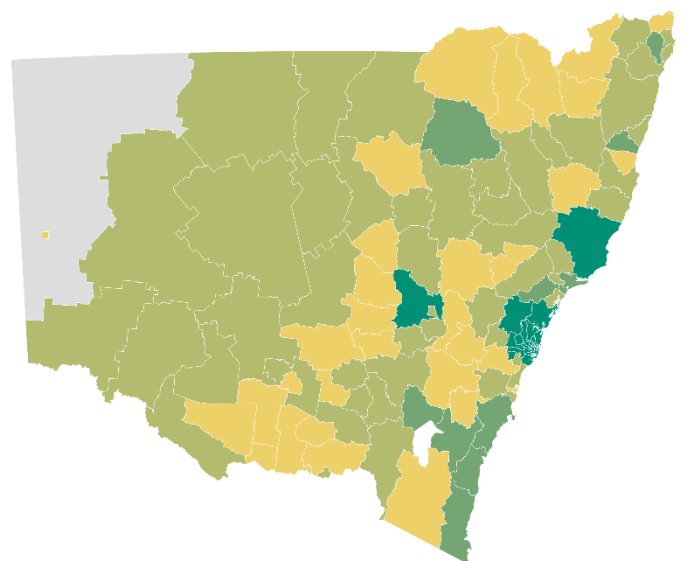
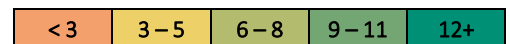


Table 16 below shows the entities in New South Wales which operate more than seven news outlets.

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in NSW	% total outlets in NSW
Australian Community Media*	53	14
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	147	40
Outlets held by all other entities	219	60
Total	366	100

Table 16: 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 366 or about 30 per cent of the total outlets. There was a slight decrease of outlets, due to the aforementioned closure of four Australian Community Media titles.

Six news entities collectively operate 147 outlets, or 40 per cent of all outlets in NSW. Australian Community Media operates the most outlets, 53, down four outlets from 57 in September 2023.

Combined, Australian Community Media and News Corp Australia collectively operate 24 per cent of total NSW outlets, or 89 outlets.

Entities not listed but with considerable outlet holdings include Regional Media Corp (seven), Win Network (six), and Community Broadcast Network (five).

6.1.3 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 17: News producers in the Northern Territory, 31 December 2023.

▼ Figure 14: Count of local news producers in the Northern Territory, excluding television, by local government area, 31 December 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.

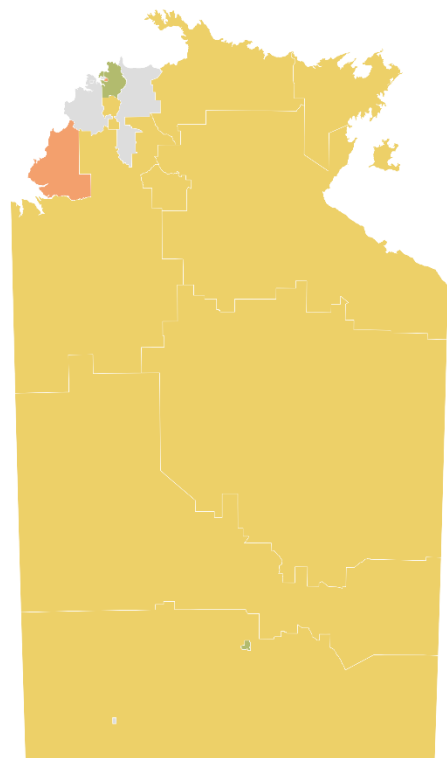
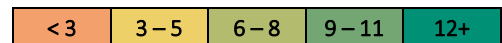


Table 18 below shows the entities in the Northern Territory which operate more than one outlet.

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 18: 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, unchanged from September 2023.

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.

6.1.4 Queensland

	Community	Local	Metro	State	Total
Print	3	71	1	2	77
Digital	1	48	2	0	51
Radio	0	79	0	0	79
Television	0	6	0	0	6
Total	4	204	3	2	213

◀ Table 19: News producers in Queensland, 31 December 2023.

▼ Figure 15: Count of local news producers in Queensland, excluding television, by local government area, 31 December 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. Brisbane is home to a diverse mix of major publishers, metropolitan-wide independents such as Solstice Media’s InQueensland, and local titles.

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 regional 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.

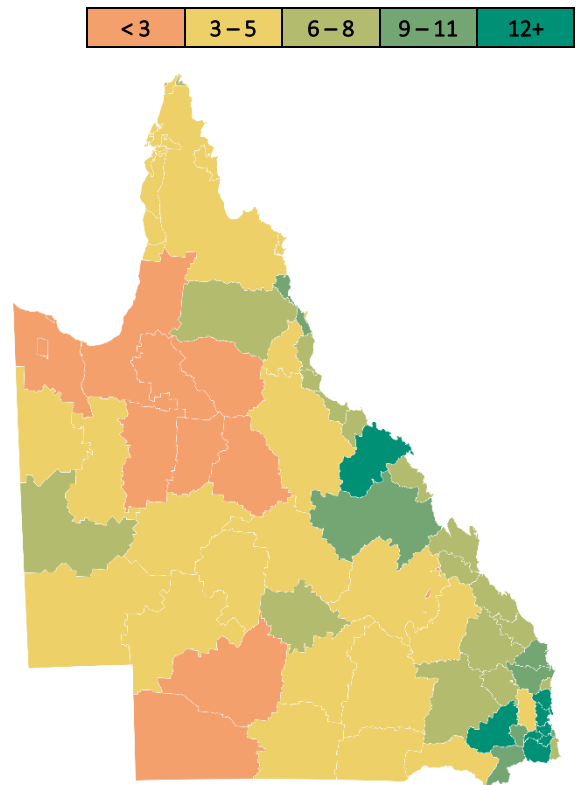


Table 20 shows the entities in Queensland which operate more than seven outlets.

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in QLD	% of total outlets in QLD
News Corp Australia*	42	20
Southern Cross Austereo*	23	11
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	106	50
Total	213	100

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

In Queensland, there were a total of 213 associated outlets (18 per cent of total outlets), down one outlet from September 2023, due to the closure of the Yarrabilba Bulletin. 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.

6.1.5 South Australia

	Community	Local	Metro	State	Total
Print	1	26	1	0	28
Digital	0	14	1	0	15
Radio	0	32	0	0	32
Television	0	9	0	0	9
Total	1	81	2	0	84

◀ Table 21: News producers in South Australia, 31 December 2023.

▼ Figure 16: Count of local news producers in South Australia, excluding television, by local government area, 31 December 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.

News Corp’s metropolitan daily The Advertiser and its local Messenger network are major producers in Adelaide. Solstice Media’s InDaily also covers the capital.

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).

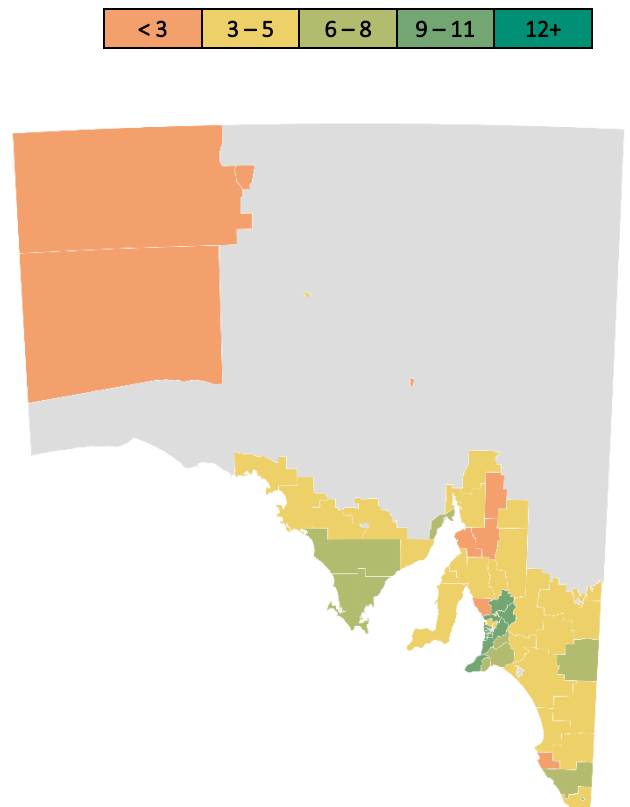


Table 22 below shows the entities in South Australia which operate more than three outlets.

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	36	43
Total	84	100

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

In South Australia, there are 84 outlets, or seven per cent of the total outlets across the country. News entities listed in this table hold 48 outlets or 57 per cent of total outlets in South Australia.

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

6.1.6 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 23: News producers in Tasmania, 31 December 2023.

▼ Figure 17: Count of local news producers in Tasmania, excluding television, by local government area, 31 December 2023.

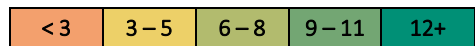
Tasmania has a higher proportion of independent news producers to large media companies compared to other states and territories, with News Corp and Australian Community Media present in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie, and the island otherwise covered by small-medium companies.

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.

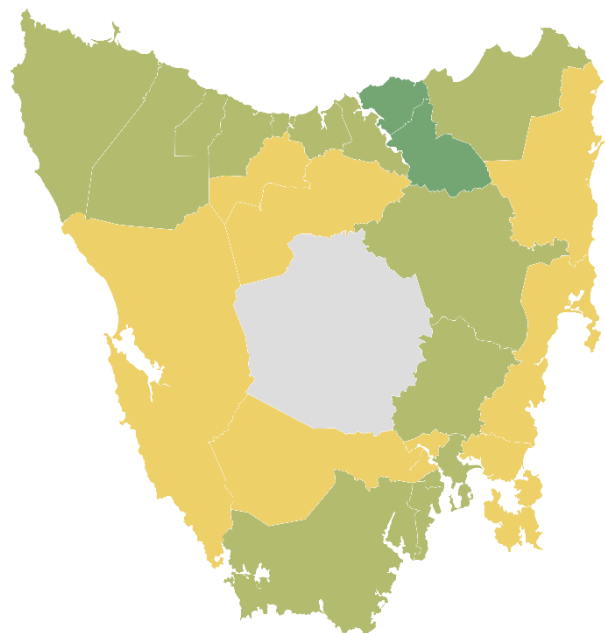


Table 24 below shows the entities in Tasmania which operate more than two outlets.

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	51
Outlets held by all other entities	25	49
Total	51	100

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

Tasmania has 51 outlets, or four 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 nine outlets or 18 per cent of the total Tasmania outlets.

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

6.1.7 Victoria

	Community	Local	Metro	State	Total
Print	39	118	3	1	161
Digital	4	22	0	1	27
Radio	0	71	0	0	71
Television	0	9	0	0	9
Total	43	220	3	2	268

◀ Table 25: News producers in Victoria, 31 December 2023.

▼ Figure 18: Count of local news producers in Victoria, excluding television, by local government area, 31 December 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, Eastern Victoria TV1, Western Victoria TV1 and Melbourne TV1 are the 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.

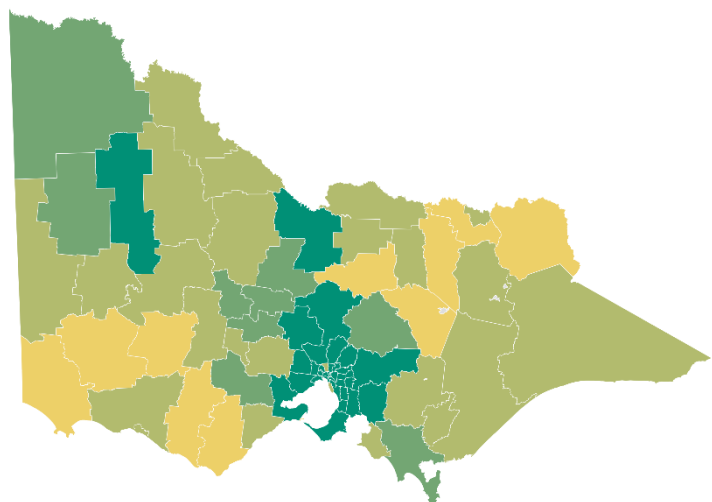
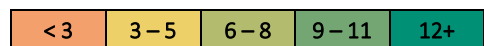


Table 26 shows the entities in Victoria which operate more than seven outlets.

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
Times News Group*	8	3
Subtotal for entities with > 7 news outlets	87	32
Outlets held by all other entities	181	68
Total	268	100

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

Victoria has 268 associated outlets or 22 per cent of the total outlets, up one outlet from September 2023. The listed seven news entities operate 87 outlets or 32 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.

Australian Community Media (six outlets), 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.

6.1.8 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 27: News producers in Western Australia, 31 December 2023.

▼ Figure 19: Count of local news producers in Western Australia, excluding television, by local government area, 31 December 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. PIJ 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.

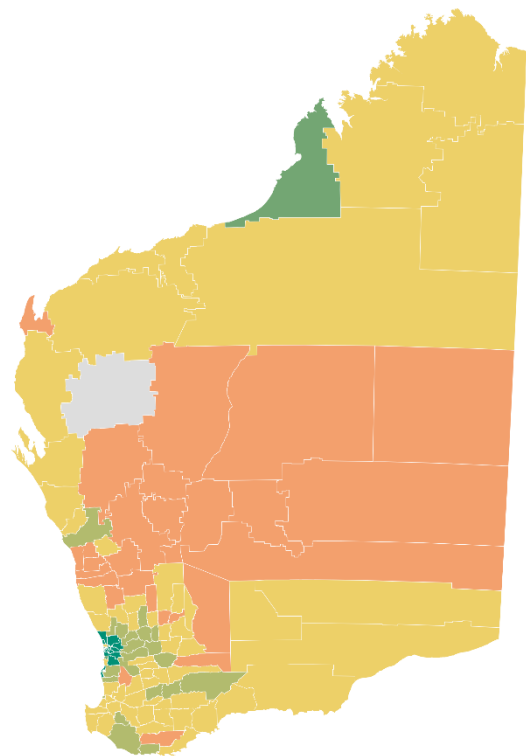
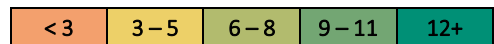


Table 28 below shows the entities in Western Australia which operate more than four outlets.

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 28: 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, unchanged from September 2023. The four listed news entities operate 76 outlets or 57 per cent of total outlets in WA.

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

The Trustee for the Mayne Family Trust is not included in this table but was added to PIJ's database following its acquisition of the four 'Examiner Newspapers' titles in Perth's outer suburbs.

7 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 PIJI and contributions are received from news organisations, from civil society and academia, and from the public. Even then, we do not have visibility into all news production and availability around Australia, and 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.

8 About the Public Interest Journalism Initiative

The [Public Interest Journalism Initiative](#) (PIJI) is a specialist think tank advancing a sustainable future for public interest journalism in Australia.

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

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

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

[Public Interest Journalism Initiative]

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