

[Public
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Initiative]

Australian News Data Report

Quarterly issue
March 2024

Australian News Data Report: March 2024

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For more information about the Australian News Data Project, please visit:
<https://piji.com.au/research-and-inquiries/our-research/anmp/>

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AUSTRALIAN NEWS DATA REPORT

Quarterly issue | March 2024

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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 March 2024. News sampling was conducted in Bunbury and surrounding local government areas (LGAs), Western Australia.

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: March 2024

2 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 7: 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.

2.1 Monthly results: March 2024

As of 31 March 2024, 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	63	451	8	4	11	537
Digital	6	163	5	4	45	223
Radio	0	397	0	0	1	398
Television	0	51	0	0	2	53
Total	69	1062	13	8	59	1211

Table 1: Active news outlets, 31 March 2024.

2.1.1 Market changes, March 2024

One change was observed in the reporting month.

#	Outlet		Description of change	Effective date
1	The Spark	NSW	● Outlet opened	05/03/2024

Table 2: Market changes, March 2024

The Spark is a new local news website covering the Shoalhaven region of New South Wales. The Spark is edited by Cat Holloway and launched in March 2024.¹

2.1.2 Other changes to news outlet records

Twelve other changes were made to outlet records. This table does not include changes made to news entity records, which are reported separately in section 2.1.3.

#	Outlet		Description of change	Effective date
1	The Advertiser	NSW	● Outlet closed	01/11/2023
2	Australian Property Journal	N/A	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
3	Bayside Weekly News	QLD	● New outlet	01/02/2024
4	Fassifern Guardian	QLD	● New outlet	13/10/2021
5	Fassifern Guardian & Tribune	QLD	● Outlet closed	06/10/2021
6	GNFM	NSW	○ Name and callsign change	12/05/2022
7	The Greek Herald	N/A	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
8	Ipswich Tribune	QLD	● New outlet	13/10/2021
9	Meander Valley Gazette	TAS	● Outlet closed	01/12/2023
10	National Indigenous Times	N/A	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
11	Queensland Farmer Today	QLD	○ Removed from the database	31/12/2018
12	Woody Yaloak Herald	VIC	● Outlet closed	21/07/2023

Table 3: Other changes to outlet records, March 2024

The Advertiser was an Australian Community Media (ACM) masthead in Cessnock, New South Wales, which printed its final edition in November 2023, and subsequently ceased publication.² The Advertiser covered local news in Cessnock City Council since 1960 and cited rising costs and changing advertiser spending as their reason for closing.

¹ The Spark. <<https://the-spark.ghost.io/>>

² The Advertiser. 2023. We fought for The Advertiser but now it's time to say goodbye. The Advertiser. 30 October. <<https://www.cessnockadvertiser.com.au/story/8404963/as-cessnock-advertiser-prints-final-newspaper-we-say-thank-you/>>

Three national scale outlets have been added to the data after being reviewed for public interest journalism in March.

1. The Australian Property Journal³ covers property news across major sectors and has begun publishing a substantial amount of public interest journalism surrounding this subject, particularly related to government policy and planning and development. The Australian Property Journal is owned by the Harry Wilson Family Trust.
2. The Greek Herald,⁴ operated by Zlatko Pavlovic, has provided community news for people of Greek heritage since launching in 1926. This largely includes Greek community events and individuals, and reporting on the Greek government.
3. National Indigenous Times⁵ is an independent outlet covering Indigenous affairs at a national scale. It is published monthly as an insert in various News Corp Australia mastheads and Seven West Media's The West Australian. National Indigenous Times also publishes articles on its own website, alongside digital editions of the monthly inserts. It is published by National Indigenous Times News Pty Ltd.

Bayside Weekly News is a new weekly newspaper published by Local News Group, covering the Wynnum Manly and Doboy wards in Brisbane.⁶

In October 2021 the Fassifern Guardian & Tribune announced that the newspaper would be splitting into two outlets: the Fassifern Guardian and the Ipswich Tribune.⁷ The new outlets began publishing a week later, with no disruption to schedule. The Fassifern Guardian and the Ipswich Tribune are both weekly newspapers, with the Fassifern Guardian covering Scenic Rim and the Ipswich Tribune reporting on Ipswich and the Western Corridor.

On 12 May 2022 1368 2GN Goulburn transitioned from an AM to an FM frequency and was renamed GNFM.⁸ Their callsign was also changed from 2GN to 2GBN. The outlet record has been updated to reflect these changes.

The Meander Valley Gazette was a local monthly newspaper covering Deloraine, Tasmania. After publishing its most recent edition in December 2023 the Meander Valley Gazette announced an indefinite hiatus,⁹ and has therefore been listed as closed.

In the course of reviewing PIJ's data, we found that Queensland Farmer Today, published by Today News Group, does not publish a significant proportion of public interest journalism. Its content is primarily non-public interest journalism agriculture-related stories, and has therefore been removed from the data.

³ Australian Property Journal. <<https://www.australianpropertyjournal.com.au/>>

⁴ The Greek Herald <<https://greekherald.com.au/>>

⁵ National Indigenous Times <<https://nit.com.au/>>

⁶ Bayside Weekly News. 2024. Lord Mayor launches new bay newspaper. Bayside Weekly News. 1 February. <<https://baysideweekly.news/bayside-weekly-news-launch/>>

⁷ Creighton D. 2021. Some exciting news for our readers. Fassifern Guardian. 6 October. <<https://www.fassifernguardian.com/some-exciting-news-for-our-readers>>

⁸ Thrower L. 2022. Goulburn's 1368 2GN makes transmission switch to FM frequency. Goulburn Post. 12 May. <<https://www.goulburnpost.com.au/story/7735707/airwave-of-nostalgia-hits-as-radio-station-switches-frequency/>>

⁹ Meander Valley Gazette. 2023. The Meander Valley Gazette is currently on hiatus, indefinitely. Meander Valley Gazette. <<https://www.meandervalleygazette.org>>

The Woody Yaloak Herald was a community newspaper covering Haddon and the Golden Plains Shire since 1977. Its closure was announced in the final edition published in July 2023, citing increasing production costs and falling advertising revenue as the reasons for its closure.¹⁰

2.1.3 Changes to news entity records

Eight entity records were updated in March.

#	Outlet		Description of change	Effective date
1	Carmit Pty. Ltd.	QLD	○ New entity	06/12/2023
2	Haddon Community Learning Centre Inc	VIC	○ Removed from the database	21/07/2023
3	Harry Wilson Family Trust	NSW	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
4	Meander Valley Connect Inc	TAS	○ Removed from the database	01/12/2023
5	National Indigenous Times News Pty Ltd	WA	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
6	Pavlovic, Zlatko	NSW	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
7	The Trustee for Creighton Family Trust	QLD	○ Outlet linked to entity	13/10/2021
8	The Trustee for Local News Group Australia	QLD	○ Outlet linked to entity	01/02/2024

Table 4: Changes to news entity records, March 2024

Correspondence with one of the owners of The Sentinel, the new outlet formed by the merger of the Moreton Bay Sentinel and the Somerset Sentinel in December 2023, confirmed that it is operated by Carmit Pty Ltd. This entity is co-owned by Mitch Gaynor, who operates the Glasshouse Country & Maleny News through the entity Seven of Clubs Media Pty Ltd, and Carl Portella, who owns Cairns Local News and The Express (Mareeba) via the entities Cairns Local News Pty Ltd and Portasea Pty Ltd respectively.

Haddon Community Learning Centre Inc formerly published the Woody Yaloak Herald and has been removed from the data following its outlet's closure.

Meander Valley Connect Inc has been removed from the data following the Meander Valley Gazette's indefinite hiatus.

The Trustee for Creighton Family Trust formerly operated the Fassifern Guardian & Tribune and has published the Fassifern Guardian and Ipswich Tribune since they split in October 2021.

¹⁰ Coker J. 2023. Celebrating the last issue of the Woody Yaloak Herald. Woody Yaloak Herald. 21 July. <https://haddonlearning.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Woody-Herald-and-Course-Guide-Term-3-Winter_2023-1.pdf>

[Australian News Data Report]

Quarterly results: Q1 2024

3 ANDR Quarterly: News outlets

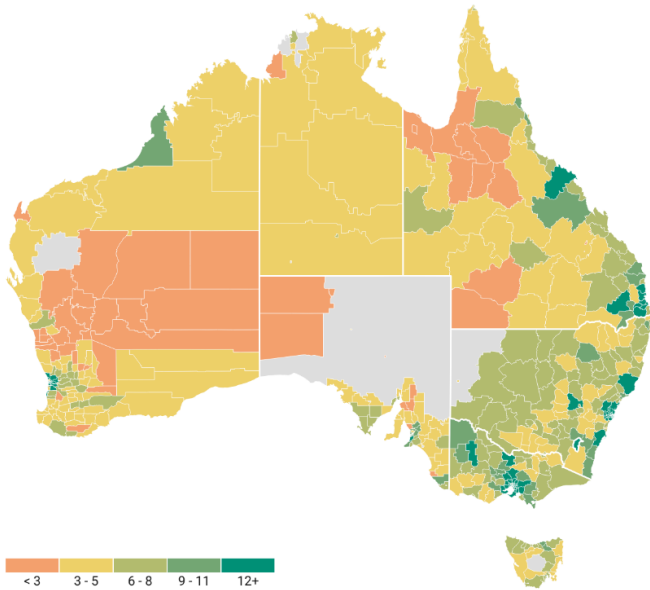


Figure 1: Count of local news producers, excluding television, by local government area, 31 March 2024.

Figure 2: Count of local news producers, excluding radio and television, by local government area, 31 March 2024.

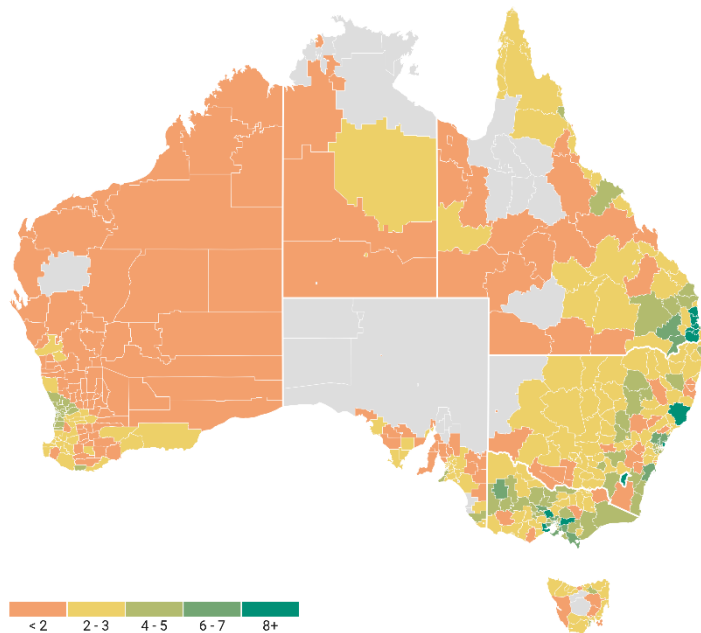


Figure 1 shows the distribution of metropolitan, local, and community-scale news producers by local government area around Australia. It includes publishers (print and digital) and radio broadcasters.

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.

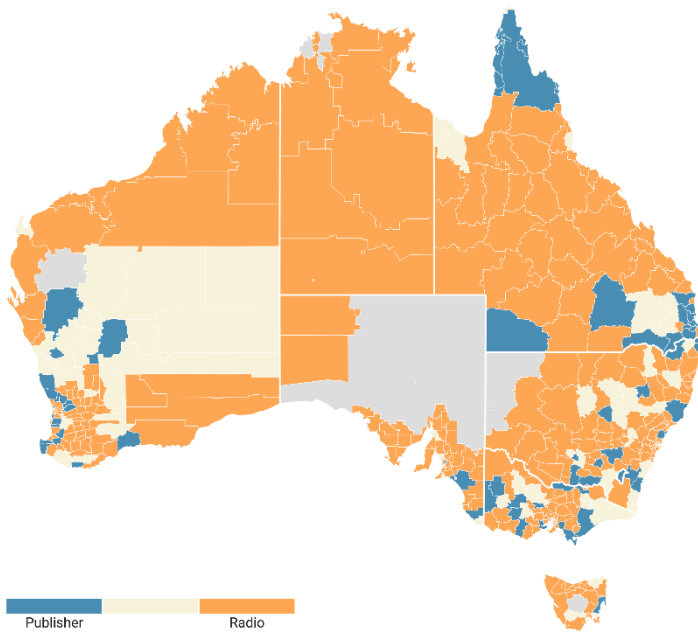


Figure 3: Local government areas according to whether they have more publisher outlets, radio outlets, or an equal number, 31 March 2024.

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 (376, 68 per cent) have a greater number of radio outlets than publishers, only 85 have more publisher outlets (16 per cent) and the remainder (87, 16 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.

3.1.1 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, NT
- Etheridge Shire, QLD
- Flinders Council, TAS
- Flinders Ranges Council, SA
- Flinders Shire, QLD
- Kingston, District Council of, SA
- 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](#).

3.1.2 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 5 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 6 groups those records according to their change category.

	This quarter	Year-on-year		Quarter-on-quarter	
Change type	Q1/24	Q1/23	Variance	Q4/23	Variance
Outlet opened	141	125	+16	137	+4
Newsroom opened	14	14	0	14	0
Increase in service	9	8	+1	9	0
New print edition	15	15	0	15	0
Merger	26	24	+2	25	+1
End of print edition	101	98	+3	101	0
Decrease in service	44	44	0	44	0
Newsroom closed	6	6	0	6	0
Outlet closed	163	139	+24	161	+2
Total number of records	519	473	+46	512	+7

Table 5: 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	Q1/24	Q1/23	Variance	Q4/23	Variance
Expansions	179	162	+17	175	+4
Contractions	340	311	+29	337	+3
Net change	(-161)	(-149)	(-12)	(-162)	+1

Table 6: Net change by change category since 1 January 2019, this quarter, year-on-year and quarter-on-quarter.

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

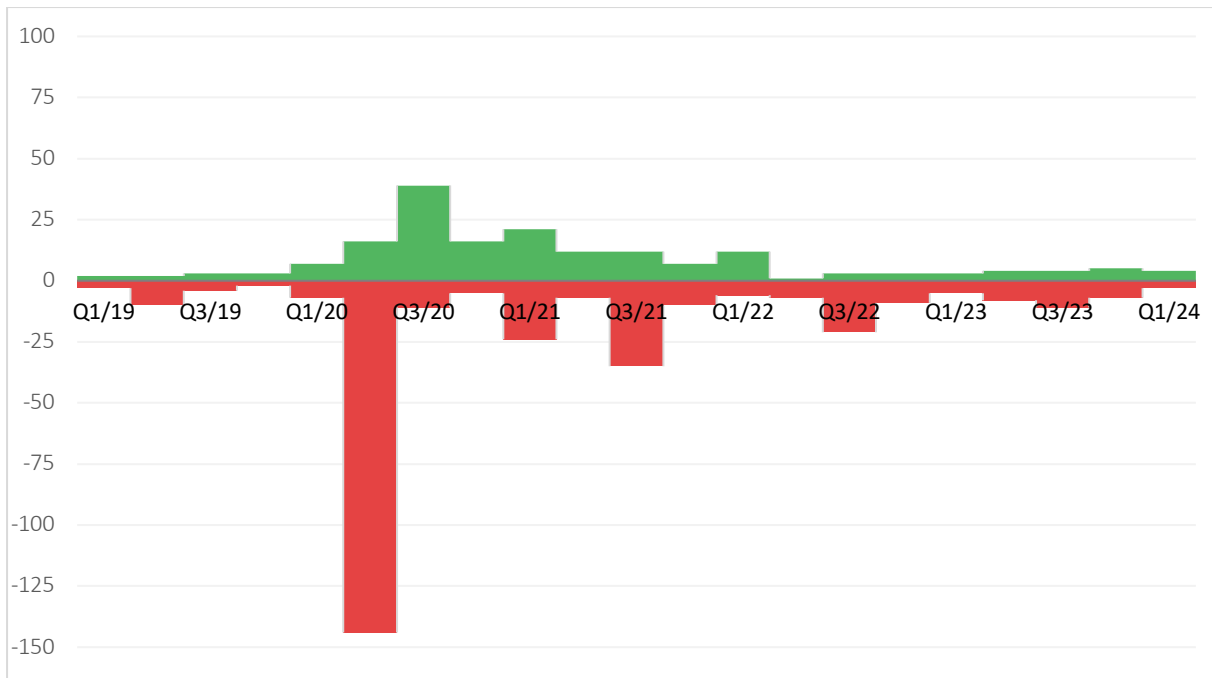


Figure 4: Change types by quarter, three years ending 31 March 2024.

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.

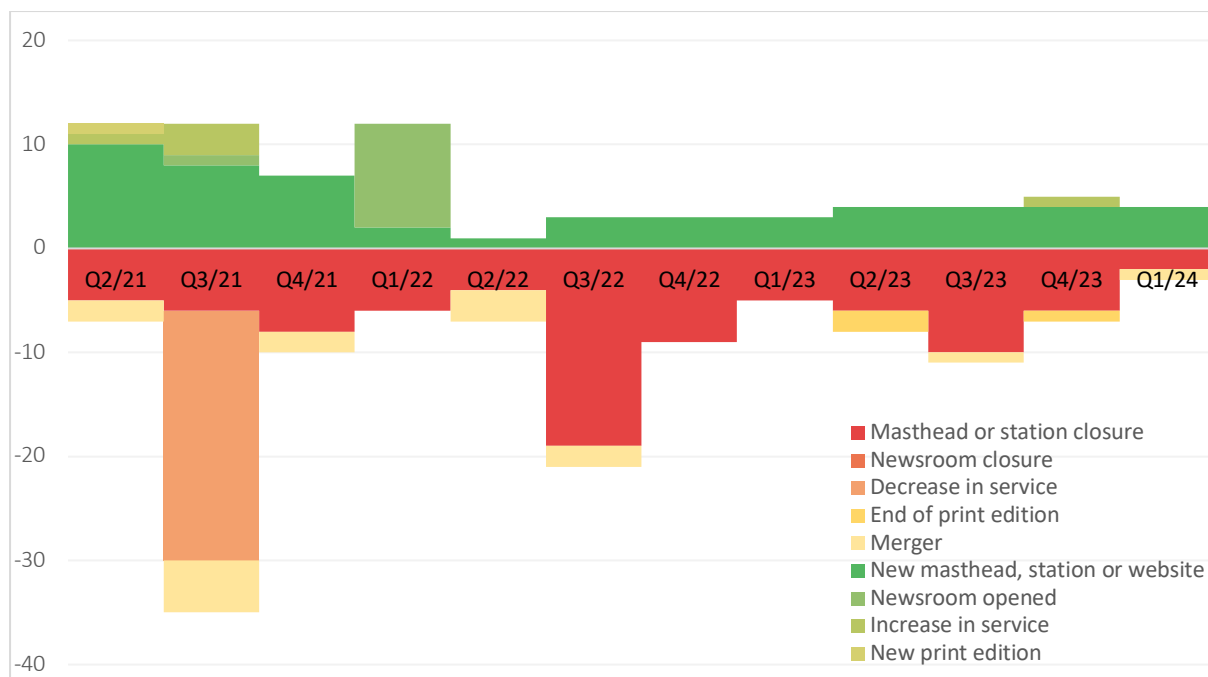


Figure 5: Change types by quarter, three years ending 31 March 2024.

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.¹¹
- 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.¹²
- Also in Q3/21, further Australian Community Media newspapers were recorded as ‘Decrease in service’ following reductions to their publishing schedules.¹³
- In Q1/22 the large growth in ‘Newsroom opened’ was a result of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s (ABC) significant expansion in regional areas, adding 55 new jobs, 10 new bureaux and 9 expanded bureaux.¹⁴
- 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.

¹¹ 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.

¹² 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.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ 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/>>

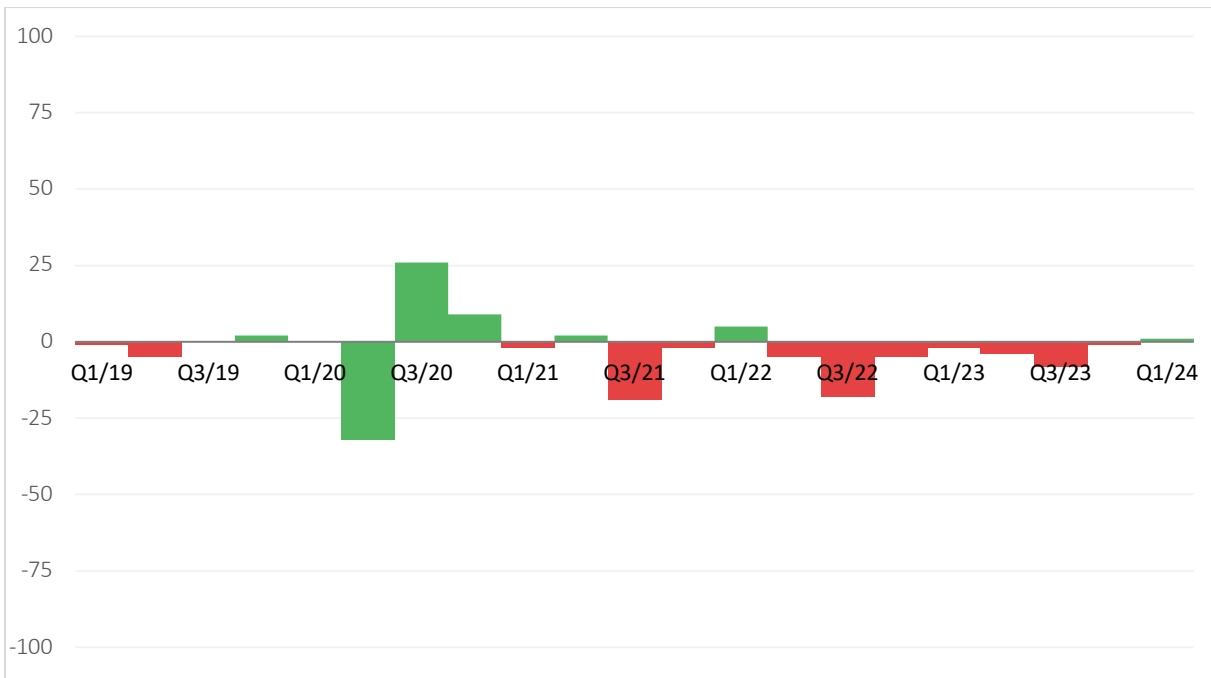


Figure 6: Net changes in news production by quarter, 1 January 2019 – 31 March 2024.

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 158 expansions compared to 218 contractions since January 2019, a negative variance of -60.

Isolating the data further to only the outlets that have opened or closed since 1 January 2019 shows a negative variance of -22. Over the three years since 1 January 2021, this variance is considerably worse: 110 outlets have closed and only 65 have opened, a net loss of 45.

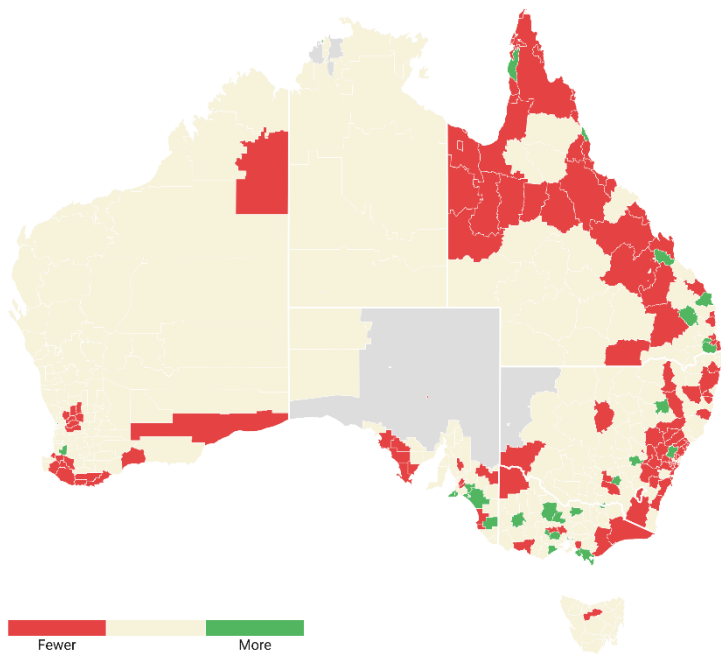


Figure 7: Net loss and gain of news outlets since 1 January 2019 by local government area, 31 March 2024

According to PIJI’s data, of 547 local government areas with at least one news producer, more than a quarter (144, 26 per cent) have fewer outlets now than at the beginning of 2019. Only 43 (8 per cent) have more producers over the same period. The remainder (367, 66 per cent) have the same number, though the active producers may have changed over time. These numbers have shifted toward equilibrium since the previous quarterly results.

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 PIJI believes that more news productive capacity has been lost than gained but this data does not speak to that.

3.1.3 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 Structure¹⁵ to make this determination, which allocates local government areas to one of five categories¹⁶ 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 7: 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 (TAS) is classified as an ‘Inner Regional’ area and Darwin (NT) 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’.

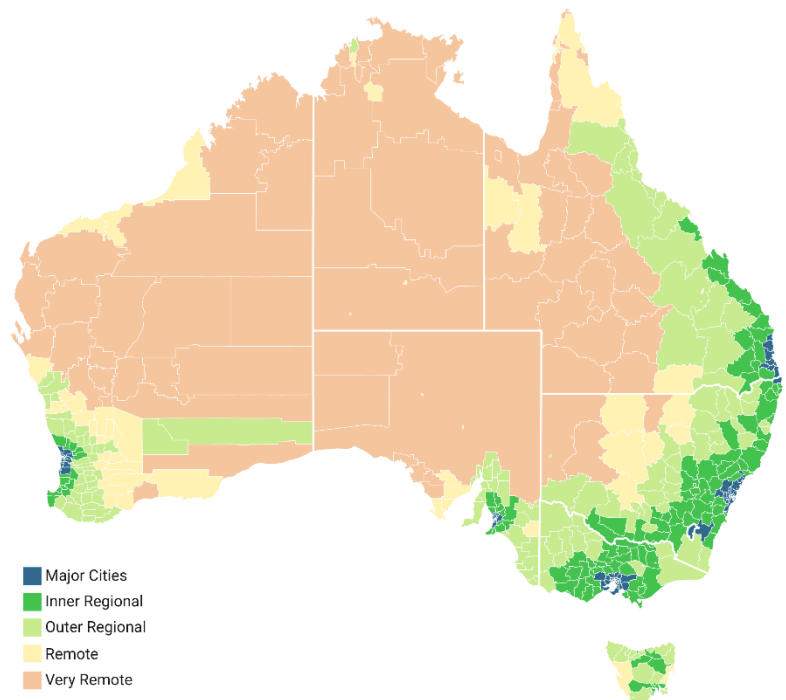


Figure 8: Distribution of remoteness areas by local government area.

¹⁵ 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>>

¹⁶ ‘Major Cities’, ‘Inner Regional’, ‘Outer Regional’, ‘Remote’, ‘Very Remote’.

3.1.3.1 Changes in metropolitan, regional and remote Australia

	Metro	Regional				Total	
Remoteness area	Cities	Inner	Outer	Remote	V. Remote	Subtotal	
Expansions	65	74	27	6	7	114	179
Contractions	138	121	64	11	6	202	340
Total change	203	195	91	17	13	316	519
Net change	(-73)	(-47)	(-37)	(-5)	+1	(-88)	(-161)

Table 8: Net change by remoteness and region since 1 January 2019, 31 March 2024.

Table 8 shows that regional and remote Australia has experienced the greatest change since 1 January 2019. 64 per cent of changes recorded have been in regional and remote Australia, and 36 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 (67 per cent) or decreased their service (91 per cent) have been in regional areas (Table 9, Figure 9). On the other hand, two thirds of the new outlets that have opened anywhere in Australia in regional Australia (90, 64 per cent); though this is outweighed by the number of closures (109).

The nature of changes experienced in metropolitan and regional areas is also different. 51 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 (39 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 (54 per cent of regional contractions) or decrease their level of service by cutting frequencies or output (20 per cent). Cuts to print editions are only 15 per cent of changes in the regions.

		Metro	Regional				Total
Remoteness area	Cities	Inner	Outer	Remote	V Remote	Subtotal	
New masthead, station or website	51	60	21	6	3	90	141
Newsroom opened	2	6	4	0	2	12	14
Increase in service	0	5	2	0	2	99	9
New print edition	12	3	0	0	0	3	15
Merger	7	7	10	1	1	19	26
End of print edition	71	18	8	2	2	30	101
Decrease in service	4	24	15	1	0	40	44
Newsroom closure	2	4	0	0	0	4	6
Masthead or station closure	54	68	31	7	3	109	163
Total number of records	203	195	91	17	13	316	519

Table 9: Count of records by change types and remoteness since 1 January 2019, 31 March 2024.



Figure 9: Change types by remoteness and region since 1 January 2019, 31 March 2024.

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 -49 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.

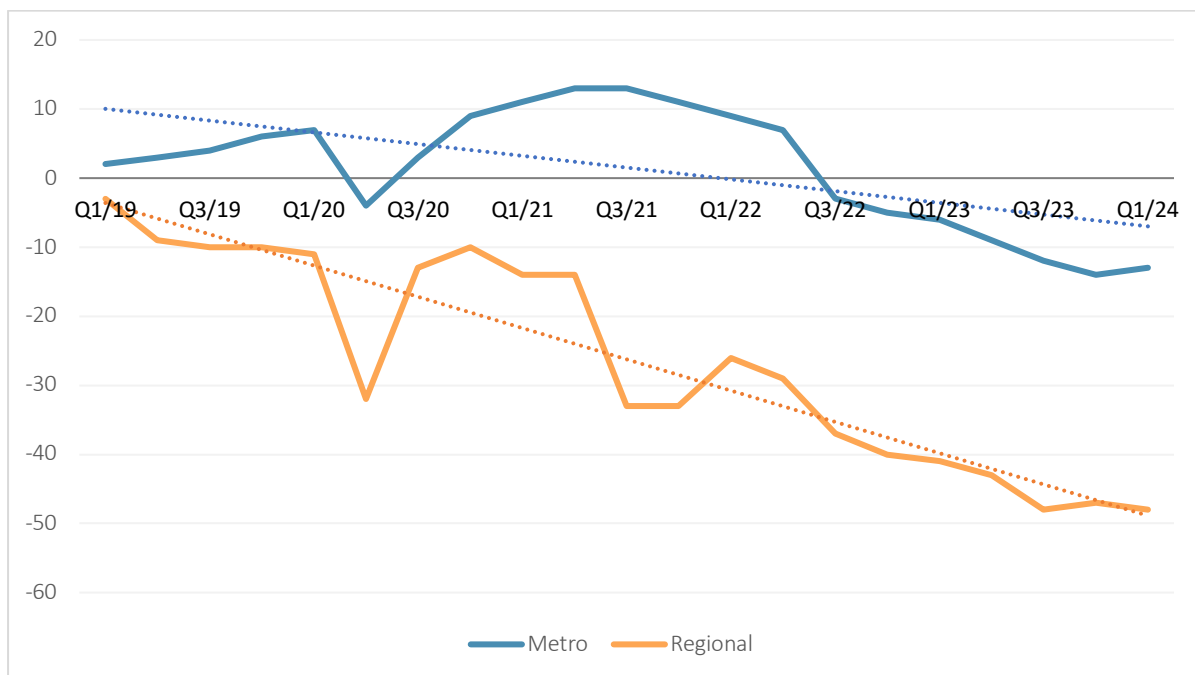


Figure 10: Net change in news production by region since 1 January 2019, 31 March 2024.

4 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 Australian Communications & Media Authority’s (ACMA) [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.

4.1.1 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: Data eligibility.

4.1.2 Results

As of 31 March 2024, the Australian News Index lists 677 news entities which operate 1,211 print, digital, radio and television news outlets. This is a small decrease in the number of recorded news entities, down from 678 in December 2023, a negative variance of one. This does not entirely reflect a trend 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 10 shows a breakdown of news outlets holdings per news entity.

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

News outlet holdings	Subtotal	%
One outlet holding	532	79
Two outlet holdings	82	12
Three outlet holdings	23	3
Four outlet holdings	13	2
Five outlet holdings	8	1
Six outlet holdings	3	0
Seven or more outlet holdings	16	2
Total	677	100

The overwhelming majority of business entities (534, 79 per cent) only operate a single news outlet.

There were only a few changes to news outlet holdings since December 2023. There was a decrease of two in entities with one outlet holding and a decrease of four entities with two outlet holdings.

There was also an increase of five entities with three outlet holdings.

There are 16 business entities that are linked to seven or more outlets, unchanged from

Table 10: News entities according to the number of outlet holdings, 31 March 2024

December 2023. The number of outlets operated by this category has a very large range: between seven and 55 per news entity. This range has continued to narrow from prior quarterly reports (December, September, June 2023) due to ongoing work identifying subsidiary companies and updating the data to reflect this.

4.1.3 Types of news entities

The business structures of news entities are provided in Table 11 using the entity types as defined by the Australia Business Register, found [here](#), and described in Section 7: Data eligibility.

Entity Type	Subtotal	%
Australian private company	371	55
Other incorporated entity	172	25
Individual/sole trader	29	4
Australian public company	27	4
Discretionary trading trust	25	4
Other unincorporated entity	18	3
Co-operative	13	2
Other	22	3
Total	677	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 11: Number of news business entities by company structure, 31 March 2024

55 per cent of news entities operate as private companies, with no change from December

2023, and by far the largest category within the data. Since December 2023 there was a decrease of one entity in the other incorporated entity type and two entities in the discretionary trading trust type, as well as an increase of one entity in the other unincorporated entity type and one entity in the other category.

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.

4.1.4 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 12 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*	99	8
Australian Community Media*	66	5
Australian Radio Network*	54	4
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	53	4
Seven West Media*	46	4
Today News Group*	32	3
Star News Group*	24	2
Provincial Press Group*	19	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
Font Publishing	7	1
Joint Venture duplicate entities ¹⁷	-6	-0
Subtotal for entities with > 6 holdings	614	51
Outlets held by all other entities	597	49
Total	1211	100

Table 12: Parent entities according to their outlet holdings, 31 March 2024

Table 12 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 10 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 614, or 51 per cent, of the total outlets in Australia at 31 March 2024. This has increased from December 2023 (604 outlets, 50 per cent), largely due to Provincial

¹⁷ Table 12 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.

Press Group (formerly listed as Regional Media Corp) acquiring five additional mastheads and PIJI confirming that Provincial Press Group is the parent entity of Monaro Media Group Pty Ltd, Regional Media Corp Pty, and Riverina Media Group Pty Ltd in NSW, and North East Media Pty Ltd in Victoria.

The top five news entities collectively operate 387 outlets, or 32 per cent of the total outlets. This is unchanged since December 2023.

Other changes to Table 12 since December 2023 include Australian Community Media's outlet holdings (66 outlets, or 5 per cent), down two outlets from 68 due to the closure of the Cootamundra Herald and The Advertiser (Cessnock); Seven West Media's outlet holdings up one outlet to 46 after launching The Nightly, a national scale daily online newspaper; and Today News Group's outlet holdings down two outlets to 32 due to the Two Wells & Districts Echo being merged into the Plains Producer, and Queensland Farmer Today being removed after being assessed for public interest journalism. Southern Cross Austereo and Australian Radio Network's outlet holdings also increased by one each due to PIJI's news entity review process.

PIJI notes again that these 18 news entities are listed by their outlet holdings, and that Table 12 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 12, but that it would be considered large in terms of its audience reach or productive capacity relative to other news entities.

Table 12 shows joint venture entities (see footnote 17 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.

ABC Local radio newsrooms appear individually in PIJI's data, which accounts for the high number of operated outlets (52) and allows for better understanding of the distribution of ABC locations and assessment of its local news coverage.

There are 398 radio newsrooms in PIJI's data. Southern Cross Austereo and Australian Radio Network have, by far, the largest radio news outlet holdings in Australia, with 85 and 52 outlets respectively. Additionally, they operate two outlets in the ACT as a joint venture. The two entities collectively operate 35 per cent of all public interest journalism-producing radio news outlets nationwide.

4.1.5 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 13 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 (59), only about five per cent of the total outlets. Five entities are listed as operating more than one national scale outlet, while a further 45 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	3
Private Media*	2	3
Schwartz Media*	2	3
Subtotal for entities with > 1 news outlet	14	24
Outlets held by all other entities	45	76
Total	59	100

Table 13: Parent entities with more than one outlet holding operating at a national scale, 31 March 2024

The total number of national outlets has increased from 55 in December 2023 due to the inclusion of Australian Property Journal, The Greek Herald, and National Indigenous Times. These outlets were assessed for public interest journalism in March 2024.

Seven West Media also launched The Nightly in February 2024, a national-scale daily online newspaper. The Nightly is Seven West Media's only national publication and is operated by West Australian Newspapers Limited.

SBS Radio and ABC Radio National are the only radio news outlets operating at a national scale.

5 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	42	15	69
Local	16	352	25	208	80	46	221	114	1062
Metropolitan	0	2	0	3	2	0	3	3	13
State/territory	0	2	0	1	0	2	3	0	8
Subtotal	16	360	25	216	83	51	269	132	1152
National									59
Total									1211

Table 14: Count of outlets by coverage scale and state/territory, 31 March 2024.

Change category	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Total
Expansions	1	52	3	49	16	5	46	7	179
Contractions	1	136	1	101	22	2	62	15	340
Total change	2	188	4	150	38	7	108	22	519
Net change	0	(-84)	+2	(-52)	(-6)	3	(-16)	(-8)	(-161)

Table 15: Net change by change category and state/territory since 1 January 2019, 31 March 2024.

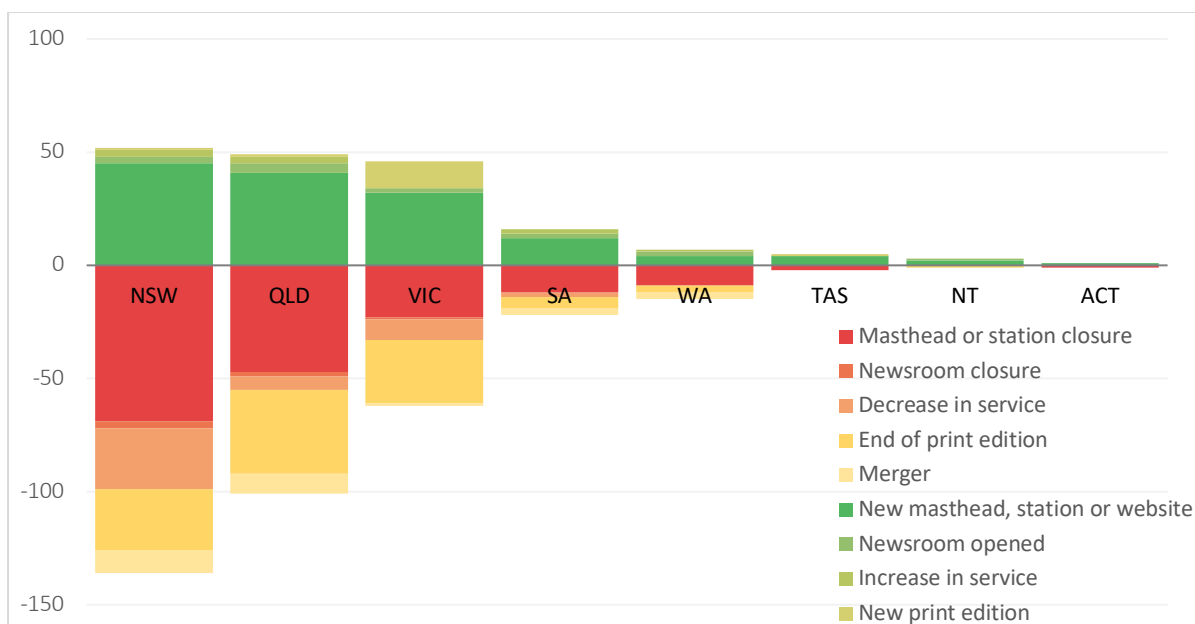


Figure 11: Change types by state or territory since 1 January 2019, 31 March 2024.

5.1.1 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 16: Count of local news producers in the Australian Capital Territory, 31 March 2024.

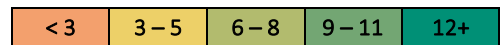
▼ Figure 12: Count of local news producers in the Australian Capital Territory, excluding television, 31 March 2024.

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.

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

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

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.



5.1.1.1 Changes in the Australian Capital Territory

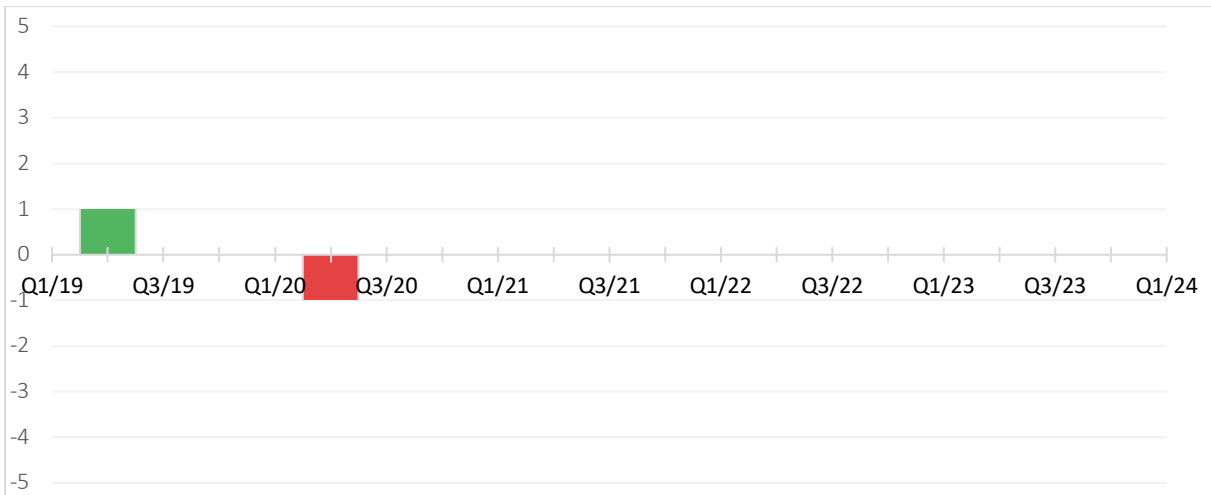


Figure 13: Change categories in the Australian Capital Territory by quarter, 1 January 2019 – 31 March 2024.

Few changes have been observed in the ACT. News Corp launched the Canberra Star, a digital news title, in Q2/19. The Canberra Chronicle, a newspaper published by Australian Community Media, closed in Q2/20.

5.1.1.2 Entities in the Australian Capital Territory

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 outlet	8	50
Outlets held by all other entities	8	50
Total	16	100

Table 17: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in the Australian Capital Territory, 31 March 2024

Table 17 shows the entities in the Australian Capital Territory which operate more than one outlet.

The ACT has 16 local outlets, or around one per cent 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.

There are eight radio news outlets in the ACT, or two per cent of the total. Australian Radio Network and Southern Cross Austereo have the largest holdings, with Capital Radio Network operating two stations. 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.

5.1.2 New South Wales

	Community	Local	Metro	State	Total
Print	4	151	2	1	158
Digital	0	64	0	1	65
Radio	0	125	0	0	125
Television	0	12	0	0	12
Total	4	352	2	2	360

◀ Table 18: News producers in New South Wales, 31 March 2024.

▼ Figure 14: Count of local news producers in New South Wales, excluding television, by local government area, 31 March 2024.

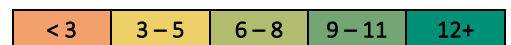
News production in New South Wales is heavily centred in coastal areas, particularly from Bega Valley on the Victorian border north through the Illawarra, Sydney and Central Coast to Port Macquarie-Hastings and the Hunter Valley. Smaller hubs of production exist particularly in Young and Lismore and 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.

Greater Sydney has a very high level of news density. Similar to Melbourne, it features both daily print newspapers, a strong presence of commercial city-wide radio, three commercial TV networks, the public broadcasters, and many independent local outlets. These are spread across the city, with independent print and radio outlets in the Northern Beaches, Blacktown, Parramatta, Lane Cove and Inner West areas, among others.

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.

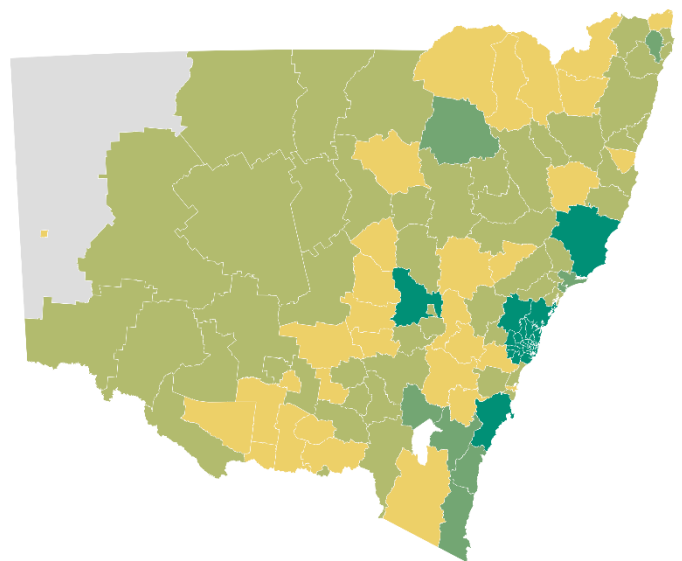
News outlet presence is thinner in the Snowy Monaro, parts of the Central West and the Riverina, and northern parts of the state.



5.1.2.1 Changes in New South Wales

PIJI has recorded the greatest number of changes events in New South Wales of any state. There has been a net reduction in titles in New South Wales since 2019.

Australian Community Media’s consolidation of its presence in the state has, since 2020, seen the closure of at least 36 newspapers. A further 25 have reduced their service in some way: either through reduced publication frequency, or largely existing as digital shells that rerun network content produced at other papers without any original local production. ACM sold seven titles to Provincial Press Group in April 2023.



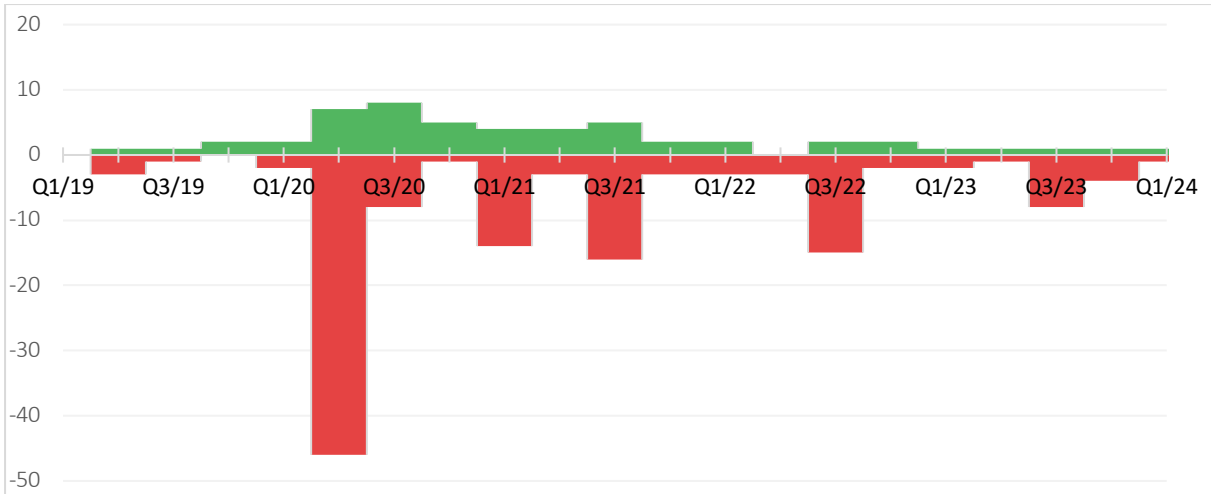


Figure 15: Changes in New South Wales by quarter, 1 January 2019 – 31 March 2024.

News Corp also closed papers in the north of the state in early 2020: Coastal Views in Grafton, and the Northern Rivers Echo and Richmond River Express Examiner, both in Casino.

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. In total, News Corp’s geographic footprint has increased since 2019, while ACM’s has reduced.

There has been change among independent news producers. Titles have launched where major titles have closed, such as The Hunter River Times and IndyNR, both the state’s north. Regionally-focussed titles have also launched, such as the New England Times and Region Riverina.

Conversely, there have also been contractions. Long-standing newspapers such as Warren Weekly and the Don Dorrigo Gazette closed. In the case of the former, a new title, the Warren Star, was founded to fill the gap left by the closure of the Weekly.

Some outlets that opened within the data period have also subsequently closed – Orange City Life NEWSWATCH, for example, launched as a free weekly newspaper in May 2020 and closed in March 2021. The NSW Local App Company both launched and then closed multiple local news sites across the state, including in the Hunter Valley, Orange and Port Macquarie. It currently retains a presence only in Lismore.

Sydney has seen some changes among nationally-focussed outlets, such as Capital Brief, which opened in 2023. The presence of international media companies in Sydney has also changed: The Washington Post opened a local bureau in 2021 and Forbes Australia in 2022, while local editions of Huffington Post and BuzzFeed News closed in 2020.

5.1.2.2 Entities in New South Wales

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in NSW	% total outlets in NSW
Australian Community Media*	51	14
News Corp Australia*	36	10
Southern Cross Austereo*	20	6
Broadcast Operations Group*	17	5
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	14	4
Provincial Press Group*	13	4
Subtotal for entities with > 12 news outlets	151	42
Outlets held by all other entities	209	58
Total	360	100

Table 19: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in New South Wales, 31 March 2024

Table 19 shows the entities in New South Wales which operate more than 12 outlets.

New South Wales has the highest number of outlets in the country, with 360 or about 30 per cent of the total outlets. New South Wales also lost the most outlets this quarter, down six from 366 in December 2023.

Six news entities collectively operate 147 outlets, or 41 per cent of all outlets in NSW. Australian Community Media operates the most outlets, 51, down two outlets from 53 in December 2023.

There was a slight decrease of outlets since the previous quarterly report, due to the aforementioned closure of two further ACM titles, among other various other closures from entities with fewer outlet holdings throughout the quarter.

Provincial Press Group has been added to Table 16 after its acquisition of four NSW mastheads from Wilkie Watson Publications and one from Tuden Media in January 2024, under the name Riverina Media Group Pty Ltd.

Combined, Australian Community Media and News Corp Australia collectively operate 24 per cent of total NSW outlets, or 87 outlets.

There are 125 radio news outlets in NSW, or 31 per cent of all radio outlets. The news entities with the largest radio outlet holdings are Southern Cross Austereo (19), Broadcast Operations Group (17), and Australian Radio Network (nine). These three entities collectively operate 36 per cent of all NSW radio news outlets.

Entities not listed but with considerable outlet holdings include Australian Radio Network (nine), WIN Network (six), and Community Broadcast Network (five).

5.1.3 Northern Territory

	Community	Local	Metro	Territory	Total
Print	0	5	0	0	5
Digital	0	2	0	0	2
Radio	0	13	0	0	13
Television	0	5	0	0	5
Total	0	25	0	0	25

◀ Table 20: News producers in the Northern Territory, 31 March 2024.

▼ Figure 16: Count of local news producers in the Northern Territory, excluding television, by local government area, 31 March 2024.

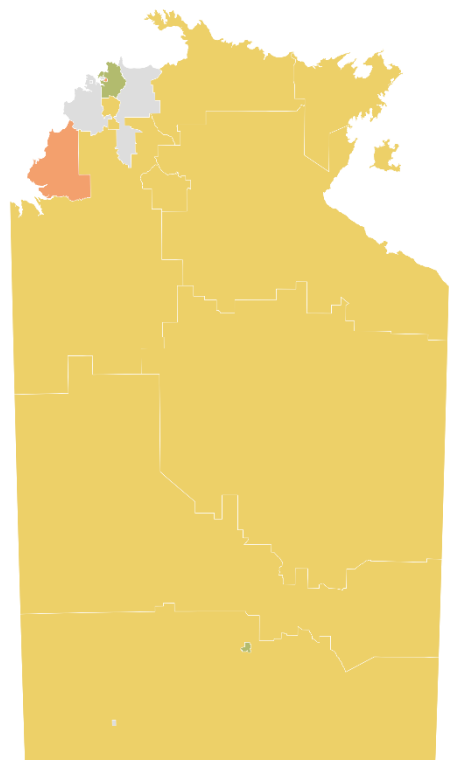
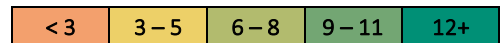
There are few digital/print news producers in the Northern Territory. News is produced out of Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek by News Corp, Australian Community Media, Today Group and independents the Tennant & District Times and NT Independent.

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.

Community radio is a significant contributor of news, particularly in remote areas. The National Indigenous Radio Service is carried by more than

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 the broadcast area of both ABC Darwin and CAAMA Radio.



5.1.3.1 Changes in the Northern Territory

Few changes have been observed in the Northern Territory. The Centralian Advocate was folded into The NT News in Q2/20. In the same quarter, the NT Independent launched. Australian Associated Press opened a Darwin newsroom in Q1/21, and Centralian Today, published by the Today Group, opened in Alice Springs in Q3/23.

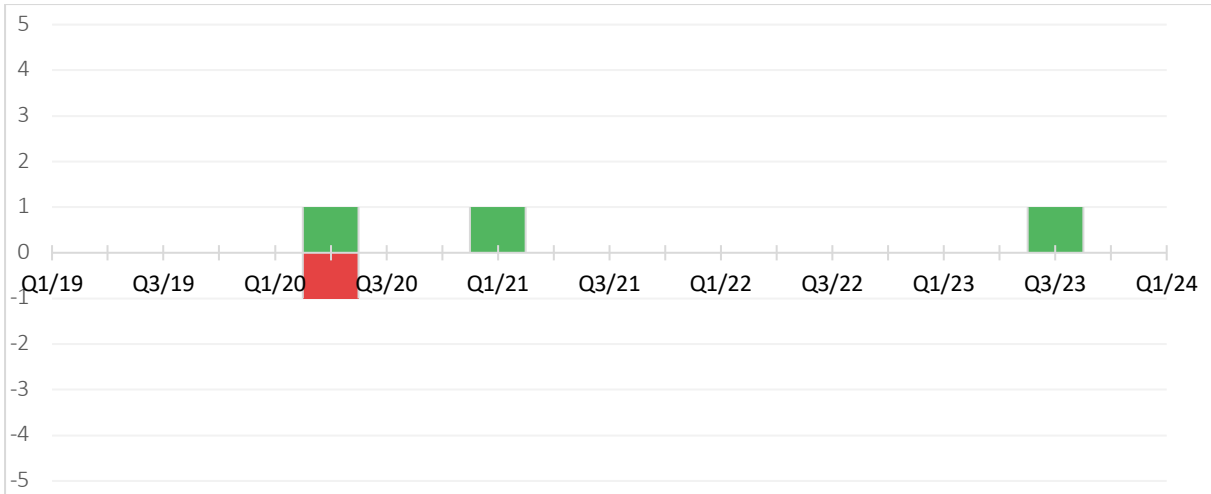


Figure 17: Change categories in the Northern Territory by quarter, 1 January 2019 – 31 March 2024.

5.1.3.2 Entities in the Northern Territory

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in NT	% total outlets in NT
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	3	12
Southern Cross Austereo*	3	12
Australian Radio Network*	2	8
Nine Entertainment Co*	2	8
Joint Ventures	-1	-4
Subtotal for entities with > 1 news outlets	9	36
Outlets held by all other entities	16	64
Total	25	100

Table 21: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in the Northern Territory, 31 March 2024

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

The Northern Territory has 25 outlets, or two per cent of total outlets, one more than December 2023. Alice Springs News has been included as PIJI found they continued publishing after announcing their closure in November 2021.

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 24 per cent of total outlets in the NT.

There are 13 radio news outlets in the Northern Territory, or three per cent of total radio outlets. Only two news entities have more than one holding, Australian Broadcasting Corporation (three) and Australian Radio Network (two).

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

5.1.4 Queensland

	Community	Local	Metro	State	Total
Print	3	75	1	1	80
Digital	1	48	2	0	51
Radio	0	79	0	0	79
Television	0	6	0	0	6
Total	4	208	3	1	216

◀ Table 22: News producers in Queensland, 31 March 2024.

▼ Figure 18: Count of local news producers in Queensland, excluding television, by local government area, 31 March 2024.

Local government areas in Queensland have a wide spread of news density, with more than 20 outlets in Brisbane and as few as three in parts of North West Queensland.

The capital and its surrounding cities are home to a diverse mix of major publishers News Corp and Nine, medium-sized businesses such as Solstice Media and the Today Group, as well as local independents. News Corp operates both the Courier Mail, a major daily newspaper, as well as the Quest community newspaper brand across the city’s suburbs.

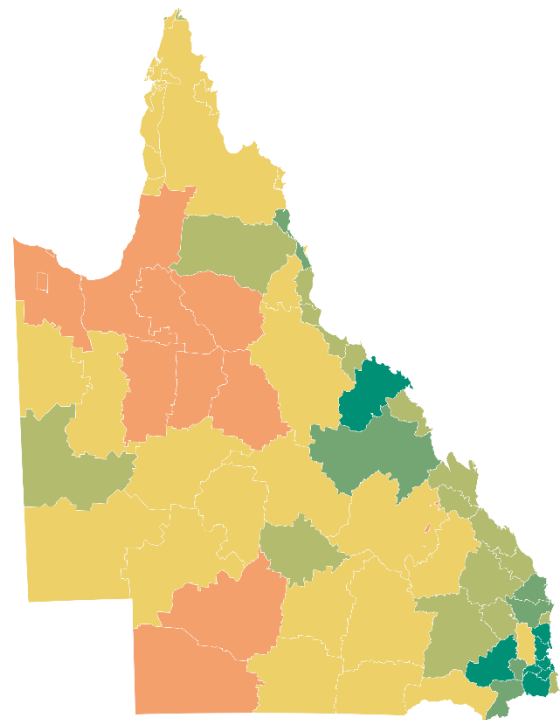
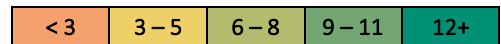
Independent outlets in Brisbane include the Bayside Weekly News, The Local Bulletin in the western suburbs, and the Everton Echo. There are particular concentration in the south-east and Whitsunday Region, with smaller news production hubs around Cairns, Hervey Bay and Dalby.

Radio in Brisbane includes national brands such as hit FM and Triple M, Nine’s 4BC, ABC Brisbane and community radio such as 4ZZZ Radio Brisbane.

Independent news companies dominate in regional Queensland, particularly the Today Group, which operates 19 outlets across the state, 16 of them in regional areas.

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.



5.1.4.1 Changes in Queensland

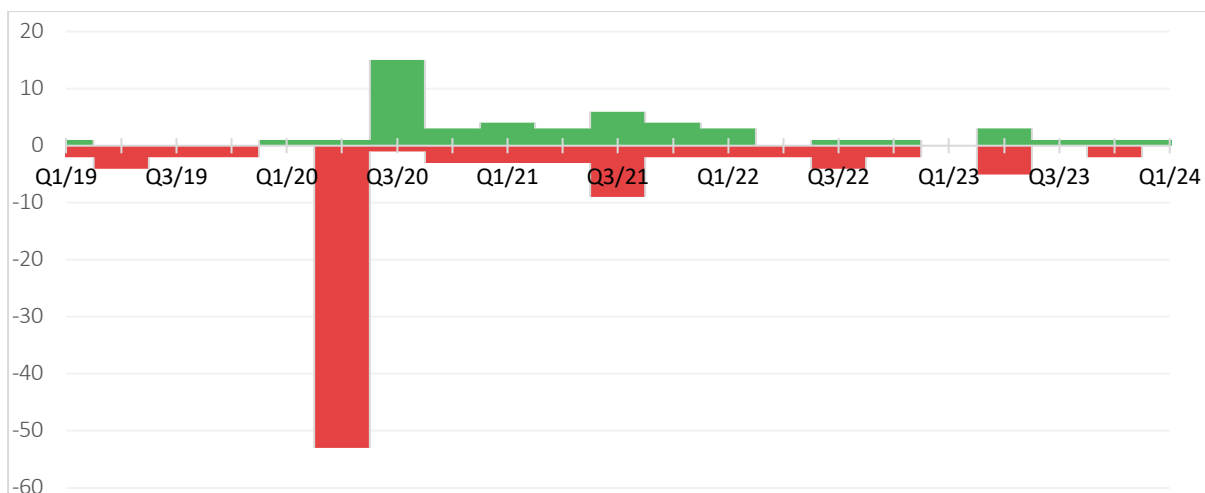


Figure 19: Change categories in Queensland by quarter, 1 January 2019 – 31 March 2024.

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, Cairns and Burnett. Over time, many of these start-ups have closed, leaving only one remaining in many markets. In Chinchilla, for example, after News Corp closed the Chinchilla News in April 2020, three new titles were launched: the West QLD Echo, the Chin Wag and Country Caller. By the end of that same year, only the Caller remained.

The Today Group has expanded into many of these same regional markets. Prior to COVID-19 it was a single digital-only news outlet in Noosa, published by Melbourne-based Star News Group. In the period since has launched 13 titles across regions including Gympie, Bundaberg, and Maranoa and purchased three titles: two Australian Community Media newspapers in Beaudesert and Goondiwindi, as well as the Longreach Leader.

Australian Community Media closed its newspaper in Jimboomba and now only maintains a presence in Mount Isa.

Queensland is also one of the few states to have seen reductions in TV presence, with Nine newsrooms in Toowoomba and Mackay and WIN a newsroom in Hervey Bay all closing in 2019. In 2021, after affiliation agreements changed, WIN ended its local news bulletins in Sunshine Coast, Toowoomba and Townsville.

5.1.4.2 Entities in Queensland

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in QLD	% of total outlets in QLD
News Corp Australia*	42	19
Southern Cross Austereo*	23	11
Today News Group*	16	7
Australian Radio Network*	15	7
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	11	5
Subtotal for entities with > 7 news outlets	107	50
Outlets held by all other entities	109	50
Total	216	100

Table 23: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in Queensland, 31 March 2024

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

In Queensland, there were a total of 216 associated outlets (18 per cent of total outlets), up three outlets from December 2023 due to the opening of the Community Leader (Redlands), Bayside Weekly News, and Burdekin Life, and the Fassifern Guardian & Tribune splitting into two separate newspapers, the Ipswich Tribune and the Fassifern Guardian.

Five news entities collectively operate 107 outlets or 50 per cent of QLD outlets. News Corp Australia operates 42, or 19 per cent, of Queensland outlets, almost double the holdings of the next news entity.

There are 79 radio news outlets in Queensland, or 20 per cent of the total. The news entities with the largest holdings are Southern Cross Austereo (22) and Australian Radio Network (14), with one of Australian Radio Network's outlets being a joint venture with Nova Entertainment. Southern Cross Austereo and Australian Radio Network collectively operate 46 per cent of all radio news outlets in Queensland.

5.1.5 South Australia

	Community	Local	Metro	State	Total
Print	1	25	1	0	27
Digital	0	14	1	0	15
Radio	0	32	0	0	32
Television	0	9	0	0	9
Total	1	80	2	0	83

◀ Table 24: News producers in South Australia, 31 March 2024.

▼ Figure 20: Count of local news producers in South Australia, excluding television, by local government area, 31 March 2024.

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).

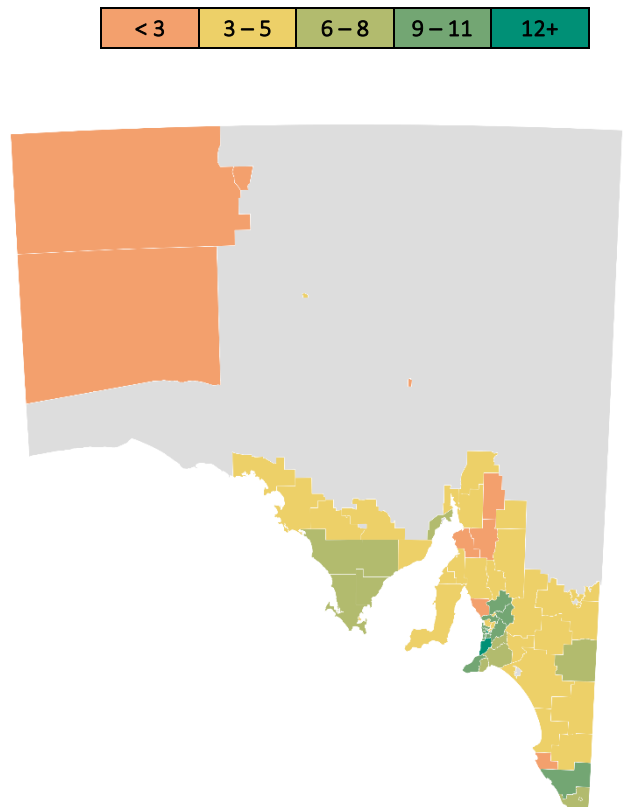
The Today News Group has emerged as a major player in the state in the June 2023 quarter. It revived the Border Watch, South-Eastern Times and Penola Pennant in 2020, and subsequently purchased 11 titles from Australian Community Media in April 2023. It also purchased four titles from Papers and Publications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



5.1.5.1 Changes in South Australia

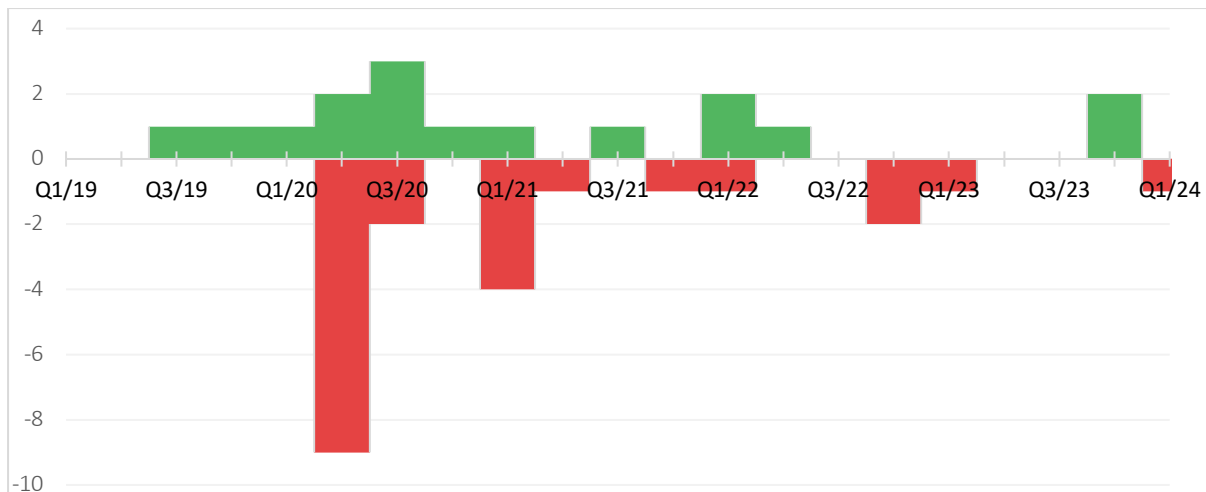


Figure 21: Change categories in South Australia by quarter, 1 January 2019 – 31 March 2024.

South Australia has been moderately affected by changes in its news market.

With the onset of COVID in Q2/20, News Corp ended the print editions of its Messenger community titles in Adelaide. Across the data period, News Corp has also opened digital local outlets in Whyalla (Q4/19), Port Lincoln and the Barossa Valley (Q3/20), and Adelaide Hills and Mount Gambier (Q4/20).

Australian Community Media temporarily suspended and then permanently closed a number of titles, including the West Coast Sentinel, Flinders News, Coastal Leader and Eyre Peninsula Tribune. During the suspension of the Murray Valley Standard, local digital outlet Murray Bridge News launched (Q2/20). The Eyre Peninsula Advocate launched (Q3/21) to fill the gaps left by the Tribune and Sentinel.

The ABC opened new bureaux in Whyalla and Victor Harbor in Q1/22.

There has also been fluctuation among independent titles:

- Within metropolitan Adelaide, both the Adelaide East Herald (Q4/22) and Adelaide Hills Herald (Q1/23) were closed by Taylor Group after being purchased in 2022.
- Along the Grapevine, an independent local news website in Adelaide Hills, closed in Q4/22.
- The Whippet launched in Q3/21 in the City of Onkaparinga and closed by Q1/22.

5.1.5.2 Entities in South Australia

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*	15	18
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	47	57
Outlets held by all other entities	36	43
Total	83	100

Table 25: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in South Australia, 31 March 2024

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

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 47 outlets or 57 per cent of total outlets in South Australia.

Today News Group holds 15 outlets, or 18 per cent of South Australian outlets, down one outlet since December 2023 due to the Two Wells and Districts Echo being merged into the Plains Producer.

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.

There are 32 radio news outlets in South Australia, or eight per cent of the total. The news entities with the largest holdings are Australian Radio Network (nine) and Southern Cross Austereo (four), which collectively operate 41 per cent of all radio news outlets in South Australia.

5.1.6 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 26: News producers in Tasmania, 31 March 2024.

▼ Figure 22: Count of local news producers in Tasmania, excluding television, by local government area, 31 March 2024.

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.

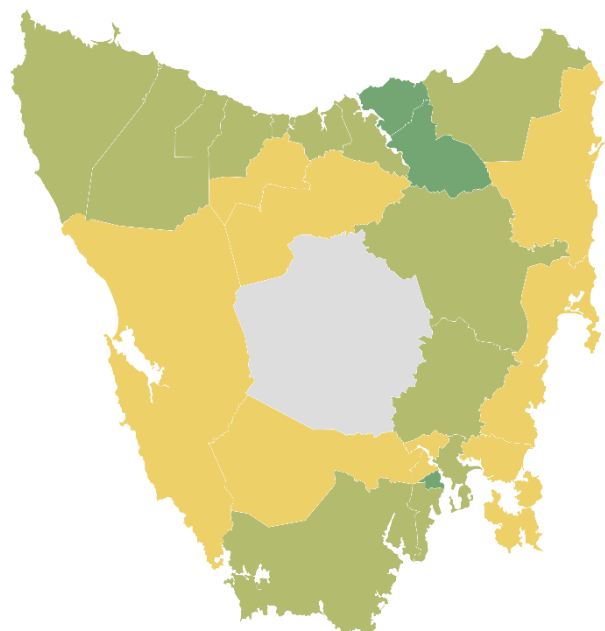
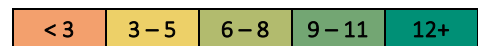
A significant presence in Tasmanian news media is Font Publishing, which has purchased multiple local outlets over the past few years, including Tasmanian Country, Derwent Valley Gazette, Sorrell Times and others.

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 PIJL has no record of print, digital or radio news producers. It is included the Tasmania TV1 licence area.
- 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.



5.1.6.1 Changes in Tasmania

Few changes have been observed in Tasmania. Tasmanian Inquirer, a digital investigative journalism site, launched in Q1/20. News Corp has launched two digital local news sites in the state: The Launceston News (Q1/20) and The North West Coast News (Q3/20), based in Burnie. The New Norfolk and

Derwent Valley News, a local news website, launched a print edition in Q3/20. In Q1/24, the Hobart Weekly News opened in the state capital.

Two contractions have been observed: the Tasmanian Browser closed in Q1/23, and the Meander Valley Gazette in Q4/23.

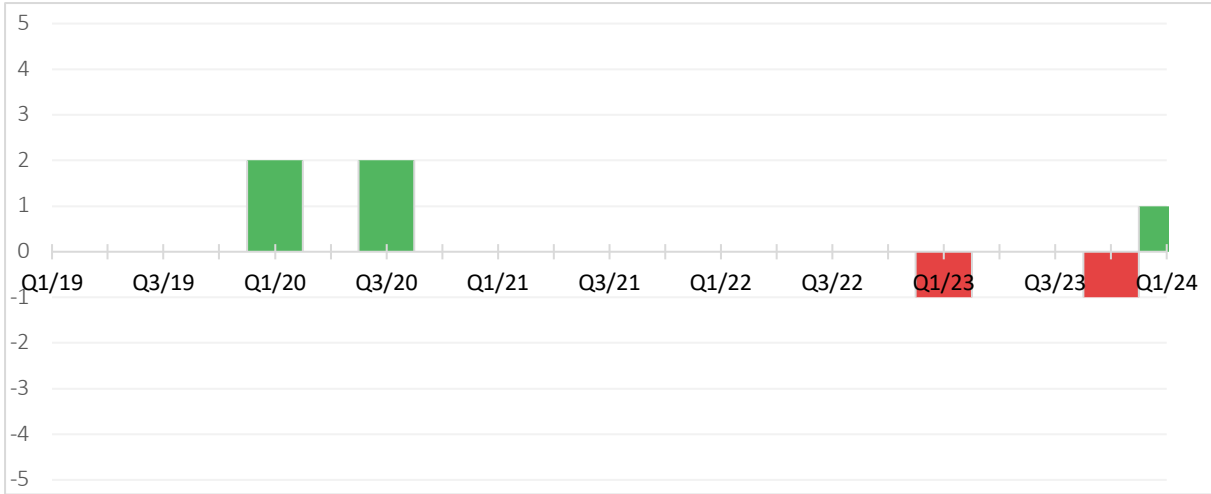


Figure 23: Change categories in Tasmania by quarter, 1 January 2019 – 31 March 2024.

5.1.6.2 Entities in Tasmania

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
Huon Newspaper Company	3	6
Subtotal for entities with > 2 news outlets	29	57
Outlets held by all other entities	22	43
Total	51	100

Table 27: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in Tasmania, 31 March 2024

Table 27 shows the entities in Tasmania which operate more than two outlets. Six entities operate 29 outlets or 57 per cent of the total Tasmania outlets. Huon Newspaper Company is now included in Table 24 after the launch of its third outlet, Hobart Weekly News, in January 2024.

Australian Radio Network operates the largest number of news outlets in the state, with nine outlets or 18 per cent of the total Tasmanian outlets. Font Publishing continues to have a significant presence in Tasmania, operating seven outlets, or 14 per cent.

There are 17 radio news outlets in Tasmania, or four per cent of the total. Australian Radio Network alone operates nine radio news outlets, or 53 per cent of the total in Tasmania.

5.1.7 Victoria

	Community	Local	Metro	State	Total
Print	38	119	3	1	161
Digital	4	22	0	2	28
Radio	0	71	0	0	71
Television	0	9	0	0	9
Total	42	221	3	3	269

◀ Table 28: News producers in Victoria, 31 March 2024.

▼ Figure 24: Count of local news producers in Victoria, excluding television, by local government area, 31 March 2024.

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.

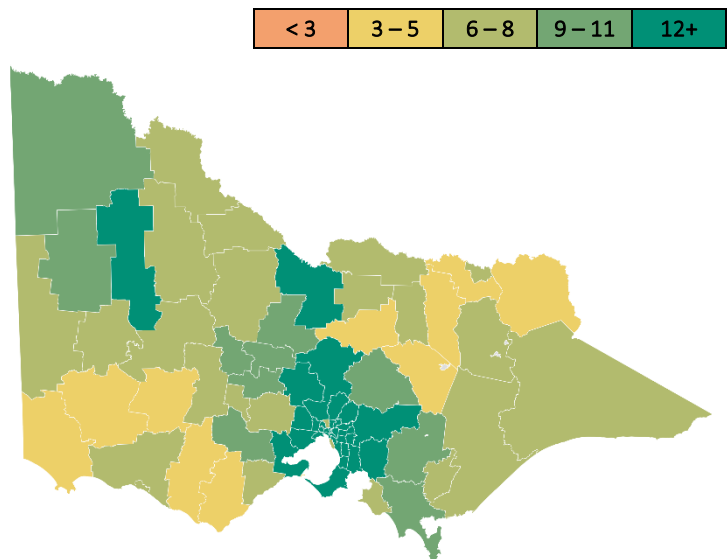
Star News Group publishes 18 papers in Melbourne’s suburbs and surrounds, and two in Geelong. The Local Paper also exists across Melbourne city, though with a smaller reporting footprint. Hyperlocal News publishes five titles within the City of Melbourne.

Australian Community Media is present in larger regional cities in Victoria, with daily papers in Bendigo, Wodonga, Ballarat and Warrnambool. 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.

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.



5.1.7.1 Changes in Victoria

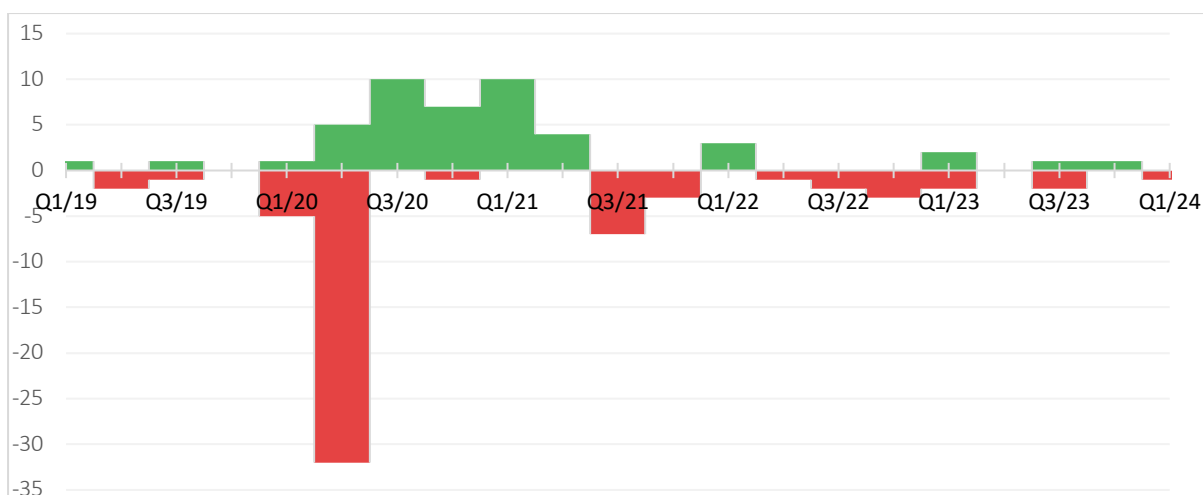


Figure 25: Change categories in Victoria by quarter, 1 January 2019 – 31 March 2024.

The third-largest number of changes in Australia have been recorded in Victoria. Despite multiple and longer lockdowns than other parts of the country, including in regional areas, Victoria lost fewer news outlets during COVID-19 than either New South Wales or Queensland.

Within metropolitan Melbourne, News Corp ended the print editions of its Leader community titles, shifting all of these to digital-only publication. The existing Leader brands have also been consolidated, with multiple titles merged into regional digital editions. For example, the Moorabbin Leader, Dandenong Leader, Cranbourne Leader and Berwick Leader were aggregated into a South East category on the Herald Sun website.

Australian Community Media separately launched the Inner East Review in East Melbourne and Richmond in 2022, which has since closed.

The Local Paper has significantly expanded its geographic footprint, launching 14 localised editions in local government areas across the city and immediate surrounding area.

Star News Group launched the Lilydale Star Mail in May 2021.

In regional Victoria news production remains robust. Newspapers that did have closed across the period include independent papers the Kyneton Free Press, Yeates Media’s East Gippsland News, Australian Community Media’s Hepburn Advocate, and News Corp’s Bellarine and Surf Coast Echo.

The Paper, which launched as a digital title in Leongatha following the 2020 closure of the Great Southern Star, subsequently closed by the end of the year. The Bridge, which opened after the closure of the Yarram Standard, continues to operate.

In the Wimmera-Mallee in the state’s west, titles have closed in Edenhope (Kowree Advocate) and Mildura (both the Independent and the Weekly) and have opened in Horsham (Horsham Times, Wimmera-Mallee Sport), Ararat (Ararat Advocate) and Mildura (The Mildura News).

In the south west, the Moyne Gazette closed in Port Fairy and Warrnambool-based investigative news site The Terrier has taken extended breaks and is currently closed. The Warrnambool Weekly launched in March 2023.

New community titles across the state include The Wombat Post and Traf District News, which opened in a new iteration in December 2023 after previously closing in April 2023. The Woody Yaloak Herald, Buninyong & District Community News and Port Albert Tattler all closed across the period.

5.1.7.2 Entities in Victoria

News entity	Outlet holdings in VIC	% total outlets in VIC
Star News Group	20	7
News Corp Australia*	17	6
Ace Radio Broadcasters*	15	6
Southern Cross Austereo*	10	4
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	9	3
McPherson Newspapers*	8	3
Times News Group*	8	3
Subtotal for entities with > 7 news outlets	87	32
Outlets held by all other entities	182	68
Total	269	100

Table 29: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in Victoria, 31 March 2024

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

Victoria has 269 associated outlets or 22 per cent of the total outlets, up one outlet from December 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.

There are 71 radio news outlets in Victoria, or 18 per cent of the total. Ace Radio Broadcasters has the largest holdings (14), followed by Southern Cross Austereo (nine), and Australian Radio Network (seven). Together these entities operate 42 per cent of the radio news outlets in Victoria.

Australian Community Media (six outlets), Provincial Press Group (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.

5.1.8 Western Australia

	Community	Local	Metro	State	Total
Print	14	51	1	0	66
Digital	1	5	2	0	8
Radio	0	52	0	0	52
Television	0	6	0	0	6
Total	15	114	3	0	132

◀ Table 30: News producers in Western Australia, 31 March 2024.

▼ Figure 26: Count of local news producers in Western Australia, excluding television, by local government area, 31 March 2024.

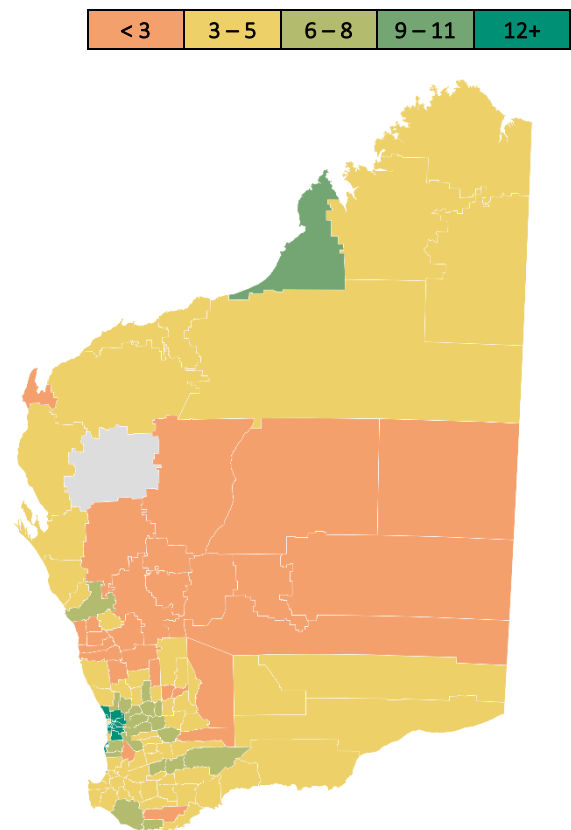
Western Australia’s media landscape is dominated by Seven West Media. Almost every local government area in the state is covered by one of SWM’s 19 regional newspapers, including very remote areas. In Perth, the West Australian and PerthNow cover the whole metro and a network of PerthNow print papers 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 2024 audit. The Midwest Times, based in Geraldton, appears to publish an average of one story each year, while ABC Pilbara also provides a small amount of coverage of the shire. At the 2021 census, this local government area had a population below 200 people.

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).

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.



5.1.8.1 Changes in Western Australia



Figure 27: Change categories in Western Australia by quarter, 1 January 2019 – 31 March 2024.

The market in Western Australia has been remarkably stable over the data period, though consistent with most of the rest of the country it has tended toward decline.

Within Perth, Seven West Media reorganised its community newspaper titles in 2021 into the PerthNow brand. As part of this process, the net number of titles was reduced: separate editions of the Western Suburbs Weekly were merged into the single PerthNow Western Suburbs, and separate editions of the Eastern Reporter were merged into the single PerthNow Central, a net reduction of two titles. South of the city in Rockingham, Seven West Media closed local newspaper The Weekend Courier in June 2019. In 2024 Seven West Media launched The Nightly, a national news-focused digital site headquartered in Perth.

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. In 2023 it sold two further papers – the Augusta-Margaret River Mail and Busselton-Dunsborough Mail – to SEN. Its final two titles in the state, the Bunbury Mail and Mandurah Mail, were audited as part of March 2024 sampling and were not found to publish any original material. PIJI will list these titles as closed in its April 2024 data update.

The Bridgetown Star opened after the closure of the Donnybrook-Bridgetown-Manjimup Mail in 2020. Initially an online title, it launched a print publication, was forced back online after the closure of ACM’s printing facilities in 2023, and subsequently closed in September of that year.

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

The ABC opened a new bureau in Carnarvon and increased its presence in Northam in 2022.

PIJI is aware of two radio stations commencing news services across the period: Harvey Community Radio 96.5 FM partnered with the Harvey Waroona Reporter to produce a radio news bullet in 2021, and Denmark 99.7 FM commenced broadcasting in the same year.

5.1.8.2 Entities in Western Australia

Parent entity	Outlet holdings in WA	% total outlets in WA
Seven West Media*	35	27
Southern Cross Austereo*	29	22
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	7	5
The Herald Publishing Company	5	4
Subtotal for entities with > 4 news outlets	76	58
Outlets held by all other entities	56	42
Total	132	100

Table 31: Parent entities with the largest number of outlet holdings in Western Australia, 31 March 2024

Table 31 shows the entities in Western Australia which operate more than four outlets.

Western Australia has 132 associated outlets or 11 per cent of total outlets across Australia, down two outlets from December 2023. The four listed news entities operate 76 outlets or 58 per cent of total outlets in WA.

Just two entities combined, Seven West Media and Southern Cross Austereo, operate 49 per cent (64 outlets) of the total outlets in Western Australia.

There are 52 radio news outlets in Western Australia, or 13 per cent of the total. Southern Cross Austereo has by far the largest radio holdings in Western Australia. It operates 29 radio news outlets, 56 per cent of the total 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.

[Australian News Sampling Project]

Case study, March 2024:
Bunbury and surrounds, WA

6 Australian News Sampling Project

The results presented here are from a March survey of the City of Bunbury and three nearby local government areas – the shires of Capel, Collie and Dardanup – in south-west Western Australia.

In this project we analyse samples of news coverage in a given month against two benchmarks:

- the amount of public interest journalism produced
- the relative localism of the stories to the audience

For this project, public interest journalism is defined as:

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

In practice, this means news relating to the functioning of government at all levels, including their agencies, foreign policy, the economy and significant public expenditure; crime and the courts; social services such as health and education; emergency services including police and fire; and community individuals and events, including local sport.

The localism of a story is both whether the story is local in nature – that is, affects a small and identifiable geographic community, such as a single town or local government area – and whether it is local specifically to the local government area being sampled, to a nearby LGA, or to a distant LGA. An article about a community event in Brisbane that is published in a newspaper in Adelaide might be a local story in its content, but it is not local to a South Australian audience.

The target sample size for each outlet is a minimum of 200 articles or four editions of a print newspaper. Where the minimum cannot be met, we review the entire month of content. Where resources permit, we expand the number of articles sampled.

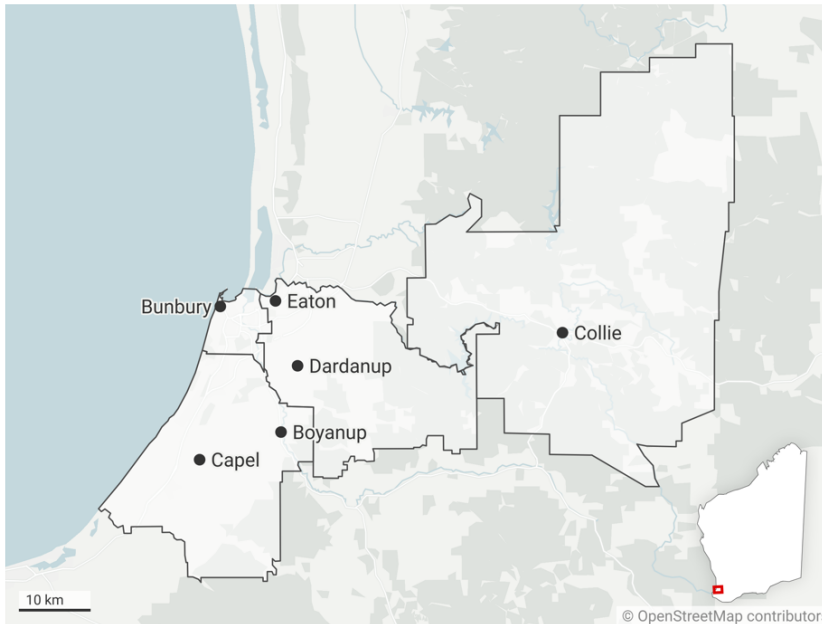
With this work, we seek to expand the amount of information about local news around Australia. This project fills a data gap in the existing ANMP work through its focus on the content output, testing the underlying assumption that newspapers and websites are providing public interest journalism for their local communities.

Radio and television are not surveyed in this project. We can remotely audit print and digital news content, but it is much more difficult to reliably access radio or television news programming from outside of its broadcast area. In almost all cases that we have found, there are no public digital archives of broadcast news content available, meaning that assessments must be done by live stream which is extremely resource intensive. This is a significant barrier to independent scrutiny, and not one that PIJI is resourced to overcome.

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

6.1 Bunbury and surrounds, Western Australia

This sample includes the City of Bunbury and three nearby local government areas – the shires of Capel, Collie and Dardanup – in south-west Western Australia.



Region

Land area	285 893 ha
Residents	77 915 (2022)

Population centres

Bunbury	Boyanup
Eaton	Capel
Dardanup	Collie

News outlets (March 2024)

Print	3
Digital	1
Radio	3
Television	3

6.1.1 Local news producers

Outlet	Format	Ownership	Scale	Total
10 West Digital Television	Television	West Digital Television Pty Ltd	Local	0
7 News Regional WA	Television	Golden West Network Pty Limited	Local	0
963 AM	Radio	Radio West Broadcasters Pty Ltd	Local	0
ABC South West WA	Radio	Australian Broadcasting Corporation	Local	37
Bunbury Herald	Print	Seven West Media Limited	Local	124
Bunbury Mail	Digital	Rural Press Pty Limited	Local	60
Collie River Valley Bulletin	Print	Collie Community Publishing Pty Ltd	Local	128
hit95.7 Southwest	Radio	Radio West Broadcasters Pty Ltd	Local	0
Nine Regional Western Australia	Television	WIN Television WA Pty Ltd	Local	0
South Western Times	Print	South West Printing and Publishing Company Limited	Local	132
Total				481

Table 32: News producers in Bunbury and surrounds and the total number of articles assessed.

The south-west region of Western Australia is served by the public broadcaster, Australian Community Media's digital regional title, the Bunbury Mail, and the South Western Times - a weekly newspaper published by The West Australian.

The West Australian publishes an additional local weekly newspaper, the Bunbury Herald, based in Bunbury. The Collie River Valley Bulletin – an independent local weekly newspaper, is based in the Shire of Collie.

Commercial radio stations include both hit and Triple M brands.

10, 7 and Nine make up the commercial television network of Bunbury and surrounds.

6.1.2 Changes observed in Bunbury and surrounds

Date	Change observed
16/04/2020	● Bunbury Mail ended its print edition
16/04/2020	○ Collie Mail suspended
01/07/2020	● Collie Mail reopened at reduced service
31/03/2021	● Collie Mail closed

Two changes have been observed in Bunbury and surrounds since PIJ began monitoring. In 2020, Australian Community Media ended its print edition of the Bunbury Mail.

In 2021, the Collie Mail closed following the suspension of dozens of Australian Community Media non-daily newspapers in April 2020.

The Bunbury Mail will additionally be listed as closed in PIJ’s April 2024 data update as it was not found to publish any original material in this sample. This change will be backdated to April 2023 when it finished publishing a print edition.

6.1.3 Sample

The digital output of the public broadcaster, two publishers and two digital outlets was assessed between 1 – 31 March 2024. For all titles this represented the total of their digital output across that period.

A total of 481 articles are in the sample.

The ABC sample only includes articles published to the ABC Local website and may not be representative of news content on local radio.

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

Bunbury Mail had no output of local relevance to the sampled area and as such, no commentary has been provided for this title, except where we present evidence for its exclusion.

Overall, we found high (65%+) to very high (85%+) levels of public interest journalism. The largest focus of public interest journalism coverage was community, followed by government, public services and lastly courts and crime.

6.1.4 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 South West WA	25	71	10	29	35	2	37
Bunbury Herald	92	82	20	18	112	12	124
Bunbury Mail	50	91	5	9	55	5	60
Collie River Valley Bulletin	99	92	9	8	108	20	128
South Western Times	91	84	18	17	109	23	132
Total	357	85	62	15	419	62	481

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

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 at all outlets, ranging from 71 per cent at ABC South West to 92 per cent at Collie River Valley Bulletin.

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.

Outlet	Public interest journalism											
	Government			Courts and crime			Community			Public services		
	All	U	% U	All	U	% U	All	U	% U	All	U	% U
ABC South West WA	17	11	31	2	1	3	14	11	31	7	6	17
Bunbury Herald	51	36	32	21	11	10	80	48	43	14	12	11
Bunbury Mail	23	15	27	13	9	16	15	12	22	31	29	53
Collie River Valley Bulletin	44	32	30	3	3	3	80	61	57	16	15	14
South Western Times	54	33	30	11	8	7	78	60	55	13	11	10
Total	189	127	30	50	32	8	267	192	46	81	73	17

Table 34: Breakdown of public interest journalism.

Stories can be allocated to 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.

We found that the three print outlets – the Herald, the Bulletin and the Times - were very similar in terms of both the total number of subjects coded within each public interest journalism category and the number of unique stories identified within each category.

ABC South West follows this pattern to an extent, deviating with less community reporting. The volume of articles published can be taken into account when interpreting the results and commentary below – the ABC published a total of 35 reported stories compared to the three newspapers which published between 100 – 130 reported stories each.

Overall, the largest focus of public interest journalism coverage was community. This was true at all outlets except for the public broadcaster, which gave fairly equal coverage to government stories.

Community stories sampled across the month were found to be about local and community sport (60), followed closely by community events (46), community individuals (36) and community organisations (22). This was led by the Bulletin, which published half of all local and community sport stories in the sample, followed by the Herald (26) and Times (11).

Community events were covered by all outlets: Bunbury Herald (17), Collie River Valley Bulletin (15), South Western Times (12) and ABC (two). Events across the south west region took place for International Women’s Day, St Patrick’s Day and Harmony Week. Events such as a vintage car festival in Bunbury and the Bunbury Cup horserace were covered by multiple outlets in the sample. The two West Australian outlets covered various fundraisers such as cycling and swimming events for further research and awareness of health issues such as breast cancer, youth mental health, endometriosis, and domestic violence. The Bunbury Herald covered events in Bunbury such as an epilepsy awareness day and celebrations for the Holi Hindu festival, while the South West Times covered

other events in the region such as the Donnybrook Apple Festival and Warren Agricultural Show. The Collie River Valley Bulletin additionally covered the Collie Labour Day Festival.

Both the Herald and Times newspapers featured profiles of athletes from the south west region who were competing at national and international levels of sport, including AFL, Sheffield Shield cricket, a mountain biking championship, kayaking nationals, and the Paris Olympics. The ABC covered profiles of a local musician from a small town in the Great Southern region of Western Australia, and a man from the Shire of Harvey in the south west who received a national bravery award.

The Bulletin's coverage of community individuals often related to community organisations, for example, an article was published about the local RSL, including members. The Herald and Times newspapers published the most stories featuring community organisations (seven and nine respectively). Organisations such as the Leschenault Men's Shed received coverage from both outlets, while the Herald covered a support group for those affected by suicide in Bunbury and the Times covered a support group for those affected by road trauma in Collie. Both support groups were started by locals who could not find an existing support group in their community. The Donnybrook branch of the Country Women's Association received coverage from the Times as well as the ABC.

Government was the next biggest focus at most outlets. Overall, this coverage focussed equally on state (46) and local (45) governments, with some coverage of the federal government (19). The split was similar among most outlets with even coverage of state and local stories, plus a handful of federal government stories. Unusually for the ABC, local government received the most coverage (five), followed by federal (three) and state (one).

The Shire of Waroona's consideration to introduce a permit system for 4WDs driving along the beach and the City of Bunbury's proposal to erect a memorial for the first governor of Western Australia were covered by multiple outlets. The Herald and Times covered the local governments of Bunbury, Capel, Dardanup, Busselton, Donnybrook-Balingup, and Collie. These stories included council meetings, transport infrastructure such as road closures and speed limit reductions, and sporting facility upgrades to ovals and changerooms. The Bulletin covered local issues related to council such as meetings and budgets, as well as multiple stories on housing policy. Four of the five ABC local government stories were focussed on councils in the south west region: Waroona, Manjimup, Bunbury and Busselton.

State government stories were largely about funding and grants for food and agriculture businesses, waste facilities, an energy storage project, electric vehicle infrastructure, and an education centre in the south west region, sometimes in partnership with local councils. Activities of the Parliament of Western Australian, and motions led by the member of the Legislative Council for the South West, were also covered. A major issue across the month was that Bunbury's Dolphin Discovery Centre went into voluntary administration. The ABC's only state government story addressed Australia's wine industry and concerned all state and territory governments nation-wide.

Federal government stories mostly related to local issues across the south west region. For example, multiple outlets reported on community meetings held as part of the federal government's consultation on its proposed offshore wind zone off the south west coast, and the opposition government's discussion of south west Western Australia as a site where a nuclear reactor could potentially replace a coal plant scheduled to close.

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. Services stories were heavily focussed on fire (22) and police (19), followed by education (15), other services (nine), and health (eight).

The Bunbury Mail contributed 12 police and 11 fire services stories to the results, though none of these were relevant to the sampled area.

The higher level of reporting on fire services compared to other samples was due to multiple suspicious fires around Bunbury, and bushfires in the south west region including near Dalyellup and Waroona, some burning for more than one day, receiving ongoing coverage. Fire services were also the feature of disaster preparedness stories at the Herald, Times and ABC, which published stories on the Bunbury council pushing to hire extra emergency personnel, a call from several services asking the public to stay safe of the Easter long weekend, and the pilots of spotter aircraft trained to detect bushfires across Western Australia.

Some police stories were also related to the suspicious fires, with the arson squad investigating. Additionally, the Herald reported on calls from survivors of domestic violence for more action and services in the south west region, while the Bulletin introduced a new police officer.

The majority of education stories came from the Bulletin and focussed on competitions and community events for school children. Education stories from the Herald reported on fundraising and grants to support the educational needs of children in Bunbury and the south west. School programs such as first aid training were the covered by the Times.

Other services covered included emergency and rescue services. Allegations of prison staff experiencing sexual harassment and the prison's subsequent response were the subject of numerous articles, particularly from the Times.

The majority of health services storied came from the Times and included the state government's rollout of CCTV cameras in regional hospitals as south west hospitals report aggressive and violent incidents against staff, and the Donnybrook-Balingup council's decision to halt the sale of a medical centre.

Courts and crime coverage was particularly low at ABC South West and Collie River Valley Bulletin, however, the two West Australian weekly newspapers provided some courts and crime coverage across the month, although this category was still the lowest category of coverage at all outlets. Most courts and crime stories published by Bunbury Herald were about specific, local and mostly non-violent crimes such as theft and drug possession. The South Western Times also published articles about crimes in the local area such as property damage, as well as broader issues such as domestic violence and harassment or assault in institutional settings such as hospitals and prisons.

Overall, reporting was split between non-violent (17 stories) and violent crimes (13), and lower court (13), superior court (three), and intermediate court (two).

6.1.5 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 South West WA	25	71	10	29	3	9	5	14
Bunbury Herald	90	80	14	13	16	14	10	9
Bunbury Mail	35	64	2	4	10	18	15	27
Collie River Valley Bulletin	99	92	3	3	5	5	7	7
South Western Times	80	73	24	22	11	10	4	4
Total	329	79	53	13	45	11	41	10

Table 35: Scale of coverage of reported stories.

Stories concerning local issues had the highest overall focus at all outlets. 79 per cent of stories were local in scale, followed by 13 per cent regional, 11 per cent state and nine per cent national in scale.

Bunbury Herald and Collie River Valley Bulletin provided very high levels of local coverage, with some coverage of regional, state and national stories.

As well as providing high levels of coverage of local coverage, ABC South West and South Western Times also focussed on regional stories, with almost a third of stories published coded to this scale. South-west Western Australia was the main region covered, with a few stories focussed on regional Western Australia in general.

PIJI finds that ABC stations tend to focus more on state-wide and national issues at a higher rate than other outlets, while a much lower proportion of coverage is dedicated to local issues. This was less true in Bunbury and surrounds than previous sample regions. ABC South West provided high levels of local coverage, moderate coverage of regional issues and lower coverage of state and national stories.

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. The localism of each story is presented in Table 7, and each story may be simultaneously in multiple categories.

Outlet	City of Bunbury		Shire of Capel		Shire of Collie		Shire of Dardanup	
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %
ABC South West WA	10	29	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bunbury Herald	66	59	10	9	0	0	4	4
Bunbury Mail	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Collie River Valley Bulletin	1	1	0	0	99	92	0	0
South Western Times	39	36	2	2	9	8	8	7
Total	116	28	12	3	108	28	12	3

Table 36: Localism of coverage of reported stories.

We found that the localism results were specific to different news outlets, reflecting the scale of the outlet and the local communities that each news outlet primarily serves.

- The Bulletin displayed very strong localism for Collie, while the Herald, based in Bunbury, predictably displayed strong localism for Bunbury, with additional coverage of Capel and Dardanup. This outlet also provided coverage of Harvey, a nearby LGA that was located outside of the sampled area.
- The South Western Times covered stories in all four LGAs sampled across the month, with a focus on Bunbury. Although outside of the sampled area, local stories published by this outlet also focussed on the nearby LGAs of Donnybrook, Balingup, and Harvey.
- PIJI has ABC South West WA listed as covering Bunbury, Capel and Dardanup. Of these LGAs, this outlet only provided local coverage of Bunbury across the month.
- PIJI also has Bunbury Mail listed as covering all four LGAs sampled, however, no local coverage of these LGAs was found across the month.

The ABC sample may be affecting these localism results. As we are coding stories which are published in text on the website, rather than the content broadcast on local radio, it could be that stories published online are inherently less localised than what is broadcast in the limited geographic area of the radio license. That is, for a story to be worth putting online to a much larger and more nationalised audience, the editorial incentive is that it should be appealing to a wider audience.

6.1.6 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 it publishes, 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.

Outlet	Syndication						Original	
	Internal		Wire		Other		n	All %
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %		
ABC South West WA	10	29	0	0	0	0	25	71
Bunbury Herald	6	5	0	0	0	0	106	95
Bunbury Mail	12	22	43	78	0	0	0	0
Collie River Valley Bulletin	0	0	0	0	0	0	108	100
South Western Times	5	5	0	0	0	0	104	95
Total	33	8	43	10	0	0	343	82

Table 37: Syndication of reported stories.

Internal syndication was found at the ABC newsroom, with almost a third of stories originating from the larger ABC network.

The Herald and Times were found to internally syndicate a handful of stories across the month. Both newspapers featured a Wheels South West insert in each weekly edition. At the Bunbury Herald, there was also some syndication from the West Australian.

From the outlets mentioned so far, there was no syndicated content from wire services or other news websites.

Additionally, we found no syndication at the Collie River Valley Bulletin.

On the other hand, 100 per cent of output from the Bunbury Mail was syndicated, either internally from Australian Community Media's network, Australian Associated Press or other wire service.

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 [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.

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.

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