

[Australian News Sampling Project]

Case study, April 2024:

Greater Adelaide, SA

3 Australian News Sampling Project

The results presented here are from an April survey of 20 local government areas across the Greater Adelaide of South Australia: Adelaide City Council, Adelaide Hills Council, Campbelltown City Council, the cities of Burnside, Charles Sturt, Holdfast Bay, Marion, Mitcham, Mount Barker, Norwood Payneham, Onkaparinga, Playford, Port Adelaide Enfield, Prospect, Salisbury, Tea Tree Gully, Unley, West Torrens, and the towns Walkerville, and Gawler.

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 Australian Broadcasting Corporation (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.

3.1 Greater Adelaide, South Australia

This sample includes the 20 local government areas that make up Greater Adelaide, including the Town of Gawler on its northern edge.



Region	
Land area	3,260km ²
Residents	1,387,290

Population centres	
Adelaide	Port Adelaide
Norwood	Torrens Park
Woodville	Rostrevor
Brighton	Modbury
Salisbury	Stirling
Sturt	Elizabeth
Noarlunga Centre	Gawler

News outlets (April 2024)	
Print	5
Digital	8
Radio	9
Television	3

Being a large metropolitan region, Greater Adelaide is well covered by multiple news outlets of varying scales and formats. The Advertiser, the daily print newspaper published by News Corp, serves the area, as does the metro-scale digital outlet InDaily, published by Solstice Media.

Adelaide’s surrounds are additionally served by weekly local newspapers: The Bunyip based in Gawler, The Leader also covering Gawler as well as the Barossa Valley, and Fleurieu Sun covering Onkaparinga as well as the Fleurieu Peninsula. The Blackwood Times, a monthly community newspaper, is based in Mitcham.

News Corp has an additional local digital presence with The Adelaide Hills News, The Barossa, Clare & Gawler News, and its Messenger titles across five regions across Adelaide and surrounds: City; East, Inner Suburbs & Hills; North & Northeast; South; and West & Beaches.

The region has a heavy radio presence, including Southern Cross Austereo’s major Triple M and hit brands, Australia Radio Network’s Mix 102.3 Adelaide, and Nova Entertainment’s FiveAA. Community radio stations include Coast FM 88.7, PBA FM 89.7, Vision Australia and WOW FM 100.5. The public broadcaster is also present with ABC Adelaide.

Each of the three major commercial television networks, Nine, Seven and Ten, has an Adelaide newsroom and produce daily news programming.

Local news producers

Outlet	Format	Ownership	Scale	Total
10 Adelaide	Television	Network 10 (Adelaide) Pty Limited	Local	0
ABC Adelaide	Radio	Australian Broadcasting Corporation	Local	146
The Adelaide Hills News	Digital	News Corp Australia Pty Limited	Local	116
The Advertiser	Print	Advertiser Newspapers Pty Limited	Metro	312
The Barossa, Clare & Gawler News	Digital	News Corp Australia Pty Limited	Local	100
The Blackwood Times	Print	Badcock, Miles	Community	0
The Bunyip	Print	The Murray Pioneer Pty Ltd	Local	269
Coast FM 88.7	Radio	Southern and Western Community Broadcasters Inc	Local	0
FiveAA	Radio	Festival City Broadcasters Pty Ltd		0
Fleurieu Sun	Print	SA Today Pty Ltd	Local	266
hit SAFM Adelaide	Radio	SCA Digital Pty Ltd	Local	0
InDaily	Digital	Solstice Media Pty Ltd	Metro	316
The Leader (Barossa Valley)	Print	Leader Newspapers Pty Ltd	Local	298
Messenger East, Inner Suburbs & Hills	Digital	Advertiser Newspapers Pty Limited	Local	102
Messenger City	Digital	Advertiser Newspapers Pty Limited	Local	197
Messenger North & Northeast	Digital	Advertiser Newspapers Pty Limited	Local	126
Messenger South	Digital	Advertiser Newspapers Pty Limited	Local	89
Messenger West & Beaches	Digital	Advertiser Newspapers Pty Limited	Local	122
Mix 102.3 Adelaide	Radio	5AD Broadcasting Company Pty Ltd	Local	0
Nine Adelaide	Television	Channel 9 South Australia Pty Limited	Local	0
PBA FM 89.7	Radio	Para Broadcasters Association Inc	Local	0
Seven Adelaide	Television	Channel Seven Adelaide Pty Limited	Local	0
Triple M Adelaide 104.7	Radio	Triple M Adelaide Pty Ltd	Local	0
Vision Australia Radio Adelaide 119.7AM	Radio	Vision Australia Limited	Local	0
WOW FM 100.5	Radio	Way Out West Broadcasters Inc	Local	0
Total				2459

Table 5: News producers in Adelaide and surrounds and the total number of articles assessed.

3.1.1 Changes observed in Greater Adelaide

Date	Change observed
10/02/2020	● The Adelaide Hills News opened
01/04/2020	○ The Bunyip temporarily closed
08/04/2020	● Messenger East, Inner Suburbs & Hills ended print edition
	● Messenger North & Northeast ended print edition
	● Messenger South ended print edition
	● Messenger West & Beaches ended print edition
16/04/2020	● On the Coast closed
22/04/2020	○ The Bunyip reopened
02/08/2020	● The Barossa, Clare & Gawler News opened
01/10/2020	● Adelaide East Herald opened
01/09/2021	● The Whippet opened
31/01/2022	● The Whippet closed
25/11/2022	● Adelaide East Herald closed
18/12/2022	● Along the Grapevine closed
17/02/2023	● Adelaide Hills Herald closed

Many changes have been observed in Adelaide and surrounds since PIJ began monitoring. In 2020, News Corp opened two digital hyperlocals: The Adelaide Hills News and The Barossa, Clare & Gawler News. 2020 also saw News Corp end its print editions of four Messenger titles across Greater Adelaide.

Between 2020 – 2023, five outlets closed. These include On the Coast, an Australian Community Media newspaper based in Onkaparinga, two short-lived publications – Adelaide East Herald and The Whippet, and two publications based in

Adelaide Hills – Along the Grapevine and Adelaide Hills Herald. The Bunyip temporarily closed early in COVID-19 but reopened only two weeks later.

3.1.2 Sample

The digital output of the public broadcaster, four publishers and eight digital outlets was assessed between 1 – 30 April 2024. Three complete editions of The Advertiser were coded this month: Wednesday 3, Saturday 6, Monday 22, in order to reach a target minimum of 200 articles. For all other outlets, we coded their entire output across the sample period.

A total of 2,459 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. The Blackwood Times, as a community-scale outlet, was not coded.

The overwhelming majority of content published in News Corp’s local titles (The Adelaide Hills News, The Barossa, Clare & Gawler News, Messenger East, Inner Suburbs & Hills, Messenger City, Messenger North & Northeast, Messenger South, Messenger West & Beaches) was AI-generated content covering traffic conditions, local court appearances and petrol prices. There were very few reported stories, many of which were published to a generic ‘Messenger’ banner and were unable to be attributed to a particular title. To account for these items, the results and commentary for these titles have been aggregated and presented below as a single ‘Messenger’ outlet.

Overall, we found high to very high levels of public interest journalism at most outlets. ‘Community’ was the biggest focus overall, largely due to the coverage provided by local print newspapers. ‘Government’ was the largest focus of public interest journalism at the public broadcaster, the Messenger titles, The Advertiser, and InDaily. Notably, ‘Courts and crime’ coverage was the second-biggest focus at the public broadcaster, the Messenger titles, and The Advertiser.

3.1.3 Public interest journalism results

Stories are defined as containing public interest journalism if they are, on balance, focussed on an issue relating to government, crime and courts, community individuals, events and sport, or other public services such as health and education.

Outlet	Reported stories					Excluded	Total
	PIJ		Other		Subtotal		
	n	%	n	%	n	n	n
ABC Adelaide	108	75	36	25	144	2	146
The Advertiser	110	60	74	40	184	128	312
The Bunyip	202	86	32	14	234	35	269
Fleurieu Sun	222	91	22	9	244	22	266
InDaily	187	78	54	22	241	75	316
The Leader (Barossa Valley)	207	91	20	9	227	71	298
The Messenger	66	93	5	7	71	836	907
Total	1102	82	243	18	1345	1169	2514

Table 6: Stories by whether they are public interest journalism, other journalism, or excluded from the sample.

Table 6 provides detail of how the total sample breaks down into public interest journalism, other journalism and exclusions. We found very high levels of public interest journalism at The Bunyip, Fleurieu Sun and The Leader (Barossa Valley), high levels at ABC Adelaide and InDaily, and moderate levels at The Advertiser.

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.

Most articles published by aggregated Messenger titles were excluded. Across its digital hyperlocal titles, News Corp publishes near-daily, AI-generated stories that provide the day's weather, updates on traffic conditions and petrol prices, and reproduce lists of people appearing before local courts and recent business liquidations. Of the 836 excluded stories from these news outlets' sample, 821 are of this type. Of the remaining articles that were included (71), we found very high levels of public interest journalism.

Outlet	Public interest journalism											
	Government			Courts and crime			Community			Public services		
	All	U	% U	All	U	% U	All	U	% U	All	U	% U
ABC Adelaide	61	43	30	57	37	26	46	39	27	43	42	30
The Advertiser	88	60	33	56	36	20	39	35	19	26	24	13
The Bunyip	86	59	25	16	16	7	209	129	55	40	34	15
Fleurieu Sun	68	40	16	6	6	3	276	168	69	24	23	9
InDaily	216	138	57	33	25	10	43	36	15	33	32	13
The Leader (Barossa Valley)	78	52	23	3	2	1	224	168	74	37	35	15
Messenger	54	31	44	47	25	35	29	22	31	12	11	16
Total	651	423	31	218	147	11	866	597	44	215	201	15

Table 7: Breakdown of public interest journalism.

Stories can be allocated to up to four subjects each. As such, Table 7 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 local print outlets – The Bunyip, Fleurieu Sun and The Leader – focused on ‘Community’, followed by ‘Government’, ‘Public services’ and ‘Courts and crime’. These outlets were also very similar in terms of the total number of subjects coded within each public interest journalism category.

‘Government’ was the largest focus of public interest journalism at the public broadcaster, the Messenger titles, and metro-scale newspaper, The Advertiser, followed by ‘Courts and crime’ coverage. Compared to previous samples, it is unusual for court reporting and crime stories to receive this level of coverage relative to the other public interest journalism categories. ‘Community’ and ‘Public service’ coverage followed.

InDaily also follows this pattern to an extent, providing heavy ‘Government’ coverage, followed by ‘Community’, ‘Public services’, and ‘Courts and crime’.

Overall, the largest focus of public interest journalism coverage was ‘Community’.

Community stories sampled across the month were found to be about local and community sport. This was led by The Leader (90), Fleurieu Sun (67) and The Bunyip (48). One weekly edition (10 April) of The Leader published an additional 30-page feature titled ‘Game On’, highlighting the new winter season and clubs of local sports such as AFL, netball, hockey, soccer and rugby. The ABC, Advertiser and InDaily were found to have little no local and community sport reporting.

The three local newspapers focused on community events, organisations and individuals.

Many stories towards the end of the month covered ANZAC Day events such as commemorations and marches. Other community events showcased local artists and authors, while school events such as a Year 12 Formal and a primary school sports day took place. Shows featuring gardens, aircraft and vintage cars were reported on, as well as festivals such as the Barossa Arts Festival.

Local branches of larger organisations such as the Returned & Services League (RSL), Probus, Rotary and Scouts Clubs, groups with shared interests in aquatics, surf lifesaving, motoring and orienteering, organisations serving the community delivering meals and planting trees, and societies supporting libraries and community history are some examples of community organisations across the region that received coverage.

The Leader, The Bunyip and Fleurieu Sun featured profiles of locals who had served the community or volunteered for organisations, small business owners, musicians, and artists.

Moderate ‘Community’ coverage was found at the ABC, The Advertiser and InDaily where this category was the third category of focus.

Of the few stories featuring community individuals published by The Advertiser and InDaily, they tended to focus on local athletes competing at national levels or stories related to arts and culture.

Injury and death stories were common at these outlets and centred on vehicle crashes, accidents such as a shark attack, and overseas natural disasters and conflicts. The ABC also reported on community health stories, for example, a measles alert for locations around Adelaide, while The Advertiser reported on the AFL’s drug and anti-doping policy. Small and local businesses such as restaurants and cafes received some coverage from The Advertiser and InDaily.

‘Government’ was the next biggest focus overall. This coverage focussed mostly on state (106) and local governments (106), with some coverage of the federal government (49).

The three local newspapers and Messenger titles mostly covered local government, some state, and few federal government stories.

The planned redevelopment of a public oval and recreational facilities by the Barossa Council, a nearby local government area to the sampled region, was covered by The Bunyip and The Leader. Local government stories also included council meetings across Greater Adelaide, for example, the Town of Gawler was looking for a new CEO, and incidents related to infrastructure, such as calls for road upgrades and proposals to preserve heritage buildings. Four councils across the region – the Cities of Holdfast Bay, Marion, Mitcham and Onkaparinga – renewed their partnership with the state government to strengthen resilience against climate change.

InDaily also provided local government coverage, particularly for the City of Adelaide, across a range of issues including local planning, for example, a proposed design to improve outdoor dining. A major issue across the month was the proposed redevelopment of the Crown & Anchor, a city pub, and the balance between protecting a cultural institution in Adelaide and the need allow development of sought-after locations. In a similar vein, the proposed redevelopment of Festival Plaza received repeated attention.

Of the few local government stories published by The Advertiser, they reported on similar issues, for example, a proposed redevelopment of McLaren Vale’s Main Street with public art and amenities for pedestrians to improve the nightlife and atmosphere of the historic area.

State government stories included planning issues such as the redevelopment of Festival Plaza in Adelaide’s CBD, and industrial relations incidents such as planned strikes for train workers and a proposed restructure of jobs at SA Museum. These stories received ongoing coverage from outlets such as the ABC and InDaily. Many state government stories focussed on the South Australian government and the ongoing housing crisis.

Federal government stories mostly related to national issues such as the review of prices and competition in the supermarket sector, Australia’s new Governor-General, the Federal budget and international war and conflict. Most coverage came from InDaily, with a few stories from The Bunyip and Fleurieu Sun which tended to relate to South Australian regions, for example, federal funding for schools in the Spence electorate and an announcement for a new mental health service in Gawler.

‘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 police (50) and education (50), followed by health (45) and other services (20). Fire and care services received low coverage.

Police stories were mostly published by ABC Adelaide (13), InDaily (12), The Advertiser (10) and Messenger (nine), while education stories were mostly published by The Bunyip (15), The Leader (12), Fleurieu Sun (nine) and InDaily (nine).

Police stories published at the ABC, InDaily and Messenger titles had strong crossover with reporting of crime and accidents, with several investigations and incidents receiving ongoing coverage over the month. Both the ABC and The Advertiser covered the rise of theft from supermarkets and subsequent targeted police operations.

Education stories at InDaily focused on tertiary education, while other education such as growing enrolments for apprenticeships, German language classes run by a guest teacher at a local library, and a program for young umpires to continue their training were covered by the three local print newspapers.

Health services stories included an inquiry into ambulance ramping, where paramedics are unable to transfer patients into hospital emergency departments within an appropriate timeframe, covered by the ABC and The Bunyip. The Leader published stories reminding readers of the upcoming flu season

and to get vaccinated. Fleurieu Sun reported on the closure of a private hospital in Victor Harbor, as well as a pilot program expanding the number of nurses working in GP clinics to reduce pressure on hospitals

Research and science stories published by the ABC focused on climate change, the environment and animals. Gather Round was a significant AFL sporting event that took place in Adelaide this month and was the subject of a university study looking at the cultural benefits of the event and future infrastructure needed, reported on by The Advertiser.

Other services covered included aviation firefighters and parole services at the ABC, the SES at Fleurieu Sun, an Aboriginal legal service at The Advertiser, and emergency services at InDaily.

‘Courts and crime’ coverage was unusually high at ABC Adelaide compared to previous samples, along with The Advertiser and Messenger titles where ‘Courts and crime’ was the second-highest category of public interest journalism. At the public broadcaster, this was partly due to a number of court appearances and crimes being the subject of ongoing coverage, such as an accomplice of the Snowtown murders being released from jail, the alleged murder of a 21-year-old man in the City of Charles Sturt, and a court case involving a former newspaper deputy editor injured by a speeding car.

The Advertiser provided coverage of high-profile or national-scale stories, for example, a defamation case brought by Bruce Lehrmann, a trial of former US President Donald Trump, and a woman accused of murder by serving a meal with poisonous mushrooms.

The Messenger titles tended to cover more local-scale courts and crime incidents across Adelaide and surrounds involving drug-related crimes, assault shoplifting and arson.

Overall, there was significantly more reporting on violent crimes (76 stories) compared to nonviolent crimes (47), and a focus on lower court (38), followed by superior court (18), other courts (12), and intermediate court (11).

3.1.4 Local news results

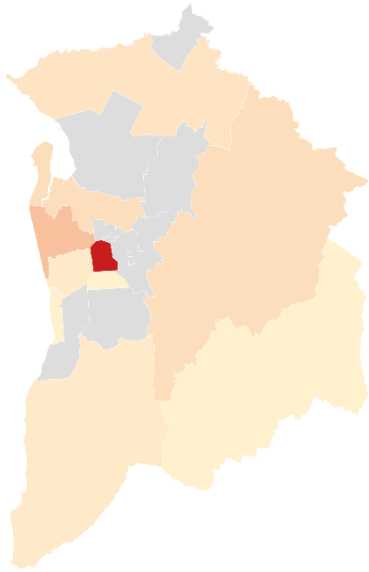
Every article is coded against up to three story scales: whether a story concerns local issues, issues relevant to a wider region, an entire state or territory, or the country as a whole. International and not applicable options are also available, but very few stories fall into these categories, and they have been excluded from this table and commentary.

Outlet	Local		Regional		State		National	
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %
ABC Adelaide	81	56	5	4	38	26	56	39
The Advertiser	65	35	7	4	14	8	55	30
The Bunyip	198	85	14	6	21	9	0	0
Fleurieu Sun	187	77	31	13	20	8	7	3
InDaily	98	41	7	3	45	19	61	25
The Leader (Barossa Valley)	205	90	2	1	26	12	3	1
Messenger	64	90	2	3	6	9	1	1
Total	899	67	68	5	170	13	183	14

Table 8: Scale of coverage of reported stories.

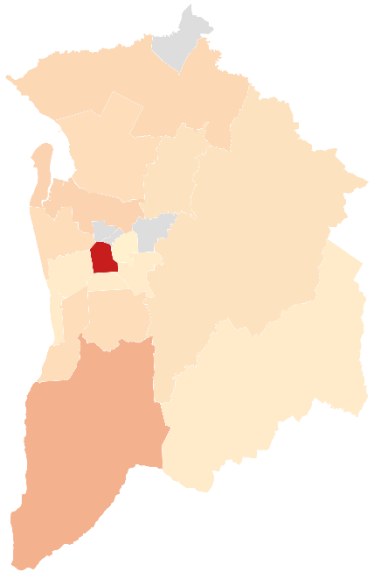
Stories concerning local issues had the highest overall focus at all outlets. 67 per cent of stories were local in scale, followed by 14 per cent national, 13 per cent state and five per cent regional.

The three local newspapers and Messenger titles provided the highest levels of local coverage.



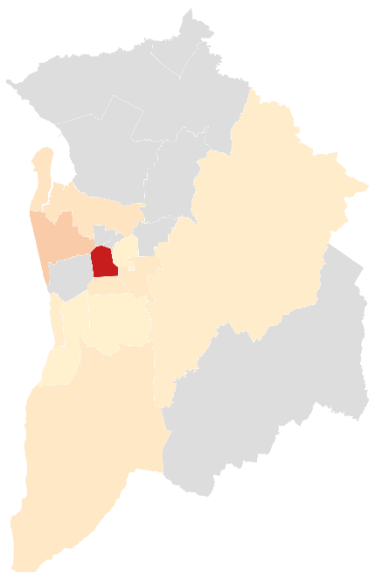
The ABC, The Advertiser and InDaily split their focus more evenly between local, state and national scale stories. As with previous samples, PIJI finds that ABC stations tend to focus more on state-wide and national issues at a higher rate than other outlets, while a much lower proportion of coverage is dedicated to local issues. There was low coverage of regional-scale stories across all outlets (five per cent overall), with Fleurieu Sun providing the most regional coverage (13 per cent), mostly of the Fleurieu Peninsula.

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.



The geographic spread of local stories by outlet or outlet group is presented in the three figures on this page: the ABC, a combination of all News Corp titles (The Advertiser as well as its local Messenger titles) and InDaily.

The City of Adelaide received the greatest coverage by far at all three outlets. Charles Sturt was second for both the ABC and InDaily, with Onkaparinga in second place at News Corp.



The Advertiser and Messenger provided the greatest spread of coverage, while InDaily was the most concentrated around the central city, with smaller amounts of coverage particularly in the south and east. The ABC provided little to no coverage of the middle ring of the city, before picking up again in outer areas of Onkaparinga, Adelaide Hills, Mount Barker and Playford.

Of these three groups, we found no coverage in the local government areas of Campbelltown, Gawler, Prospect and Walkerville.

The Bunyip, Fleurieu Sun and Barossa Leader are not presented here as they are predominantly focussed on a single local government area within this sample, whereas the selected titles each have a city-wide focus. Each had very high levels of localism within their coverage areas.

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.

Local Government Area	ABC Adelaide		The Advertiser		InDaily		The Messenger	
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %
Adelaide City Council	33	23	27	15	47	20	13	18
Adelaide Hills Council	4	3	0	0	2	1	4	6
City of Burnside	0	0	1	1	3	1	1	1
City of Campbelltown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
City of Charles Sturt	9	6	2	1	10	4	3	4
Town of Gawler	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
City of Holdfast Bay	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
City of Marion	0	0	2	1	1	< 1	3	4
Mount Barker District Council	0	0	1	1	1	< 1	4	6
City of Mitcham	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
City of Norwood	0	0	1	1	1	< 1	0	0
City of Onkaparinga	2	1	5	3	3	1	9	13
City of Playford	3	2	2	1	0	0	4	6
City of Port Adelaide Enfield	4	3	1	1	4	2	6	9
City of Prospect	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
City of Salisbury	0	0	1	1	0	0	4	6
City of Tea Tree Gully	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	6
City of Unley	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1
Town of Walkerville	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
City of West Torrens	2	1	2	1	0	0	0	0

Table 9: Localism of coverage of reported stories.

3.1.5 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 if 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. This difference in transparency means that syndication data at the ABC is more robust than at other outlets. The ABC may appear to syndicate more frequently - and may do, given the scale of the public broadcaster’s news production and geographic reach - but caution should be taken with comparisons to other outlets due to this difference in data quality. Separately, where the ABC lists the news team as the generic ‘ABC News’ rather than the name of the local newsroom, it is not marked as internally syndicated.

Outlet	Syndication						Original	
	Internal		Wire		Other		n	All %
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %		
ABC Adelaide	31	22	11	7	0	0	102	71
The Advertiser	16	9	13	8	16	9	139	76
The Bunyip	0	0	0	0	0	0	234	100
Fleurieu Sun	0	0	0	0	0	0	244	100
InDaily	28	12	96	40	1	0	116	48
The Leader (Barossa Valley)	0	0	0	0	0	0	227	100
Messenger	12	17	0	0	0	0	59	83
Total	87	7	120	9	17	1	1121	83

Table 10: Syndication of reported stories.

We found a mix of syndication results across different outlets, with moderate syndication at each of the titles within a larger network and none at the independent local newsrooms.

Around 20 per cent of stories at ABC Adelaide originated from other ABC newsrooms, from a broad mix including ABC Rural, ABC Investigations and local newsrooms both within South Australia (North and West SA, South East SA) and in other states (Illawarra, Ballarat, Central Coast (NSW)). A small number of sport stories were sourced from AAP.

The Advertiser was found to internally syndicate a handful of stories across the month and featured numerous SA Weekend inserts in its weekend edition. There was also syndicated content from wire services such as the Agence France-Presse (AFP) for international stories, as well as from other news websites. Additionally, a small proportion of stories published by Messenger titles syndicated content between all hyperlocals.

At InDaily, more than half the content was syndicated, with extensive syndication from AAP, especially for stories of national and international scales. There was also some internal syndication from other Solstice Media newsrooms, particularly InReview and The New Daily. Other content internally sourced from SA Life and CityMag tended not to be public interest journalism by PIJ's definition, and content from the.post was co-produced with the South Australian government and therefore excluded.

On the other hand, we found no syndication at The Bunyip, The Fleurieu Sun, and The Leader, with 100 per cent of output from these outlets being original content.

4 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 one of:

- The [Australian Press Council](#) or the [Independent Media Council](#)
- The [Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice](#)
- The [Commercial Radio Code of Practice](#)
- The [Subscription Broadcast Television Codes of Practice](#)

Or if it 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, PIJ undertakes a basic assessment of the content output in order to determine this.

Radio and television outlets are represented according to the local government areas where they are licensed to broadcast. ACMA publishes a public registry of callsigns, their operators, and the

broadcast licence areas in which they transmit, including maps of these areas. Using this information, PIJI has added each radio and television station to those local government areas that overlap with their broadcast licence areas.

Each approach has its strengths and weaknesses.

For publishers, assessing content output is a resource-intensive process, as is maintaining this data. Errors in coverage geographies may be introduced where the initial assessment is not representative of longer-term production, or where changes occur in the output over time.

A strength of the approach to mapping broadcasters is that the geographies are likely to remain comparatively stable. On the other hand, broadcast licence areas and local government areas rarely align, leading to situations where an LGA may have two or more overlapping broadcast areas within it. This would cause that LGA to be misrepresented as having a very high news density. This approach also creates a false equivalency between a news station being licensed to broadcast in an area, and actually transmitting in that area. Transmitting in a place also does not inherently suggest that local news is produced about that place.

The research reason for this distinction in how we map publishers and broadcasters is that we are not able to independently verify news production for the latter group. While we can remotely audit print and digital news content relatively easily, it is much more difficult to reliably access radio or television news programming from outside of their broadcast areas. In almost all cases there are no public digital archives of news content available, meaning that assessments must be done on live streams. This is a significant barrier to independent scrutiny, and not one that PIJI is resourced to overcome.

Determining local geographies by the content produced by an outlet is a strongly preferred approach, despite the challenges, in part because it helps to identify where there may be undersupply. Content assessments are stronger evidence of this than availability alone.

Data collection and maintenance

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

Data is actively maintained. It is updated monthly with new assessments and to reflect incoming information about changes to news outlets and their operations. However, due to the volume and complexity of the data being maintained, it is not possible to reverify every record every month. Therefore, there may be inconsistencies and errors in the data as things change over time.

Market changes

This project also monitors a broader set of changes in the Australian news market beyond just the opening and closing of individual outlets. These changes are categorised as different 'change types'.

The change types collected, listed in terms of the hierarchy, are:

- i. Masthead or station opening / closing; meaning an entire news outlet opening or closing.
- ii. Newsroom closure / opening; meaning a news company removing or adding a base from which to conduct news production, that having an impact on its coverage area. This change type only captures instances where there is an assumed change to the amount of localised news production (such as AAP opening a new bureau in Darwin); it does not include an outlet moving into new premises without a probable reduction in content (for example, when The Age's Melbourne CBD newsroom moved into Nine Entertainment's Melbourne CBD studios).

- iii. Decrease / increase in service; meaning changes in the amount of content that is produced, or, rarely, the availability of that content. Most often this category has captured observable changes in public interest journalism output, but it can also include the launch of a new access point for existing content. It can include changes to print publication frequency, but does not include print distribution area changes.
- iv. End / start of print edition; meaning changes in availability without a corresponding change in production. A newspaper that transitions to digital-only publication without reducing its coverage is an example.
- v. Merger / demerger, meaning the coverage and/or content area of one news outlet being absorbed into another without a corresponding change in production. This change type is treated as a contraction but is the lowest level of concern.

Some caveats around this project are necessary to avoid misinterpretation of the data.

The first caveat is to acknowledge that the market changes captured are broader than ‘closures’ and ‘openings’ of news outlets. ‘Contractions’ is not a synonym for ‘closures’; it is a broader category of negative changes to news production and availability. This report is updated regularly in order to demonstrate the difference.

The data is likely to be an undercount of changes that have occurred. It is actively maintained by PIJI and contributions are received from news organisations, from civil society and academia, and from the public. Even then, we do not have visibility into all news production and availability around Australia, and do not presume to have a complete log of all changes that have occurred since 1 January 2019.

The way that data is recorded in the database also leads to undercounts in two subtly different ways: in changes that occur over time, and in multiple changes that occur simultaneously as part of one event. Each news publication is entered in the database only once, and only the most recent and most serious change type is represented. Where an event involves multiple change types it is logged as the highest ranked category to which it fits. This means that:

- If a news website was founded in January 2019; launched a print edition in April; closed that print edition in September and closed entirely by December, only the most serious (and, secondly, most recent) change – the ‘Masthead or station closure’ in December – would be recorded, despite the multiple other positive and negative changes to production and availability across the period.
- If the closure of a print news outlet was logged, the event would have necessarily involved the end of a print edition; a decrease in service and the closure of a newsroom, but it would be only logged as a ‘Masthead or station closure’, as that change type ranks highest on the hierarchy.

The data also flattens the complexity of what is gained and lost by not having any assessment of the output, institutional characteristics or content of the news companies: the closure of a newspaper with ten working journalists appears equivalent to the opening of a website of one. Clearly these two events would have very different impacts on the production and availability of news, but it is beyond this project’s scope to assess for every change.

For these reasons caution must be taken in drawing conclusions about the general health of the news media ecosystem from this data alone.

Two further hypotheticals provide reasons for caution:

1. A news media ecosystem in which many news entrepreneurs had the confidence and the capital to establish organisations and outlets, the majority of which might fail, could be a healthy environment of public interest journalism production and competition but might appear in our data like a failing system due to the high number of closures.
2. A news media ecosystem in which all journalism was produced by a single company could be an uncompetitive environment or be failing to meet community need for diverse and locally relevant content, but would look healthy in our data if that one company was stable or growing.

Due to limited resources and the significant methodological difficulty in ensuring rigour, this project does not record any information about journalism job gains and losses.

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

5 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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