

[Public
Interest
Journalism
Initiative]

Australian News Data Report

Monthly issue
May 2024

Australian News Data Report: May 2024

Authors: Gary Dickson, Jerome des Preaux and Pauline Ferraz
Research assistance: Ilana Cohen, Jacob Wallace and Maia Germano

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

To discuss this report, please email Gary Dickson: gary.dickson@piji.com.au.

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AUSTRALIAN NEWS DATA REPORT

Monthly issue | May 2024

Table of contents

1	Overview	4
	Monthly results: May 2024	5
2	Australian News Mapping Project	6
2.1	Monthly results: May 2024	6
2.1.1	Market changes, May 2024	7
2.1.2	Other changes to news outlet records	7
2.1.3	Changes to news entity records	9
3	Australian News Sampling Project	11
3.1	Great Southern region, Western Australia	12
3.1.1	Local news producers	12
3.1.2	Changes observed in the Great Southern region	13
3.1.3	Sample	13
3.1.4	Public interest journalism results	14
3.1.5	Local news results	16
3.1.6	Syndication	17
3.2	Comparative analysis	19
3.2.1	Method	19
3.2.2	Public interest journalism	20
3.2.3	Localism	22
4	Data eligibility	23
5	About the Public Interest Journalism Initiative	28

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 4: 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 results as at 31 May 2024. News sampling was conducted across the Great Southern region, Western Australia. The first sample in this region was conducted in May 2023 and comparative results are provided.

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: May 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 \(LGA\)](#).

Further detail about the project, including eligibility, definitions and a methodology for categorising changes, can be found in Section 4: 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 to date.

2.1 Monthly results: May 2024

As of 31 May 2024, the Australian News Index lists 1,219 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	452	8	4	11	538
Digital	6	162	5	4	45	222
Radio	0	405	0	0	1	406
Television	0	51	0	0	2	53
Total	69	1070	13	8	59	1219

Table 1: Active news outlets, 31 May 2024.

2.1.1 Market changes, May 2024

No changes were observed in the reporting month.

2.1.2 Other changes to news outlet records

Twelve 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	1179 AM Melbourne	VIC	○ Increase in service and name correction	31/12/2018
2	3MPH Vision Australia Radio Mildura	VIC	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
3	Bucketts Radio 104.1FM	NSW	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
4	Geelong 99.5FM	VIC	○ Increase in service	31/12/2018
5	Halls Creek Herald	WA	● New outlet	14/02/2024
6	Nova 100	VIC	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
7	Nova 106.9	QLD	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
8	Nova 919	SA	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
9	Nova 93.7	WA	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
10	Nova 96.9	NSW	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
11	Smooth FM 95.3	NSW	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
12	Vision Australia Radio Adelaide 1197AM	SA	○ Name correction	31/12/2018

Table 2: Other changes to outlet records, May 2024.

As part of its regular data management process, PIJ undertook a partial review of its radio outlet data in May.

Vision Australia is a newsreading community radio service for people with vision impairments that operates around Australia. Multiple changes were made to its outlets in May:

- 3MPH Vision Australia Radio Mildura was added to the database. It is operated on a temporary community broadcasting licence and covers the Mildura Rural City local government area.
- The coverage areas of 1179 AM Melbourne and Geelong 99.5FM have been changed to include the Shire of Baw Baw and the City of Warrnambool respectively. Vision Australia’s Melbourne service is simulcast in Warragul on 93.5FM, and the Geelong service is simulcast to Warrnambool on 882AM.
- We also found that the names of 1179 AM Melbourne and Vision Australia Radio Adelaide 1197AM had been incorrectly recorded, these have been fixed.

Bucketts Radio 104.1FM has been assigned a community radio broadcasting licence after operating on a temporary community broadcasting licence for 14 years¹. Bucketts Radio is a community radio station servicing Gloucester, NSW. The station is operated by Gloucester Broadcasters Association Incorporated, with its new licence commencing June 1 2024².

In May PIJI reviewed Nova Entertainment's radio holdings and found that several stations which were not included in our data provide regular news services. Prior to this PIJI had included FiveAA, Smooth 91.5 FM, Star 104.5 News, and KIIS 97.3 FM Brisbane, which is operated as a joint venture with Australian Radio Network. Following this review PIJI has added Melbourne's Nova 100, Brisbane's Nova 106.9, Adelaide's Nova 91.9, Perth's Nova 93.7, as well as Nova 96.9 and Smooth FM 95.3 both operating in Sydney.

The Halls Creek Herald is a newspaper covering local news in the Shire of Halls Creek, in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. The Herald became digital-only in January 2019, before ceasing publication two months later in March. In February 2024 the Herald reopened in print and digital formats and has been publishing fortnightly since.

¹ Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA). LinkedIn Post. <https://www.linkedin.com/posts/australian-communications-and-media-authority_the-acma-allocated-a-community-radio-broadcasting-activity-7178556337528692736-p5e-/>

² Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA). Register of Radio Communications Licenses. Gloucester Broadcasters Association Incorporated. <https://web.acma.gov.au/rrl/licence_search.licence_lookup?pLICENCE_NO=12442237/1>

2.1.3 Changes to news entity records

Eight entity records were updated in May.

#	Outlet		Description of change	Effective date
1	Gloucester Broadcasters Association Incorporated	NSW	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
2	Nova 100 Pty Ltd	NSW	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
3	Nova 96.9 Pty Ltd	NSW	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
4	Nova Entertainment Pty Ltd	NSW	○ Linked outlets	31/12/2018
5	Nova Entertainment (Adelaide) Pty Ltd	NSW	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
6	Nova Entertainment (Perth) Pty Ltd	NSW	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
7	Vision Australia Limited	VIC	○ Linked outlet	31/12/2018
8	Willett, Gerard Robert	WA	○ Added to the database	14/02/2024

Table 3: Changes to news entity records, May 2024

Gloucester Broadcasters Association Incorporated has been added to the data as the operating entity of Bucketts Radio 104.1FM.

As part of PIJl’s review of Nova radio stations Nova 106.9, Nova 919, and Smooth FM 95.3 have been linked to their operating entity Nova Entertainment Pty Ltd. Nova 100 and Nova 96.9 had individual operating entities added to the data, Nova 100 Pty Ltd and Nova 96.9 Pty Ltd respectively. Nova Entertainment (Adelaide) Pty Ltd has also been added to the data and is the entity operating Nova 919. Lastly, Nova Entertainment (Perth) Pty Ltd is the operating entity of Nova 93.7. This entity is a joint venture between Nova Entertainment and Australian Radio Network.³

3MPH Vision Australia Radio Mildura has been linked to its operating entity Vision Australia Limited.

Gerard Robert Willett is the sole trader operating the Halls Creek Herald, as well as the newspaper’s managing editor.⁴

³ HT&E Limited. *Annual Report 2020*. <<https://investors.arn.com.au/static-files/4faae22f-7f6f-4013-994c-b68249f1ff50>>

⁴ Gerard Willett. LinkedIn. <<https://www.linkedin.com/in/gerard-willett-4113916b/>>

[Australian News Sampling Project]

Case study, May 2024:

Great Southern region, WA

3 Australian News Sampling Project

The results presented here are from a May survey of eleven local government areas in Western Australia's Great Southern region: the City of Albany and the shires of Broomehill-Tambellup, Cranbrook, Denmark, Gnowangerup, Jerramungup, Katanning, Kent, Kojonup, Plantagenet, and Woodanilling. This is a resample, with the first sample conducted in May 2024.

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 Great Southern region, Western Australia

The Great Southern region comprises 11 local government areas (Albany, Broomehill-Tambellup, Cranbrook, Denmark, Gnowangerup, Jerramungup, Katanning, Kent, Kojonup, Plantagenet, and Woodanilling). The largest population centre in the region is Albany, 420km southeast of Perth.



Region	
Land area	3 893 951.3 ha
Residents	64,430

Population centres	
Albany	Mount Baker
Denmark	Katanning
Kojonup	Gnowangerup
Cranbrook	Jerramungup
Tambellup	Nyabing
Woodanilling	Broomehill

News outlets (May 2024)	
Print	5
Digital	0
Radio	5
Television	3

3.1.1 Local news producers

Outlet	Format	Ownership	Scale	Total
7 News Regional WA	Television	Golden West Network Pty Limited	Local	0
10 West Digital Television	Television	West Digital Television Pty Ltd	Local	0
99.7 Denmark FM	Radio	Denmark Community Resource Centre Inc	Local	0
ABC Great Southern	Radio	Australian Broadcasting Corporation	Local	30
Albany Advertiser	Print	Albany Advertiser Pty Ltd	Local	201
Albany Extra	Print	Albany Advertiser Pty Ltd	Local	112
Denmark Bulletin	Print	The Trustee For Gill Family Trust	Local	35
Great Southern Herald	Print	Albany Advertiser Pty Ltd	Local	71
hit94.9 Great Southern	Radio	Elldale Pty Ltd	Local	0
hit95.3 Albany	Radio	Belcap Investments Pty Ltd	Local	0
Nine Regional Western Australia	Television	WIN Television WA Pty Ltd	Local	0
Triple M Albany 783	Radio	Belcap Investments Pty Ltd	Local	0
Triple M Great Southern	Radio	Elldale Pty Ltd	Local	0
Total				449

Table 4: News producers in Great Southern and the total number of articles assessed.

Three Seven West Media newspapers serve the area: the Albany Advertiser and Albany Extra in the south, and the Great Southern Herald, based in Katanning in the north part of the region.

The independent Denmark Bulletin publishes fortnightly.

The area is additionally well-served by commercial radio outlets, with both hit and Triple M stations broadcasting from Albany and Katanning. Community radio outlet Denmark FM operates from the coastal town, while the ABC’s local newsroom is also in Albany.

Each of the three major commercial television networks, Nine, Seven and Ten, have a presence in the region.

There are no known primarily digital news outlets in the region.

3.1.2 Changes observed in the Great Southern region

Date	Change observed
04/10/2021	● 99.7 Denmark FM opened
30/12/2021	● The Great Southern Weekender closed

Few changes have been observed in this region since PIJI began monitoring.

In October 2021 community radio station Denmark FM opened in Denmark, offering local news in its morning broadcast. Later that year, the Albany-based independent newspaper, the Great Southern Weekender, closed.

Table 5: Changes observed in the region since 1 January 2019.

3.1.3 Sample

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

A total of 449 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.

This is a repeat sample in the Great Southern region, which was first sampled in May 2023. Specific commentary comparing the results is provided in Section 3.2.

Overall, we found high to very high levels of public interest journalism at all 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 and the second-biggest focus at the Albany Advertiser, the Denmark Bulletin and the Great Southern Herald. We also found high levels of localism, with most stories being local in scale, particularly at the newspapers. Additionally, we found mixed syndication results across the sample, with high internal syndication at the public broadcaster, and little to none at the local outlets. Where content was syndicated at the local publishers, we found a mix of internal and external syndication. These findings were highly consistent with the first sample undertaken in this region in May 2023.

3.1.4 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					Excluded	Total
	PIJ		Other		Subtotal		
	n	%	n	%	n	n	n
ABC Great Southern	27	90	3	10	30	0	30
Albany Advertiser	141	82	31	18	172	29	201
Albany Extra	54	72	21	28	75	37	112
Denmark Bulletin	28	97	1	3	29	6	35
Great Southern Herald	68	97	2	3	70	1	71
Total	318	85	58	15	376	73	449

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 ABC Great Southern, the Denmark Bulletin and the Great Southern Herald, and high levels at the Albany Advertiser and Albany Extra.

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 a commercial or political 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 Great Southern	23	16	53	6	3	10	10	9	30	11	9	30
Albany Advertiser	52	37	22	28	20	12	119	83	48	21	19	11
Albany Extra	8	6	8	0	0	0	63	46	61	9	8	11
Denmark Bulletin	7	6	21	1	1	3	36	23	79	2	1	3
Great Southern Herald	43	26	37	9	6	9	67	46	66	19	17	24
Total	133	91	24	44	30	8	295	207	55	62	54	14

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 (U%).

We found that three local print outlets – the Albany Advertiser, the Denmark Bulletin, and the Great Southern Herald – focused heavily on ‘Community’, followed by ‘Government’, ‘Public services’ and ‘Courts and crime’. The Albany Extra follows a slightly different pattern, providing heavy ‘Community’ coverage, followed by ‘Public services’, ‘Government’, and ‘Courts and crime’. Overall, the largest

focus of public interest journalism coverage was 'Community', except for the public broadcaster, which mainly focused on 'Government' stories and gave equal coverage to 'Community' and 'Public services'.

'Community' stories sampled across the month were found to be about local and community sport. This was led by the Albany Advertiser (40), the Albany Extra (22), and the Great Southern Herald (21). The ABC was found to have no local and community sport coverage. Comparatively, the Denmark Bulletin produced quite a lot of local and community sport stories, with regards to the amount of stories published.

'Community' stories covered events such as ANZAC Day commemorations, and anniversaries such as the City of Albany's bicentenary, as well as the 25th anniversary of the National Walk Safety to School Day. Other school events, such as the annual swimming carnival for Australian Christian College Southlands students and the WA College of Agriculture Denmark Ball were also reported on.

Local industry organisations such as the Albany Chamber of Commerce and Industry, as well as local branches of larger organisations such as the Country Women's Association and the Surf Life Saving club are some examples of community organisations that received coverage for their events.

All outlets featured profiles of individuals who had served the community, like veterans, but also small business owners and artists from the local area such as multi-award author Kim Scott.

'Government' was the second biggest focus overall. This coverage focussed mostly on state (22) and local government (14), with little coverage of federal government stories (six).

The Albany Advertiser, the Great Southern Herald and the public broadcaster mostly covered state government, followed some local government and few federal government stories.

Local government stories included community consultations on retail trading hours in Albany, infrastructure developments, such as the opening of the Albany Ring Road, and coverage of government agency matters, such as protests against the development of a marine park in the Shire of Esperance, a nearby local government area to the sample region. Three shires across the region - Woodanilling, West Arthur and Kojonup – are partnering with the Department of Industries and Regional Development and CSIRO to map groundwater resources around the Great Southern region.

A few stories covered Dr Thomas Brough's preselection as a candidate for the WA Liberal Party in preparation of next year's state election, all of which were published by the Albany Advertiser and ABC Great Southern.

State government stories included broad environmental issues such as bushfire impact assessment, funding for a drought relief program, and a government purchase of properties affected by the Mira Mar landslip. The West Australian state budget received ongoing coverage, most of which came from the public broadcaster, the Great Southern Herald and the Albany Advertiser.

Federal government stories mostly related to national issues such as the ban on live sheep export and its repercussions on Great Southern farmers. The Albany Extra and the Albany Advertiser also reported on the federal government's decision to expand its new energy apprenticeship program to electric vehicles.

'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 childcare, as well as education. Services stories were heavily focused on health (18), education (13), police (eight) and care (seven).

Health stories were mostly published by the Albany Advertiser (eight) and the Great Southern Herald (six), while education stories were mostly published by the Albany Extra (five) and the Great Southern Herald (four).

Health stories published at the Albany Advertiser and the Great Southern Herald covered the shortage of doctors across the region and ways in which the issue was being tackled. Both outlets also reported on the results of the latest report into patient safety released by the Western Australian Department of Health. Stories often had strong crossover with reporting of the State Budget, with the Albany Advertiser reporting new mental health resources for children and adolescents and the Great Southern Herald covering new projects to improve the health of children in the most disadvantaged areas.

Education stories at the Albany Extra included the development of a learning program to help young people at risk of dropping out of school build their skills, and the Federal Government’s decision to expand the New Energy Apprenticeships Program. The Great Southern Herald reported on the WA 2024 Youth Parliament, and Nyabing Primary School’s participation in the ANZAC Day commemorations. Both newspapers reported on a symposium on land stewardship through the combination of traditional ecological knowledge and science.

Police stories published at the Albany Advertiser (three) and the Great Southern Herald (four) had strong crossover with reporting of crime and vehicular accidents. A story published in the Denmark Bulletin reported an investigation into an arson in Walpole/Nornalup National Park.

‘Courts and crime’ coverage was particularly high at the Albany Advertiser (28). The Great Southern Herald had the second highest coverage (nine). Both provided ongoing coverage of high-profile, local stories, for example, the investigation into the alleged attempted murder of a disabled child by her mother with insulin. This was also reported by the public broadcaster.

Other stories tended to cover local-scale courts and crime incidents involving arson, assaults and driving offences.

Overall, violent crimes (13) and to non-violent crimes (14) were covered fairly equally, with a focus on superior court (10), followed by lower court (four) and intermediate court (two).

3.1.5 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 Great Southern	15	50	5	17	13	43	3	10
Albany Advertiser	143	83	10	6	24	14	7	4
Albany Extra	51	68	6	8	9	12	8	11
Denmark Bulletin	27	93	1	3	2	7	0	0
Great Southern Herald	61	87	8	11	16	30	5	7
Total	297	79	30	8	64	17	23	6

Table 8: 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, led by the newspapers, followed by 17 per cent state, eight per cent regional and six per cent national.

The four newspapers provided the highest levels of local coverage, with the Denmark Bulletin providing the most local coverage (93 per cent overall).

The ABC split its focus more evenly between local and state-scale stories. Local-scale coverage was relatively high at ABC Great Southern (50 per cent) compared with previous samples where the ABC tends to focus more on state and national scale stories.

The ABC and Great Southern Herald provided similar regional levels of coverage (17 and 11 per cent respectively), mostly of the Great Southern region.

There was a low level of national coverage across all outlets (six per cent overall).

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 8, and each story may be simultaneously in multiple categories.

LGAs	ABC		AA		AE		DB		GSH	
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %
Albany	4	13	111	65	35	47	1	3	14	20
Broomehill - Tambellup	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	3
Cranbrook	1	3	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
Denmark	0	0	20	12	3	4	26	90	1	1
Gnowangerup	0	0	2	1	2	3	0	0	2	3
Jerramungup	0	0	4	2	3	4	0	0	3	4
Katanning	2	7	4	2	1	1	0	0	20	29
Kent	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Kojonup	1	3	3	2	0	0	0	0	4	6
Plantagenet	1	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Woodanilling	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	9	30	146	85	46	61	27	93	49	70

Table 9: Localism of coverage of reported stories.

The City of Albany received the greatest coverage by far at most outlets. The Denmark Bulletin almost exclusively covered Denmark. Great Southern Herald provided coverage of Katanning, followed by Denmark.

The Great Southern Herald provided the greatest spread of coverage, publishing at least one local story for 10 out of the 11 LGAs sampled. It was also the only outlet to cover the local government areas of Woodanilling and Kent.

The Denmark Bulletin, the Albany Extra and the Albany Advertiser demonstrated 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.

3.1.6 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. 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 Great Southern	19	63	0	0	0	0	11	37
Albany Advertiser	6	4	0	0	4	2	162	94
Albany Extra	4	5	0	0	5	7	66	88
Denmark Bulletin	0	0	0	0	0	0	29	100
Great Southern Herald	0	0	0	0	0	0	70	100
Total	29	8	0	0	9	2	338	90

Table 10: Syndication of reported stories.

We found a mix of syndication results across different outlets, with high internal syndication at the public broadcaster, and little to none at the local outlets.

Around 60 per cent of stories at ABC Great Southern originated from other ABC newsrooms from a broad mix including ABC News, and local newsrooms both within Western Australia (ABC Esperance, ABC Midwest and Wheatbelt, ABC Pilbara, ABC South West), other states (ABC New England), and other regions (ABC Asia).

At the Albany Extra, seven per cent of the content was internally syndicated, with many stories originating from the Albany Advertiser, which was also found to internally syndicate a handful of stories across the month. Both outlets were found to syndicate content from other sources, largely from a REV Motoring Guide liftout published by CarExpert.

On the other hand, we found no syndication at The Denmark Bulletin and the Great Southern Herald, with 100 per cent of output from these outlets being original content.

3.2 Comparative analysis

The Great Southern region was first sampled in May 2023 and has been resampled in May 2024. This section provides a comparative statistical analysis between the two sample periods.

3.2.1 Method

The 2 X 2 contingency chi-squared test of independence was used to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between the February and November Eyre Peninsula samples. The chi-squared test is non-parametric, meaning that it does not rely on the same assumptions about the data as parametric tests, for example that the population from which the data was drawn are normally distributed. This makes the chi-squared test a good fit for the data which is generated in the course of coding.

The test is used to examine the relationship between two categorical variables, variables which cannot be ordered or measured. For example, 'public interest journalism' is a binary categorical variable, as each story within a sample must either be public interest journalism or not.

The data is organised into a contingency table, a cross-tabulation of the observed frequencies for each combination of the categorical variables. The difference between the observed and expected values in each cell are taken, and the sum of these differences produces the chi-square (χ^2) test statistic. From this statistic a p -value can be calculated to determine whether the relationship between the two variables is statistically significant. A p -value of less than .05 is commonly regarded as significant, suggesting that there is less than a five per cent chance that the observed relationship occurred by random chance alone, with lower values indicating a lower chance. In these tables a statistically significant result at $p < .05$ is denoted by an asterisk (*), $p < 0.01$ by two asterisks (**), and $p < .001$ by three (***).

One weakness of the chi-squared test is the requirement for each expected value to be more than five. In cases where expected values fell below this threshold Fisher's exact test was used.

Statistical significance does not imply the strength of a relationship, however, so the phi coefficient (ϕ) was used as a measure of association. This statistic ranges from 0, indicating complete independence, to 1, a perfect positive relationship. Though negative values indicate a negative relationship between the variables, they have been removed here for clarity. The phi coefficient is expressed as a decimal following a statistically significant result.

The current resampling compared the May 2023, $n = 498$, and May 2024, $n = 449$, samples of the Great Southern region in Western Australia, from five outlets: ABC Great Southern, Albany Advertiser, Albany Extra, Denmark Bulletin, and Great Southern Herald. The outlet Topics was included in the 2023 sample, but was excluded in 2024, as PIJ no longer assesses community-scale outlets in the sampling project due to very low output.

3.2.2 Public interest journalism

	Public interest journalism								
	2023				2024				Change
	PIJ		Other		PIJ		Other		
Outlet	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	%
ABC Great Southern	33	94	2	6	27	90	3	10	-4
Albany Advertiser	156	65	84	35	141	70	60	30	+5
Albany Extra	58	43	78	57	54	48	58	52	+6
Denmark Bulletin	28	80	7	20	28	80	7	20	0
Great Southern Herald	44	85	8	15	68	96	3	4	+11* (.19)
Total	319	64	179	36	318	71	131	29	+7* (.07)

Table 11: Comparison of stories by whether they are public interest journalism or other journalism.

Table 11 provides detail of how the total sample breaks down into public interest journalism (PIJ) and other journalism, and how this changed between May 2023 and May 2024.

In 2023 we found very high levels of PIJ output from ABC Great Southern, high levels from Denmark Bulletin and Great Southern Herald, moderate from Albany Advertiser and Albany Extra, resulting in overall moderate rates of PIJ for the region at 64 per cent. These figures remained relatively consistent in 2024, with only Great Southern Herald showing a significant change in PIJ output, increasing its proportion by 11 per cent to a very high level of PIJ production. Though there was no significant change from ABC Great Southern, Albany Advertiser, Albany Extra, and Denmark Bulletin, a broader trend towards PIJ also meant that the overall PIJ proportion significantly increased, marking a seven per cent change from 2023. Both changes had small effect sizes, however, indicating little association. Also worth noting is the large influence of Albany Advertiser on the overall PIJ figure given its much higher rate of production than any other outlet in the region, comprising roughly half of the total sample in both years.

	Public interest journalism					
	Government					
	2023		2024		Change	
Outlet	n	%	n	%	%	
ABC Great Southern	22	67	16	59	-7	
Albany Advertiser	50	32	37	26	-6	
Albany Extra	11	19	6	11	-8	
Denmark Bulletin	9	32	6	21	-11	
Great Southern Herald	14	32	26	38	+6	
Total	106	33	91	29	-5	
	Courts and crime					
	n	%	n	%	%	
	Outlet	n	%	n	%	%
ABC Great Southern	2	6	3	11	+5	
Albany Advertiser	11	7	20	14	+7* (.11)	
Albany Extra	1	2	0	0	-2	
Denmark Bulletin	0	0	1	4	+4	
Great Southern Herald	4	9	6	9	0	
Total	18	6	30	9	+4	

	Community				
	n	%	n	%	%
ABC Great Southern	9	27	9	33	+6
Albany Advertiser	104	67	83	59	-8
Albany Extra	49	84	46	85	+1
Denmark Bulletin	24	86	23	82	-4
Great Southern Herald	27	61	46	68	+6
Total	213	67	207	65	-2
	Public services				
	n	%	n	%	%
ABC Great Southern	9	27	9	33	+6
Albany Advertiser	13	8	19	13	+5
Albany Extra	10	17	8	15	-2
Denmark Bulletin	1	4	1	4	0
Great Southern Herald	10	23	17	25	+3
All	43	13	54	17	+4
	Other				
	n	%	n	%	%
ABC Great Southern	13	39	2	7	-31** (.37)
Albany Advertiser	18	12	6	4	-7* (.13)
Albany Extra	7	12	2	4	-7.84
Denmark Bulletin	6	21	0	0	-21* (.35)
Great Southern Herald	10	23	4	6	-17** (.25)
All	54	17	14	4	-13*** (.20)

Table 12: Comparison of public interest journalism categories.

The proportion of each PIJ category in reporting was remarkably consistent between 2023 and 2024 for each outlet. The only significant change in the four main PIJ categories of ‘Government’, ‘Courts and crime’, ‘Community’, and ‘Public services’ was an increase to Albany Advertiser’s ‘Courts and crime’ production. This was a relatively minor change, however, at seven per cent and with a small effect size. The proportion of each pillar reflects their presence in Australian journalism at large. ‘Community’ stories received the vast majority of attention, followed by ‘Government’, ‘Public services’, and ‘Courts and crime’ as the least reported pillar. This order is true for both samples.

The exception to the lack of change between the 2023 and 2024 samples is in the other PIJ section, which includes stories about the environment as well as accidents (e.g. car crashes). The 2023 sample had a very high rate of other PIJ stories, a figure which has fallen significantly among all outlets except Albany Extra in the 2024 sample. The changes from ABC Great Southern and Denmark Bulletin in particular had moderate effect sizes, indicating a stronger association than any other change in any category. Given the significant decrease from four of the five outlets, there was also a significant overall change with a slightly lower effect size. Furthermore, there were significant overall declines in each of the two elements of other PIJ individually, though with small effect sizes.

3.2.3 Localism

Scale	Story scale				
	2023		2024		Change
	n	%	n	%	%
Local	259	69	297	79	+10** (.12)
Regional	79	21	30	8	-13*** (.15)
State	71	19	64	17	-2
National	77	20	23	6	-14*** (.21)
International	15	4	8	2	-2

Table 13: Comparison of scale of coverage of reported stories

The scale of news coverage amongst all outlets in the Great Southern region saw significant changes between the 2023 and 2024 samples. There was a 10 per cent increase in local-scale coverage, remaining the most commonly reported scale by far, though the effect size was small. Regional- and national-scale reporting both significantly decreased from 2023, also with relatively small effect sizes.

International issues received very little attention in the Great Southern outlets, consistent with 2023, with the presence of state-scale stories also remaining relatively unchanged. With the decline in regional, state is now the second largest scale, though much smaller than local.

LGA	Local government area				
	2023		2024		Change
	n	%	n	%	%
Albany	155	61	165	55	-5
Broomehill-Tambellup	0	0	3	1	+1
Cranbrook	1	0	4	1	+1
Denmark	38	15	50	17	+2
Gnowangerup	7	3	6	2	-1
Jerramungup	2	1	10	3	+3
Katanning	21	8	27	9	+1
Kent	1	0	1	0	0
Kojonup	7	3	8	3	0
Plantagenet	6	2	2	1	-2
Woodanilling	0	0	1	0	0
Total	229	89	256	86	-4

Table 14: Comparison of coverage by local government area.

Distribution of coverage between Great Southern local government area coverage was practically unchanged between the 2023 and 2024 samples, and no significant changes were observed. Table 14 shows LGA coverage as a percentage of all local-scale stories, with the vast majority of these concerning Great Southern LGAs in both samples. Albany received the largest proportion of local coverage, at over half of all stories. Though coverage is not evenly distributed, each LGA had at least one relevant story in the 2024 sample, and only Broomehill-Tambellup and Woodanilling had no stories in the 2023 sample. Between the five outlets operating in the area, the entirety of the Great Southern region is covered in some capacity, even very remote and sparsely populated areas.

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 is 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 following:

- 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](#)
- 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.

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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[Public Interest Journalism Initiative]

CONTACT US

Public Interest Journalism Initiative Limited ABN 69 630 740 153

info@piji.com.au

www.piji.com.au

 [linkedin.com/company/public-interest-journalism-initiative](https://www.linkedin.com/company/public-interest-journalism-initiative)

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

