

[Public  
Interest  
Journalism  
Initiative]

# Australian News Data Report

Monthly issue  
July 2024

## **Australian News Data Report: July 2024**

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

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

For the data which informs this report, please visit:  
<https://piji.com.au/research-and-inquiries/our-research/anmp-data/>

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

ISBN: 978-1-7636152-4-3

### Correspondence

To discuss this report, please email Gary Dickson: [gary.dickson@piji.com.au](mailto:gary.dickson@piji.com.au).

### Suggested citation

Dickson G., Germano M., Des Preaux J. and Ferraz P. 2024. *Australian News Data Report: July 2024*. Melbourne: Public Interest Journalism Initiative. <<https://piji.com.au/research-and-inquiries/our-research/anmp/>>

### Licence

These reports and the Australian News Mapping Project data are licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 \(CC BY-NC-SA\) International Licence](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

# AUSTRALIAN NEWS DATA REPORT

Monthly issue | July 2024

## Table of contents

1	Overview	4
	<b>Monthly results: July 2024</b>	<b>5</b>
2	<b>Australian News Mapping Project</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1	Monthly results: July 2024	6
2.1.1	Market changes, July 2024	7
2.1.2	Other changes to news outlet records	8
2.1.3	Changes to news entity records	12
3	<b>Australian News Sampling Project</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1	North West, West Coast and Central Highlands, Tasmania	16
3.1.1	Local news producers	16
3.1.2	Changes observed in the North West, West Coast and Central Highlands region	17
3.1.3	Sample	17
3.1.4	Public interest journalism results	18
3.1.5	Local news results	20
3.1.6	Syndication	22
4	<b>Data eligibility</b>	<b>23</b>
5	<b>About the Public Interest Journalism Initiative</b>	<b>27</b>

## 1 Overview

The [Australian News Data Report](#) is a monthly analysis of information about news production in Australia drawn from three ongoing projects:

- **Australian News Index (ANI)** is the national database of newsrooms and changes to news production
- **Australian News Mapping Project (ANMP)** plots news producers according to their locations, coverage geographies and the characteristics of each business
- **Australian News Sampling Project (ANSP)** assesses news output by specific geographic location/s to understand the local character and quantity of public interest journalism production and produces each as a case study

This report is part of PIJI's continued commitment to ensuring an evidence-based approach to building sustainable public interest journalism production in Australia.

The catalogue of PIJI's previous reports and data is available [on our website](#).

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

This issue presents monthly results as at 31 July 2024. News sampling was conducted across the north west and west coast regions of Tasmania.

## 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](mailto:research@piji.com.au).

# [ Australian News Data Report ]

Monthly results: July 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.

### 2.1 Monthly results: July 2024

As of 31 July 2024, the Australian News Index lists 1,233 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
<b>Print</b>	61	466	7	4	12	<b>550</b>
<b>Digital</b>	6	163	5	4	48	<b>226</b>
<b>Radio</b>	0	405	0	0	1	<b>406</b>
<b>Television</b>	0	50	0	0	2	<b>52</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>1084</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>1234</b>

Table 1: Active news outlets, 31 July 2024.

### 2.1.1 Market changes, July 2024

Eight changes were observed in the reporting month.

#	Outlet		Description of change	Effective date
1	About Time	N/A	● New outlet	01/07/2024
2	Ballina Times	NSW	● New outlet	12/07/2024
3	Byron Coast Times	NSW	● New outlet	12/07/2024
4	The Courier (Narrabri)	NSW	● Decrease in service	01/07/2024
5	Douglas Gazette	QLD	● New outlet	31/07/2024
6	Lismore City News	NSW	● Outlet closed	27/07/2024
7	Tweed Coast Times	NSW	● New outlet	12/07/2024
8	VICE Australia	N/A	● Outlet closed	08/07/2024

Table 2: Market changes, July 2024.

About Time<sup>1</sup> is a national-scale prison newspaper launched in July, with print editions distributed to prisons in the ACT, NSW, Tasmania, and Victoria. It is published by About Time Media, which is based in Melbourne.

The Ballina Times,<sup>2</sup> Byron Coast Times,<sup>3</sup> and Tweed Coast Times<sup>4</sup> were launched in July covering Ballina Shire, Byron Shire, and Tweed Shire respectively. These are the first outlets to be launched in New South Wales by Times News Group, a Torquay, Victoria-based news company. The company has since launched a newspaper in Lismore, which will be captured in the August data and report.<sup>5</sup>

The Courier, a newspaper in Narrabri, New South Wales, confirmed in correspondence with PIJ that its publication schedule decreased from twice weekly to weekly from the beginning of July.

The Douglas Gazette<sup>6</sup> is a newspaper launched at the end of July, covering local news in Port Douglas, Queensland. The Douglas Gazette is operated by Cairns Local News Pty Ltd, publisher of Cairns Local News.

Lismore City News, an Australian Community Media masthead, published its final edition on 27 July, citing rising costs of printing, Meta's withdrawal of financial support for news media, and lack of government advertising as reasons contributing to the closure.<sup>7</sup> The Lismore City News launched in October 2021.

In July, Pedestrian Group, the Australian publisher of VICE Media, announced restructures which included the end of licencing deals to publish third-party brands, resulting in the closure of VICE Australia.<sup>8</sup> Refinery29,

<sup>1</sup> About Time. *About Us*. <<https://www.abouttime.org.au/about-us>>

<sup>2</sup> Ballina Times. <<https://timesnewsgroup.com.au/ballinatimes/>>

<sup>3</sup> Byron Coast Times. <<https://timesnewsgroup.com.au/byroncoasttimes/>>

<sup>4</sup> Tweed Coast Times. <<https://timesnewsgroup.com.au/tweedcoasttimes/>>

<sup>5</sup> Lismore Times. <<https://timesnewsgroup.com.au/lismoretimes/>>

<sup>6</sup> Douglas Gazette. <<https://douglasgazette.com.au>>

<sup>7</sup> Lismore City News. 2024. *Lismore City News to stop publishing as government ads, Meta support disappear*. July 9. <<https://www.lismorecitynews.com.au/story/8690334/final-edition-of-lismore-city-news-set-to-be-published-on-july-27/>>

<sup>8</sup> Jaspan, Calum. 2024. *Pedestrian boss to depart as group slashes staff and titles*. *Sydney Morning Herald*. July 8. <<https://www.smh.com.au/business/companies/pedestrian-boss-to-depart-as-group-slashes-staff-and-titles-20240701-p5jq25.html>>

Gizmodo, Lifehacker, and Kotaku have also been closed as part of this restructure, though these outlets are not included in PIJl's data.

### 2.1.2 Other changes to news outlet records

Sixteen 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	Cape York Weekly	QLD	○ Operating entity changed	30/01/2024
2	Daily Mercury	QLD	● Restarted print edition	07/05/2021
3	Eurobodalla Shire Independent	NSW	● Merger	10/04/2024
4	Gold Coast Bulletin	QLD	○ Publication schedule and format correction	31/12/2018
5	The Great Eastern Mail	VIC	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
6	The Local Paper	VIC	○ Disaggregation	10/06/2020
7	The Magnet	NSW	● Merger	10/04/2024
8	Merimbula News Weekly	NSW	● Merger	10/04/2024
9	The Moorabool News	VIC	○ Operating entity changed	02/02/2024
10	Mountain Monthly	VIC	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
11	Narooma News	NSW	● Merger	10/04/2024
12	North West Weekly	QLD	● Outlet reopened	30/05/2024
13	Pulse Tasmania	TAS	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
14	The Queanbeyan Age	NSW	○ Name change	01/07/2023
15	Region Illawarra	NSW	● New outlet	27/01/2023
16	The Rip (Queenscliff)	VIC	● Readded to the database and end of print	01/06/2023

Table 3: Other changes to outlet records, July 2024.

Cape York Weekly was sold to Region Group in 2023, with this ownership change coming into effect in early 2024. Region Group's Lydon Keane took over as editor from founder Matt Nicholls on 30 January.<sup>9</sup>

In May 2024 Nicholls recommenced publishing the North West Weekly, a Mount Isa-based newspaper. The Weekly had previously operated from July to September 2022, but closed due to financial and time pressures.

<sup>9</sup> Cape York Weekly. <[https://issuu.com/capeyorkweekly/docs/cyw\\_edition\\_169](https://issuu.com/capeyorkweekly/docs/cyw_edition_169)>



Nicholls cites the sale of the Cape York Weekly, changes in Mount Isa, and an advertising commitment from Mount Isa City Council as reasons for restarting the publication.<sup>10</sup>

The Daily Mercury, a News Corporation masthead in Mackay, Queensland, restarted its print edition in May 2021 after suspending it for 10 months during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>11</sup>

There were four mergers of Australian Community Media mastheads in April 2024. The Eurobodalla Shire Independent (Moruya, NSW) and Narooma News (Narooma, NSW) were merged into Bay Post (Batemans Bay, NSW),<sup>12</sup> and The Magnet (Eden, NSW) and Merimbula News Weekly (Merimbula, NSW) were merged into Bega District News (Bega, NSW).<sup>13</sup> There were no coverage changes associated with these mergers, as the merged outlets serviced the same local government areas as the outlets they were merged into (Eurobodalla Shire and Bega Valley Shire respectively).

In the course of regular data maintenance, PIJI found that the Gold Coast Bulletin's primary publication format and publication frequency were incorrectly recorded. This publication format has been changed from digital to print, and the frequency has been changed from twice weekly to weekly. These changes are data corrections and are not reflective of a decrease in service.

The Great Eastern Mail<sup>14</sup> is a fortnightly newspaper covering local news in East Gippsland Shire, Victoria.

The Local Paper has been listed as a single newspaper covering all of Melbourne and some surrounding regions in PIJI's data. In July, PIJI has disaggregated the title into its separate editions, with current and deprecated outlets now recorded individually in PIJI's database. There are eight editions currently publishing: Eastern Suburbs, Lilydale and Yarra Valley Express, Mitchell Shire, Northern Suburbs, North-West, Peninsula-Frankston-Greater Dandenong-Casey-Cardinia, Regional, and Southern Cross Weekly. Further detail on the disaggregation is provided in section 2.1.2.1 of this report.

The operating entity of The Moorabool News has been changed from Ballan News Pty Ltd to Surf Coast News Australia Pty Ltd (Times News Group) after it was purchased in January 2024<sup>15</sup>.

Mountain Monthly<sup>16</sup> is a monthly community news magazine in Kinglake, Victoria. Mountain Monthly covers local news from around Murrindindi Shire.

Pulse Tasmania<sup>17</sup> is a news website covering local news throughout Tasmania. Although the outlet publishes news from across the state, the scale of the majority of stories remains local and without a particular bias towards reporting on any one local government area. Due to this it has been recorded as a local-scale outlet covering all of Tasmania.

---

<sup>10</sup> Nicholls, Matt. 2024. North West Weekly. May 28. *Local paper returns to the region.*

<[https://issuu.com/northwestweekly/docs/nww\\_edition\\_008](https://issuu.com/northwestweekly/docs/nww_edition_008)>

<sup>11</sup> Wilson, Rae, & Miko Tara. 2021. *Daily Mercury print edition to return after strong digital results across Mackay and Whitsundays.* Daily Mercury. May 7. <<https://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/mackay/opinion/daily-mercury-print-edition-to-return-after-strong-digital-results-across-mackay-and-whitsundays/news-story/25f8dcc8b7800a748822ac7f907dca7a>>

<sup>12</sup> Bay Post Newsroom. 2024. Bay Post. March 17. *We've got the Eurobodalla covered with your new-look Bay Post.* <<https://www.batemansbaypost.com.au/story/8555705/eurobodalla-news-exciting-changes-ahead/>>

<sup>13</sup> Bega District News. 2024. April 3. *New-look Bega District News has the Bega Valley and Sapphire Coast covered.* <<https://www.begadistrictnews.com.au/story/8576547/bega-district-news-new-look-from-april-12/>>

<sup>14</sup> The Great Eastern Mail. <<https://greateasternmail.com.au>>

<sup>15</sup> The Moorabool News. 2024. *It's time.* January 31. <<https://timesnewsgroup.com.au/themooraboolnews/print-editions/moorabool-news-january-23/>>

<sup>16</sup> Mountain Monthly. <<https://www.mountainmonthly.com.au>>

<sup>17</sup> Pulse Tasmania. <<https://pulsetasmania.com.au>>

The Queanbeyan Age was recorded as 'The Queanbeyan Age Incorporating The Chronicle' in PIJI's data, however, on review we found that it dropped "Incorporating The Chronicle" from the masthead title in July 2023. The record has been updated to reflect this.

Region Illawarra<sup>18</sup> is a local news website covering the three local government areas which comprise the Illawarra region: Kiama, Shellharbour, and Wollongong. Publisher Region Group clarified that although posting began on the website in January 2023, full publication began in April. Region Illawarra is the sixth outlet published by the ACT-based Region Group.

The Rip (Queenscliff, VIC) was prematurely listed as closed in PIJI's data in April 2024 due to its very low publication frequency. Since then, it has continued to publish at a low frequency, so this closure has been reversed in the data. Instead, the end of The Rip's print edition in June 2023 has been recorded.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Region Illawarra. <<https://regionillawarra.com.au/>>

<sup>19</sup> The Rip (Queenscliff). 2023. June. *Thank you!* <<https://indd.adobe.com/view/d837b37b-236e-4dcf-8aa3-007a506e61f7>>

### 2.1.2.1 Changes made to The Local Paper

The Local Paper was previously recorded as a single outlet covering all of metropolitan Melbourne in PIJJ's data. This has been changed in July so that it is now recorded as eight individual outlets with different coverage areas. Changes that occurred since 1 January 2019 have also been recorded in PIJJ's data. A timeline of events at The Local Paper has been provided in the table below. Active outlets are identified in bold.

Date	Outlet	Description
14/02/2002	Melbourne Observer	First issue published.
17/02/2016	The Local Paper	First issue published.
04/03/2020	<b>Mitchell Shire Edition</b>	First issue published.
20/05/2020	Northern Edition <b>Regional Edition</b>	First issue published. 'The Local Paper' is renamed 'The Local Paper (Regional Edition)' alongside the first edition of The Local Paper (Northern Edition).
10/06/2020	Eastern Edition	First issue published.
01/07/2020	<b>Lilydale &amp; Yarra Valley Express</b> <b>North-West Edition</b>	First issue published. First issue published.
16/09/2020	Diamond Valley News-Heidelberg Edition	First issue published.
28/10/2020	Diamond Valley News-Heidelberg Edition	The Diamond Valley News-Heidelberg Edition is split into separate 'Diamond Valley News' and 'Heidelberg' editions.
11/11/2020	Knox-Sherbrooke Edition Peninsula-Frankston-Greater Dandenong Edition	First issue published. First issue published.
02/12/2020	<b>Southern Cross Weekly</b>	First issue published.
23/02/2021	Manningham Edition	First issue published.
17/03/2021	Northern Edition	The Northern Edition is split into three new editions: Whittlesea Post, Preston Post-Reservoir Times and Northcote Budget.
14/04/2021	Casey Cardinia Edition	First issue published.
16/02/2021	Eastern Suburbs Edition	'Eastern Edition' renamed 'Eastern Suburbs Edition'.
07/12/2022	Melbourne Observer	This edition ceases to publish as a standalone title.
15/03/2023	<b>Eastern Suburbs Edition</b> <b>Northern Suburbs Edition</b> <b>Peninsula-Frankston-Greater Dandenong-Casey-Cardinia Edition</b>	The Knox-Sherbrooke and Manningham editions merge into the Eastern Suburbs Edition. The Whittlesea Post, Heidelberg, Preston Post-Reservoir Times, Northcote Budget and Diamond Valley News are merged into a single Northern Suburbs Edition. The Casey-Cardinia and Peninsula-Frankston-Greater Dandenong editions are merged into a single Peninsula-Frankston-Greater Dandenong-Casey-Cardinia Edition.

Table 4: Timeline of changes at The Local Paper.

### 2.1.3 Changes to news entity records

Eleven entity records were updated in July.

#	Outlet		Description of change	Effective date
1	About Time Media Ltd	VIC	○ Added to the database	01/07/2024
2	Ballan News Pty Ltd	VIC	○ Deleted entity	02/02/2024
3	Cairns Local News Pty Ltd	QLD	○ Linked outlet	31/07/2024
4	Cape York Weekly Pty Ltd	QLD	○ Deleted entity	30/01/2024
5	Holst Advertising Pty. Ltd.	VIC	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
6	Local Media Pty Ltd	VIC	○ Linked outlets	04/03/2020
7	Mountain Monthly Co-operative Ltd	VIC	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
8	North West Weekly Pty Ltd	QLD	○ Added to the database	30/05/2024
9	Pulse Media Group Pty Ltd	TAS	○ Added to the database	31/12/2018
10	Region Group Pty Ltd	ACT	○ Linked outlets	27/01/2023
11	Surf Coast News Australia Pty Ltd	VIC	○ Linked outlet	02/02/2024

Table 5: Changes to news entity records, July 2024

About Time Media Ltd is the entity operating About Time and is registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.<sup>20</sup>

Ballan News Pty Ltd formerly operated The Moorabool News and has been removed from the data following The Moorabool News' change of ownership to the Times News Group.

Cairns Local News Pty Ltd operates the Douglas Gazette, alongside its existing Queensland masthead Cairns Local News.

Cape York Weekly Pty Ltd has been deleted from the database following the sale of its only outlet, Cape York Weekly, to Region Group in 2023.

Holst Advertising Pty Ltd is the entity operating The Great Eastern Mail.

Following the disaggregation of The Local Paper, all currently publishing editions of The Local Paper have been linked to Local Media Pty Ltd. These editions are Eastern Suburbs, Lilydale and Yarra Valley Express, Mitchell Shire, Northern Suburbs, North-West, Peninsula-Frankston-Greater Dandenong-Casey-Cardinia, Regional, and Southern Cross Weekly.

Mountain Monthly Co-operative is the entity operating the Mountain Monthly.

North West Weekly Pty Ltd is the entity publishing North West Weekly since its reopening in May 2024.

Pulse Media Group Pty Ltd operates the Tasmania-wide local news website Pulse Tasmania.

<sup>20</sup> Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. *About Time Media Ltd*. <<https://www.acnc.gov.au/charity/charities/c481eac7-b414-ee11-9cbe-00224893b0ed/profile>>

The operating entity of Cape York Weekly has been changed to Region Group Pty Ltd following its sale in 2023. Region Group also publishes the new outlet Region Illawarra.

The new NSW mastheads Ballina Times, Byron Coast Times, and Tweed Coast Times are operated by Surf Coast News Australia Pty Ltd (Times News Group). The Moorabool News has also been linked to Times News Group after it was purchased from Ballan News Pty Ltd in January 2024<sup>21</sup>.

---

<sup>21</sup> The Moorabool News. 2024. *It's time*. January 31. <<https://timesnewsgroup.com.au/themooraboolnews/print-editions/moorabool-news-january-23/>>

# [ Australian News Sampling Project ]

Case study, July 2024:

**North West, West Coast and Central Highlands,  
Tasmania**

### 3 Australian News Sampling Project

The results presented here are from a June survey of nine local government areas across the North West, West Coast, and Central Highlands regions of Tasmania. The local government areas sampled include the councils of Burnie, Central Coast, Central Highlands, Circular Head, Devonport, Kentish, Meander Valley, Waratah-Wynyard, and West Coast.

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 PIJL is resourced to overcome.

The Australian Broadcast 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 North West, West Coast and Central Highlands, Tasmania

Nine local government areas across the North West, West Coast and Central Highlands regions of Tasmania were included in this sample. The local government areas include the councils of Burnie, Central Coast, Central Highlands, Circular Head, Devonport, Kentish, Meander Valley, Waratah-Wynyard, and West Coast.



#### Region

Land area	3 428 231 ha
Residents	145 686

#### Population centres

Burnie	Devonport
Ulverstone	Latrobe
Wynyard	Sheffield
Smithton	Westbury
Waratah	Hamilton
Queenstown	

#### News outlets (July 2024)

Print	3
Digital	2
Radio	9
Television	6

#### 3.1.1 Local news producers

Outlet	Format	Ownership	Scale	Total
10 Tasmania	Television	Tasmanian Digital Television Pty Ltd	Local	0
7AD 98.9 FM Devonport	Radio	Northern Tasmania Broadcasters Proprietary Limited	Local	0
7BU 100.9FM Burnie	Radio	Burnie Broadcasting Service Proprietary Limited	Local	0
7XS Queenstown 92.1 FM	Radio	Radio West Coast Pty Ltd	Local	0
ABC Northern Tasmania	Radio	Australian Broadcasting Corporation	Local	87
The Advocate (Burnie)	Print	Rural Press Pty Limited	Local	157
Circular Head Chronicle	Print	The Huon Newspaper Company Proprietary Limited	Local	125
City Park Radio	Radio	Launceston Community Fm Group Inc	Local	0
Coast FM	Radio	Coastal Fm Inc	Local	0
The Kentish Voice	Print	The Trustee For Douglas G Begg Family Trust	Local	32
The North West Coast News	Digital	News Corp Australia Pty Limited	Local	27
Print Radio Tasmania	Radio	Print Radio Tasmania Inc	Local	0
Pulse Tasmania	Digital	Pulse Media Group Pty Ltd	Local	53
Sea FM 101.7 Burnie	Radio	Burnie Broadcasting Service Proprietary Limited	Local	0
SEA FM 107.1 Devonport	Radio	Northern Tasmania Broadcasters Proprietary Limited	Local	0
Seven Tasmania	Television	Southern Cross Television Pty Ltd	Local	0
WIN Tasmania	Television	WIN Television TAS Pty Ltd	Local	0
<b>Total</b>				<b>481</b>

Table 6: News producers in selected region and the total number of articles assessed.



The Advocate is a Burnie-based daily newspaper operated by Australian Community Media. Circular Head Council is additionally served by a weekly print newspaper, Circular Head Chronicle. The Kentish Voice, based in Sheffield, publishes monthly.

News Corp has a small digital presence with The North West Coast News, an extension of The Mercury which covers the broader region. Pulse Tasmania is a digital outlet covering most of Tasmania.

There is a heavy radio presence in this region. Northern Tasmania Broadcasters operate Devonport stations 7AD 98.9 FM and SEA FM 107.1, while Burnie Broadcasting Service operates 7BU 100.9FM Burnie and Sea FM 101.7 Burnie. Community radio stations include City Park Radio, Coast FM and Print Radio Tasmania.

ABC Northern Tasmania is based in Launceston.

All of Tasmania is covered by a single television license area, Tasmania TV1, which includes 10 Tasmania, Seven Tasmania and WIN Tasmania. Central Highlands Council falls within the television license area Remote Central & Eastern Australia TV2, therefore, this sample also includes 10 Remote Central & Eastern Australia, Imparja Television and Seven Central.

### 3.1.2 Changes observed in the North West, West Coast and Central Highlands region

Date	Change observed
16/08/2020	● The North West Coast News opened
1/12/2023	● Meander Valley Gazette closed

Table 7: Changes observed in the region since 1 January 2019.

Two changes have been observed since PIJI began monitoring. News Corp launched the digital North West Coast News in 2020.

Meander Valley Gazette, a local-scale newspaper, announced an indefinite hiatus following their December 2023 edition.

### 3.1.3 Sample

The digital output of the public broadcaster, three publishers and two digital outlets was assessed between 1 – 31 July 2024. For most outlets, this represented the total of their output across that period. For The Advocate, four complete editions were coded this month: Monday 8, Tuesday 16, Friday 19 and Wednesday 24.

A total of 481 articles are in the sample.

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

The North West Coast News is a digital hyperlocal run by The Mercury, News Corp’s Hobart-based newspaper. This structure impacts the sample: only stories that were presented on the North West Coast News section of the Mercury’s website were included, and as a consequence the results reflect a heavily localised subset of the company’s overall output in the state. This is not representative of The Mercury’s broader reporting in Tasmania, and a Burnie-based reader of the News could be reasonably expected to also access state and national content from other parts of the site.

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

Overall, we found high to very high levels of public interest journalism at all outlets. Community was the biggest focus overall, partly due to the coverage provided by the two local print newspapers and the public broadcaster. Government was the largest focus at The Advocate and the second-biggest focus at The Circular Head Chronicle, The Kentish Voice, and the public broadcaster. We also found high levels of localism, with most stories being local in scale across all outlets, except at The Advocate. Additionally, we found internal syndication at ABC Northern Tasmania and The Advocate.

### 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		
ABC Northern Tasmania	83	95	4	5	87	0	87
The Advocate (Burnie)	91	65	49	35	140	17	157
Circular Head Chronicle	96	98	2	2	98	27	125
The Kentish Voice	24	96	1	4	25	7	32
The North West Coast News	25	93	2	7	27	0	27
Pulse Tasmania	42	79	11	21	53	0	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>481</b>

Table 8: Stories by whether they are public interest journalism, other journalism, or excluded from the sample.

Table 8 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 Circular Head Chronicle, The Kentish Voice, the public broadcaster, and News Corp hyperlocal. We found high levels at Pulse Tasmania and moderate levels at The Advocate. Overall, high levels of public interest journalism were found in this sample.

Articles are generally included if they appear to have broad news value, appear to be reported, and are not promotional. They may be excluded if they are opinion or analysis pieces or if they are advertising or press releases. Stories contributed by people who have an interest in the content - such as an elected official about their achievements - will also be excluded. Excluded stories are removed from further analysis.

Outlet	Public interest journalism											
	Government			Courts and crime			Community			Public services		
	All	U	% U	All	U	% U	All	U	% U	All	U	% U
ABC Northern Tasmania	76	48	55	44	29	33	60	47	54	30	25	29
The Advocate (Burnie)	79	52	37	33	21	15	45	33	24	19	18	13
Circular Head Chronicle	35	21	21	2	1	1	136	78	80	19	18	18
The Kentish Voice	7	5	20	0	0	0	28	20	80	3	2	8
The North West Coast News	19	10	37	19	11	41	14	14	52	5	4	15
Pulse Tasmania	17	11	21	19	15	28	14	13	25	23	17	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>20</b>

Table 9: Breakdown of public interest journalism.

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

Table 9 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.

Overall, we found that 'Community' stories were the biggest category of public interest journalism, led by the two local print outlets - Circular Head Chronicle and Kentish Voice - where 'Community' stories were the largest focus. 'Community' was also the largest focus at The North West Coast News, though these outlets split their focus between 'Government', 'Courts and crime' and 'Public Services' as well. The Advocate and ABC Northern Tasmania published more 'Government' stories than any other category, and Pulse Tasmania published more 'Public services' stories than any other category.

'Community' stories sampled across the month were found to mostly be about community organisations (42), followed by local and community sport (40), community events (37) and community individuals (37). The ABC, The North West Coast News and Pulse Tasmania contributed minimally to these types of 'Community' stories, instead focusing on injuries and deaths in the community such as vehicle and motorbike accidents and a person who was found dead in a South Burnie residence following a house fire.

Circular Head Chronicle published almost half of community organisation stories (20), focussing on local branches of larger organisations such as the Rotary Club, Country Women's Association and Lion's Club. The Kentish Voice also published stories on local groups such as Kentish Men's Shed and the Kentish Probus Club's upcoming meetings.

Local and community sport coverage was mostly provided by The Circular Head Chronicle (28).

Again, Circular Head Chronicle contributed to most of the community event stories (28). Events covered by this outlet included information sessions aimed at Tasmanian dairy farmers, the announcement of next year's Rip Curl West Coast surfing competition, and a Cancer Council fundraising event organised by Kentish University of the Third Age (U3A). Other events were covered throughout the month as part of NAIDOC Week.

All outlets featured profiles of individuals who had served the community, as well as artists and celebrities from the local area, such as Smithton butcher Josh Perry, who received ongoing coverage for his participation in the latest season of television show MasterChef Australia.

'Government' was the second biggest focus overall. This coverage focussed mostly on state government (44), local government (31), and federal government stories (15).

The Advocate, The Circular Head Chronicle, and the public broadcaster mostly covered state government, followed by some local government stories and few federal government stories. The North West Coast, The Kentish Voice, and Pulse Tasmania followed different patterns. The North West Coast mainly focused on local government stories (5), followed by federal (3) and state government stories (2). The Kentish Voice and Pulse Tasmania covered few government stories, with The Kentish Voice giving equal coverage to federal and state government stories (2) and Pulse Tasmania publishing only one story for each category.

State government stories included a workers' strike at a dairy company in Burnie for pay parity, and new stadium projects in Devonport and Macquarie Point. The housing shortage was also reported on. Other stories had crossover with environment stories, including a ban on protesters entering state forests following their action against Sustainable Timer Tasmania. The state's coastal policy also received coverage as messages between Energy Minister Nick Duigan and the chief executive of a wind farm were published.

Local government stories included a development application in Burnie City Council, public consultations on the construction of offshore wind farms, and Strike It Out’s dispute with Launceston City Council over mobile homeless shelters.

Federal government stories often had crossover with local government stories, including the completion of the Dulverton Organics Treatment facility in Latrobe, and the replacement of the Rubicon River Bridge. Allocation of federal and state funds to the rehabilitation of the Dismal Swamp facility in Circular Head was also reported on. Concerns over the financial situation of Rex Airlines also received coverage.

‘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 police (34), education (17) and health (13). Other services included State Emergency Services, largely due to a missing group of three bushwalkers in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park, and correctional services.

Police stories were mostly published by Pulse Tasmania (16), the public broadcaster (9) and The Advocate (4).

Police stories had strong crossover with reporting of crime and vehicular accidents. A story published by the public broadcaster reported the findings of an independent review into the handling of allegations against a senior Tasmanian police officer who committed multiple sexual abuse offences.

Education stories were mostly published by The Circular Head Chronicle (8) and the public broadcaster (5).

Education stories included the impact of staff shortages on the implementation of a new curriculum, and Forest Primary School students performing around Smithton. The third anniversary of Study Centre Circular Head also received coverage.

Health stories included the need for better access to disability support workers in Tasmania, upgrades of the Mersey Community Hospital in North West Tasmania, and the impact of alcohol advertising during daytime sports broadcast on alcohol consumption.

‘Courts and crime’ coverage was relatively high across all outlets, except at The Kentish Voice where no ‘Courts and Crime’ coverage was found.

The North West Coast News and ABC Northern Tasmania reported updates on the timing of criminal proceedings against a jumping castle operator involved in an accident in 2021 leaving six children dead and three injured. The North West Coast News also reported on the findings of a coronial inquest into the death of a man who drowned in Tasmania’s North West in 2022. A Tasmanian Supreme Court Judge facing court over accusations of assaulting a woman received coverage from the ABC and The Advocate. The Circular Head Chronicle published two ‘Courts and crime’ stories, including the arrest of a man charged with attempted murder, arson, and family violence in the local area.

Overall, violent crimes received more coverage (34), than non-violent crimes (24). Lower courts (18) and superior courts (21) were covered fairly equally, while there was little coverage of intermediate courts (6).

### 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 Northern Tasmania	78	90	0	0	16	18	6	7
The Advocate (Burnie)	54	39	7	5	27	19	35	25
Circular Head Chronicle	81	83	1	1	11	11	3	3
The Kentish Voice	22	88	1	4	1	4	0	0
The North West Coast News	24	89	1	4	3	11	1	4
Pulse Tasmania	42	79	10	19	2	4	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>11</b>

Table 10: Scale of coverage of reported stories.

Stories concerning local issues had the highest overall focus at all outlets. 70 per cent of stories were local in scale, followed by 14 per cent state, 11 per cent national and five per cent regional.

All outlets except for The Advocate provided mostly local coverage. The Advocate split its coverage across local (39 per cent), national (25 per cent), state (19 per cent), and regional (five per cent) stories.

Local-scale stories were also the highest focus at the ABC (90 per cent), however, this outlet also provided coverage of state-scale (18 per cent) and national stories (seven per cent). State-scale stories were also a secondary focus at Circular Head Chronicle and The North West Coast News.

Pulse Tasmania produced the most regional coverage out of all the outlets sampled (19 per cent), in addition to strong local coverage (70 per cent). This outlet covered a range of regions across Tasmania, including Northern Tasmania, Central Highlands, Eastern Tasmania and the West Coast.

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

LGAs	ABC		A		CHC		NWCN		KV		PT	
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %
Burnie City	1	1	12	9	2	2	6	22	0	0	7	13
Central Coast Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	5	9
Central Highlands	2	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	15
Circular Head Council	3	3	1	1	76	78	5	19	0	0	8	15
Devonport City	4	5	14	10	1	1	4	15	1	4	5	9
Kentish Council	6	7	2	1	0	0	1	4	22	88	0	0
Latrobe Council	2	2	9	6	1	1	2	7	1	4	0	0
Meander Valley	8	9	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Waratah-Wynyard	2	2	7	5	3	3	1	4	1	4	5	9
West Coast Council	1	1	3	2	1	1	2	7	0	0	3	6

Table 11: Localism of coverage of reported stories.

Circular Head Chronicle (CHC in Table 37) and The Kentish Voice (KV) unsurprisingly demonstrated strong localism their coverage areas, 78 per cent for Circular Head Council and 88 per cent for Kentish Council respectively.

On the other hand, the public broadcaster, The Advocate (A), The North West Coast News (NWCN) and Pulse Tasmania (PT) focussed on a range of local government areas in the North West, West Coast and Central Highlands regions of Tasmania. For example, The Advocate covered larger cities Burnie and Devonport, as did The North West Coast News with the addition of Circular Head Council. ABC Northern Tasmania spread its

focus more evenly across nine of the ten local government areas sampled, while Pulse Tasmania published stories local to Central Highlands, Circular Head, Burnie, Central Coast, Devonport, and Waratah-Wynyard.

Both the ABC and The Advocate published at least one story about every local government area in the sample, except for Central Coast Council.

Each one of the 10 LGAs sampled was covered by at least one outlet during the month.

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

### 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 Northern Tasmania	11	13	0	0	0	0	76	87
The Advocate (Burnie)	69	49	0	0	0	0	71	51
Circular Head Chronicle	0	0	0	0	0	0	98	100
The Kentish Voice	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	100
The North West Coast News	0	0	0	0	0	0	27	100
Pulse Tasmania	0	0	0	0	0	0	53	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>81</b>

Table 12: Syndication of reported stories.

Internal syndication was found at two outlets: ABC Northern Tasmania and The Advocate. The ABC had 13 per cent of reported stories that originated from other ABC newsrooms in other states, including New South Wales and South Australia, and nation-wide, including ABC Rural, Landline and Stateline. The Advocate internally syndicated around half of its content (49 per cent) from the Australian Community Media network.

No syndication was found at Circular Head Chronicle, The Kentish Voice, The North West Coast News or Pulse Tasmania over the month, with 100 per cent of output from these outlet being original content.

No syndication from wire services or other news sources was found at any outlet sampled.

## 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 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 PIJ 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.

This research is supported with funding from the Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.

# [Public Interest Journalism Initiative]

[info@piji.com.au](mailto:info@piji.com.au)

[www.piji.com.au](http://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)

