

[Public  
Interest  
Journalism  
Initiative]

# Australian News Data Report

Monthly issue  
August 2024

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

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

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

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# AUSTRALIAN NEWS DATA REPORT

Monthly issue | August 2024

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## 1 Overview

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

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

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

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

Further detail about the project, including eligibility, definitions and a methodology for categorising changes, can be found in Section 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 August 2024.

The August 2024 sample was conducted across the Goulburn, Yass Valley and Upper Lachlan councils of New South Wales. This month also marks two years since the Australian News Sampling Project commenced, with initial research in August 2022 conducted in Southern Grampians Shire, Victoria, and Maranoa Regional Council, Queensland. After assessing thousands of news articles covering more than 100 local government areas, this will also be the final regular monthly sample, as the research team's focus shifts to issue-based sampling, rather than geographic. A full archive of geographic samples is available [on our website](#).

## 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: August 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: August 2024

As of 31 August 2024, the Australian News Index lists 1,232 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	61	467	7	4	12	551
Digital	6	159	5	4	49	224
Radio	0	405	0	0	1	406
Television	0	50	0	0	2	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>1081</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>1232</b>

Table 1: Active news outlets, 31 August 2024.

### 2.1.1 Market changes, August 2024

Six changes were observed in the reporting month.

#	Outlet		Description of change	Effective date
1	Blayney Chronicle	NSW	● Outlet closed	26/08/2024
2	Central Western Daily	NSW	● Decrease in service	26/08/2024
3	Daily Liberal	NSW	● Decrease in service	26/08/2024
4	The Indigenous Business Review	N/A	● New outlet	01/08/2024
5	Oberon Review	NSW	● Outlet closed	26/08/2024
6	Western Advocate	NSW	● Decrease in service	26/08/2024

Table 2: Market changes, August 2024.

Five of the changes observed in August relate to a series of contractions of Australian Community Media mastheads in New South Wales’s Central Tablelands. In July<sup>1</sup> Australian Community Media announced that Orange’s Central West Daily, Dubbo’s Daily Liberal, and Bathurst’s Western Advocate would stop producing weekly editions on August 26. The three mastheads have changed from daily (Monday through Saturday) to weekly publication frequency.

In addition to these decreases in service, Australian Community Media also announced that the Blayney Chronicle and Oberon Review would stop publishing print editions on the same date. Following their ends of print, the Blayney Chronicle’s and Oberon Review’s websites now redirect to Central Western Daily and Western Advocate respectively and have therefore been listed as closed in PIJI’s data.

The Indigenous Business Review<sup>2</sup> is a news magazine launched in August from the publisher of National Indigenous Times. It will be published every two months as an insert in News Corporation’s The Australian and Seven West Media’s The West Australian.

<sup>1</sup> Manning, James. 2024. Mediaweek. *ACM stopping the presses on weekday editions of iconic NSW regional newspapers*. July 19. <<https://www.mediaweek.com.au/acm-stopping-the-presses-on-weekday-editions-of-iconic-nsw-regional-newspapers/>>

<sup>2</sup> The Indigenous Business Review. <<https://theibr.com.au>>

### 2.1.2 Other changes to news outlet records

Seven 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	7AD 98.9FM Devonport	TAS	○ Service correction	31/12/2018
2	The Chronicle	QLD	○ Primary format correction	31/12/2018
3	Country Caller	QLD	● Outlet closed	05/04/2024
4	Geelong Advertiser	VIC	○ Publication frequency correction	31/12/2018
5	The Perth Voice	WA	○ Updated LGA coverage	31/12/2018
6	Warrego Watchman	QLD	● Outlet closed	17/05/2024
7	Western Times	QLD	○ Name correction	31/12/2018

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

Two changes were made in August that reflect past market events.

Country Caller<sup>3</sup> was a local news website covering Chinchilla, Queensland. Country Caller stopped publishing news in April 2024 and was confirmed closed through email correspondence with PIJJ in August.

Warrego Watchman<sup>4</sup> is a news website operating in southwest Queensland. Owner/operator James Clark said he has stepped away from publication since the outlet's most recent article in May 2024, but expressed that Warrego Watchman may return to digital publishing soon.

Separately, several corrections were made to PIJJ's data throughout August. These are record changes only and do not represent market changes.

- 7AD 98.9FM Devonport's state was incorrectly recorded as Australia Capital Territory (ACT) and has been changed to Tasmania.
- The Chronicle (Toowoomba) was incorrectly listed as a digital outlet despite producing a print edition.
- Geelong Advertiser's publication frequency was corrected from weekly to daily (Monday through Saturday).
- The local government area coverage of The Perth Voice has been updated to include City of Bayswater, City of Stirling, and City of Vincent.
- Western Times name was changed from "The Western Times" to reflect the masthead's title.

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<sup>3</sup> Country Caller. <<https://countrycaller.com.au>>

<sup>4</sup> Warrego Watchman. <<https://www.warregowatchman.com.au>>



### 2.1.3 Changes to news entity records

Three entity records were updated in August.

#	Outlet		Description of change	Effective date
1	Clark, James	QLD	○ Deleted entity	17/05/2024
2	Clarke, Henry Thomas	QLD	○ Deleted entity	05/04/2024
3	National Indigenous Times News Pty Ltd	WA	○ Linked outlet	01/08/2024

Table 4: Changes to news entity records, August 2024

Clark, James was the sole trader entity operating Warrego Watchman and has been deleted following its closure.

Clarke, Henry Thomas was the sole trader entity operating Country Caller and has been removed from the data due to its closure.

National Indigenous Times News Pty Ltd operates the new outlet, The Indigenous Business Review. This entity operates one other outlet in PIJl's data, National Indigenous Times.

# [ Australian News Sampling Project ]

Case study, August 2024:

**Goulburn and surrounds, New South Wales**

### 3 Australian News Sampling Project

The results presented here are from an August survey of three local government areas in New South Wales: Goulburn Mulwaree Council, Upper Lachlan Shire Council, and Yass Valley Council.

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 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 Goulburn and surrounds, New South Wales

Goulburn Mulwaree Council and two neighbouring councils – Upper Lachlan Shire and Yass Valley – were included in this sample. The regional city of Goulburn is located in the Southern Tablelands region of New South Wales.



#### Region

Land area	952 793 ha
Residents	58 912

#### Population centres

Goulburn	Yass
Crookwell	

#### News outlets (August 2024)

Print	3
Digital	1
Radio	10
Television	6

#### 3.1.1 Local news producers

Outlet	Format	Ownership	Scale	Total
10 Remote Central & Eastern Australia	Television	Central Digital Television Pty Limited	Local	0
10 Southern NSW & ACT	Television	Australian Capital Television Pty Ltd	Local	0
2CA AM 1053 Canberra	Radio	Radio Canberra Pty Ltd	Local	0
2CC Talking Canberra	Radio	Radio Canberra Pty Ltd	Local	0
7 News Southern NSW & ACT	Television	Prime Television (Southern) Pty Ltd	Local	0
ABC Canberra	Radio	Australian Broadcasting Corporation	Local	107
ABC Central West NSW	Radio	Australian Broadcasting Corporation	Local	20
Crookwell Gazette	Digital	Rural Press Pty Limited	Local	13
Eagle 93.5 FM	Radio	Radio Goulburn Pty Ltd	Local	0
GNFM	Radio	Radio Goulburn Pty Ltd	Local	0
Goulburn Post	Print	Rural Press Pty Limited	Local	63
hit104.7 Canberra	Radio	AMPLIFYCBRR PTY LTD	Local	0
Imparja Television	Television	Imparja Television Pty Ltd	Local	0
Mix 106.3 Canberra	Radio	AMPLIFYCBRR PTY LTD	Local	0
Nine Southern NSW & ACT	Television	WIN Television NSW Pty Ltd	Local	0
Radio Skid Row 88.9FM	Radio	Radio Skid Row Ltd	Local	0
RAMfm 103.3 Goulburn Community Radio	Radio	Goulburn Community Radio Association Inc	Local	0
The Rural Fringe	Print	Village of Hall and District Progress Association Inc	Local	17
Seven Central	Television	Regional Television Pty Limited	Local	0
Yass Valley Times	Print	Stadtic Media Pty Ltd	Local	98
<b>Total</b>				<b>318</b>

Table 5: News producers in selected region and the total number of articles assessed.

The Goulburn Post is a Goulburn-based weekly print newspaper operated by Australian Community Media. Crookwell Gazette is a digital ACM title covering Upper Lachlan Shire Council. Yass is served by The Yass Valley Times, an independent weekly newspaper. Additionally, The Rural Fringe is based in Hall, in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), and publishes once every two months.

There is a heavy radio presence in this region with 10 radio stations covering the sample area. Canberra is covered by commercial radio stations 2CA and 2CC, operated by Radio Canberra, as well as hit and Mix brands. Goulburn also has a commercial radio presence with Eagle 93.5 FM and GNFM. Community radio stations include Radio Skid Row, broadcast from Sydney, and RAMfm Goulburn Community Radio.

The councils of Goulburn and Upper Lachlan fall within the broadcast area of ABC Central West NSW, while Yass is covered by ABC Canberra.

All three commercial television networks operate in the area. The region is primarily part of the Southern NSW TV1 broadcast license area, though some areas around Crookwell are part of the Remote Central and Eastern Australia TV1/2 area. The WIN Network provides a full local bulletin from its Canberra newsroom to the Australian Capital Territory and Southern Tablelands region.

### 3.1.2 Changes observed in Goulburn and surrounds

Date	Change observed
14/04/2020	● Crookwell Gazette ended its digital edition
01/06/2020	● Yass valley Times launched print edition
14/08/2020	● Goulburn Post ended its Friday edition
31/03/2021	● Yass Tribune closed
12/09/2021	● The Goulburn Phoenix closed
18/08/2023	● The Yass Phoenix closed

Six changes have been observed since PIJI began monitoring. Yass Valley Times launched its print edition in June 2020.

Three outlets have closed: Yass Tribune in March 2021, following Australian Community Media’s suspension of dozens of non-daily newspapers in April 2020, The Goulburn Phoenix after being founded in late 2020, and The Yass Phoenix.

Table 6: Changes observed in the region since 1 January 2019.

Crookwell Gazette decreased its service by no longer offering a digital edition as of April 2020. Goulburn Post ended its Friday print edition later in 2020.

### 3.1.3 Sample

The digital output of the public broadcaster and four publishers was assessed between 1 – 31 August 2024. For Crookwell Gazette, this represented its digital content published to its website. For Goulburn Post, this represented its content published in digital editions. The ABC sample only includes articles published to the ABC Local website and may not be representative of news content on local radio.

For all other outlets, this represented the total of their output across that period.

A total of 318 articles are in the sample.

Over the month, the output of Crookwell Gazette was low and highly syndicated from other Australian Community Media outlets. Given Australian Community Media closures across New South Wales, PIJI will continue to monitor this outlet. The results for this outlet are presented below, however, this outlet has been excluded from further commentary in this report.

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

Overall, we found very high levels of public interest journalism at all outlets. ‘Community’ was the biggest focus overall, led by The Rural Fringe and Yass Valley Times. This was followed by ‘Government’, led by the two ABC newsrooms. We found most outlets published local scale stories. Additionally, we found internal syndication at outlets within wider networks: both ABC newsrooms and Goulburn Post.

### 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 Canberra	103	96	4	4	107	0	107
ABC Central West NSW	19	95	1	5	20	0	20
Crookwell Gazette	12	92	1	8	13	0	13
Goulburn Post	43	81	10	19	53	10	63
The Rural Fringe	10	100	0	0	10	7	17
Yass Valley Times	72	91	7	9	79	19	98
<b>Total</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>318</b>

Table 7: Stories by whether they are public interest journalism, other journalism, or excluded from the sample.

Table 7 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 all outlets 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 Canberra	100	59	55	71	39	36	59	42	39	59	51	48
ABC Central West NSW	21	11	55	11	7	35	8	7	35	6	6	30
Crookwell Gazette	11	8	62	0	0	0	10	7	54	3	3	23
Goulburn Post	41	20	38	1	1	2	42	24	45	8	7	13
The Rural Fringe	2	2	20	0	0	0	18	10	100	0	0	0
Yass Valley Times	19	14	18	2	1	1	106	64	81	13	13	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>28</b>

Table 8: Breakdown of public interest journalism.

Stories can be allocated to up to four subjects each. As such, Table 8 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 Rural Fringe and Yass Valley Times, where 'Community' stories were overwhelmingly the largest focus. 'Community' was also the largest focus at Goulburn Post, though this outlet published almost as many 'Government' stories.

'Community' stories sampled across the month were found to mostly be about community organisations (37 stories), community individuals (36), and community events (34). Local and community sport was also a focus (31), as was community health (21).

ABC Canberra provided coverage of non-profit organisations with a community health focus, such as dementia support organisations Community Home Australia, Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation, and endometriosis support group QENDO. Nearly all community health stories in this sample were published by ABC Canberra (17 of 21). Other stories featured community organisations such as the St Vincent de Paul Society and Canberra Men's Choir.

The Rural Fringe provided updates from community organisations and clubs such as Men's Shed, Hall Polocrosse Club, and Hall and Districts Axemen's Club. Yass Valley Times also focused on local and community sport, reporting on grand finals happening this month, as well as other organisations, such as the Australian Red Cross celebrating its 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Yass Valley Times focused heavily on individuals, frequently providing short biographies of people within the Yass community. In the Goulburn Post, examples of community individual stories included an article about an Olympic equestrian's local connections, and another recalling the service of a councillor of 16 years who was not contesting the 2024 local government election in Goulburn Mulwaree council. ABC Canberra also provided coverage of community individuals who had gained wider success in business or the arts, for example, the founders of a Canberra-based beehive business, an obituary for a Canberra property developer and philanthropist, and a director for Melbourne Theatre Company.

Articles about community events were mostly published by two outlets: Goulburn Post and Yass Valley Times. Community events featured included school events such as a trivia night and tree planting day, arts and culture events such as an Irish and Celtic Music Festival in Yass, and events commemorating the community's history such as Vietnam Veteran's Day and a State Emergency Services unit's 10-year anniversary.

'Government' was the second biggest focus overall, led by the two ABC newsrooms. This coverage focussed mostly on local government (29), closely followed by federal government (27), and lastly state government (17). These results may be affected by the New South Wales local government elections held in September 2024. In particular, Goulburn Post and Yass Valley Times provided local government coverage in the lead up to the election.

Goulburn Post focused more on local government relative to other levels of government, while providing some coverage of state and federal government. This outlet provided the highest volume of election coverage out of the outlets sampled, largely in the form of profiles of the current mayor and other councillors not contesting the upcoming election, profiles of candidates, and election information for both Goulburn Mulwaree council and Upper Lachlan Shire council.

Yass Valley Times also published a couple of articles on the NSW local council elections by providing profiles of current councillors and candidates for Yass Valley council. Local government was the only level of government reported on by this outlet. Other local government stories included council actions around community facilities such as a hydrotherapy pool and public toilets.

ABC Central West NSW provided a couple of stories on each level of government, whereas ABC Canberra was heavily focused on state and federal government levels. Almost all federal government coverage came from this outlet (21 of 27), as did nearly all state government stories (11 of 17). Federal government stories from the public broadcaster included a Supreme Court defamation case involving a Western Australian Senator, two separate industrial actions by the Australian Federal Police and construction workers, and general federal politics. In terms of state government reporting, ABC mostly focused on the ACT government.

Rural Fringe only published two 'Government' stories, which were also about community organisations and community history. One article reported on a new brochure launched by the ACT Minister for Heritage

highlighting locations of heritage while the other was about a project funded by an ACT government program to improve the natural environment around Hall.

‘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 focused equally on education and police (26 stories each), followed by health (19), and other services (seven). Other services included State Emergency Services, immigration detention, and corrective services.

ABC Canberra published the majority of police stories (20 of 27), largely linked to coverage of court cases. One of two police stories published by Yass Valley Times honoured a local retiring Senior Constable.

Education stories were mostly published by ABC Canberra (12), Yass Valley Times (eight), and Goulburn Post (five). ABC Canberra mostly covered tertiary education institutions, such as Australian National University (ANU), reporting on its announcement that it plans to divest from certain weapons companies, and a research trial into malaria treatment. On the other hand, Yass Valley Times mostly covered local primary schools, reporting on a primary celebrating its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary, community events and student awards.

Health services were mostly covered by ABC Canberra. This outlet featured stories about a Canberra sexual health clinic and findings of Canberra’s drug testing service two years on. Stories reporting on health services published by ABC Central West NSW were syndicated, while Goulburn Post reported on nurses protesting for a pay rise.

‘Courts and crime’ coverage was largely provided by the ABC newsrooms, with all other outlets publishing little to no ‘Courts and crime’ articles. ABC Canberra provided coverage of court cases such as a Supreme Court defamation case involving a Western Australian Senator, an ACT Supreme Court sentencing involving a former national rock-climbing coach charged with sexual assault, and another ACT Supreme Court hearing about an alleged murder at the mental health unit of Canberra Hospital.

Yass Valley Times also syndicated an article about a murder trial in the Supreme Court.

Overall, violent crimes received more coverage (31), than non-violent crimes (nine). Court cases in superior courts received the most coverage (28), with less coverage in lower (seven) and intermediate courts (two). Five stories were about cases in other courts, such as the ACT Industrial Court and the NSW Court of Appeal.

### 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 Canberra	98	92	0	0	3	3	20	19
ABC Central West NSW	19	95	1	5	2	10	1	5
Crookwell Gazette	13	100	0	0	1	8	0	0
Goulburn Post	48	91	0	0	5	9	4	8
The Rural Fringe	10	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yass Valley Times	68	86	2	3	1	1	5	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>11</b>

Table 9: Scale of coverage of reported stories.



Stories concerning local issues were the highest overall focus by far at all outlets. Overall, 91 per cent of stories were local in scale, followed by 11 per cent national, four per cent state and only one per cent regional.

All outlets demonstrated a strong focus for local-scale stories. While local-scale stories were also a strong focus at ABC Canberra (92 per cent), this outlet also provided coverage of national-scale stories (19 per cent). Each outlet except The Rural Fringe published a handful of state-scale stories.

Only a few regional-scale stories were coded over the month; one from ABC Central West NSW, a syndicated article from originally reported by ABC New England, and the other two from Yass Valley Times.

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 Canberra		ABC CW		CG		Goulburn Post		Rural Fringe		YVT	
	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %	n	All %
Goulburn Mulwaree	1	1	0	0	6	46	45	85	0	0	0	0
Upper Lachlan	0	0	0	0	8	62	1	2	0	0	2	3
Yass Valley	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	53	67

Table 10: Localism of coverage of reported stories.

Goulburn Post demonstrated strong localism for its coverage area with 85 per cent of its stories local to Goulburn. Similarly, Yass Valley Times (YVT) demonstrated strong localism for its coverage area with 67 per cent of its stories local to Yass Valley.

The public broadcaster and The Rural Fringe provided very little to no coverage of the local government areas in the sample. ABC Canberra published one story local to Goulburn, however, ABC Central West NSW (ABC CW in Table 10) and The Rural Fringe did not publish any stories local to the sampled LGAs. Instead, ABC Canberra provided local coverage of Canberra, while The Rural Fringe demonstrated strong localism for the district of Hall, both located within the Australian Capital Territory. ABC Central West NSW provided coverage to towns across the Central West NSW region, such as Bathurst, Orange, Mid-Western Regional Council, and Cabonne Shire, as well as other NSW regional towns such as Wagga Wagga.

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 if content has originated somewhere else. This is particularly true for internally syndicated content, where a company may not disclose the fact of republishing.

The ABC declares the origin of content it publishes, making it very easy to identify whether a story has been internally syndicated. 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 Canberra	18	17	0	0	0	0	89	83
ABC Central West NSW	11	55	0	0	0	0	9	45
Crookwell Gazette	13	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Goulburn Post	4	8	0	0	0	0	49	93
The Rural Fringe	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	100
Yass Valley Times	0	0	0	0	6	2	73	92
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>82</b>

Table 11: Syndication of reported stories.

Internal syndication from their wider networks was found at three outlets: both ABC newsrooms and Goulburn Post. Of reported stories published to ABC Canberra and ABC Central West NSW websites, 18 per cent and 11 per cent respectively, were internally syndicated from other ABC newsrooms. ABC Canberra shared stories from ABC Stateline, ABC Entertainment, ABC Newcastle and ABC 7:30, among others. ABC Central West NSW also shared stories from nearby ABC Riverina, as well as ABC Rural. Goulburn Post internally syndicated from the wider ACM network.

Yass Valley Times syndicated a handful of stories from other outlets, such as The Guardian Australia and South Eastern Livestock Exchange.

No syndication was found at The Rural Fringe, with 100 per cent of output from these outlets being original content.

No syndication from wire services 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 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 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.

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# [Public Interest Journalism Initiative]

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