

# Australian Newsroom Mapping Project Report : November 2021

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[Public  
Interest  
Journalism  
Initiative]

## About this project

The Public Interest Journalism Initiative (PIJI) tracks indicators of changes to news production and availability through the [Australian Newsroom Mapping Project](#) (ANMP). The project launched on 1 April 2020 and tracks changes from 1 January 2019, with new data releases each month.

The map captures five *change types*, four of which can have either negative (contraction) or positive (expansion) attributes. The change types are ordered according to the seriousness of their impact on production or availability. Further detail is provided in section three.

Due to limited resources and the significant methodological difficulty in ensuring rigour, the project does not record any information about journalism job gains and losses. More explanation of the process and some guidance for interpreting the data can be found at the end of this report.

We do not presume that this is a complete database, but we do believe that this is the most comprehensive record of its kind. We regularly find changes that were missed or unreported at the time, which then are added as backdated entries.

The data that informs the November 2021 report can be accessed [here](#).

This project benefits from contributions by the public and industry. To submit or correct data, or to discuss this report, please email: [gary.dickson@piji.com.au](mailto:gary.dickson@piji.com.au).

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## Suggested citations

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## 1. November 2021 data

### 1.1 New records in the database

32 new records were added to the database in November, the majority of them expansions and backdated to previous months.

CHANGE TYPE	RECORD	#
New masthead, station or website	Adelaide East Herald, Tusmore, SA	14
	The Bowral News, Bowral, NSW	
	Brunswick Voice, Brunswick, Vic	
	Community Leader, Manly, NSW	
	Esperance Weekender, Esperance, WA	
	Forster Fortnightly, Forster, NSW	
	Hawkesbury Post, Richmond, NSW	
	Inner City News, Carlton, Vic	
	Maryborough Sun, Maryborough, QLD	
	Narromine Star, Narromine, NSW	
	North West City News, North Melbourne, Vic	
	Nyngan Weekly, Nyngan, NSW	
	South Gippsland Voices, Mirboo North, Vic	
	Yarrabilba Bulletin, Yarrabilba, QLD	
New Print Edition	The Local Paper (Casey-Cardinia Edition), Cranbourne, Vic	13
	The Local Paper (Diamond Valley News Edition), Eltham, Vic	
	The Local Paper (Heidelberg Edition), Heidelberg, Vic	
	The Local Paper (Knox-Sherbrooke Edition), Knoxfield, Vic	
	The Local Paper (Lilydale and Yarra Valley Edition), Mooroolbark, Vic	
	The Local Paper (Manningham Edition), Doncaster, Vic	
	The Local Paper (Mitchell Shire Edition), Broadford, Vic	
	The Local Paper (Northcote Budget Edition), Northcote, Vic	
	The Local Paper (Peninsula-Frankston-Greater Dandenong Edition), Rosebud, Vic	
	The Local Paper (Preston Post-Reservoir Times Edition), Preston, Vic	

	The Local Paper (Southern Cross Weekly Edition), Melbourne, Vic	
	The Local Paper (Whittlesea Post Edition), South Morang, Vic	
	New Norfolk and Derwent Valley News, New Norfolk, Tas	
Merger	The Village Voice, Lithgow, NSW	2
	Bathurst City Life, Bathurst, NSW	
Masthead or station closure	Inner West Times, Petersham, NSW	3
	Mackay Local News, Mackay, QLD	
	Tatura Guardian, Tatura, Vic	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>32</b>

**Table 1:** New records according to the change type, November 2021.

The very large number of new records this month, most of them expansions, is due to an extension of the Australian Newsroom Mapping Project which we expect to launch in December 2021. *Building the Full Picture: Local news producers* is a database and visualisation which seeks to capture all local news outlets producing written core news content for print and online. This project has required extensive, systematic data gathering, which has revealed a very large number of new mastheads launched over the period of this project which we had previously not identified.

Of the changes added to the database this month, only one occurred in November 2021. The Narromine Star launched early in the month following the closure of the Narromine News by Australian Community Media in April 2020.

The new mastheads reported this month launched on the following timeline:

Dec 2019 Yarrabilba Bulletin  
 May 2020 South Gippsland Voices  
 Aug 2020 Forster Fortnightly; Maryborough Sun  
 Sep 2020 Hawkesbury Post  
 Oct 2020 Adelaide East Herald; Nyngan Weekly  
 Dec 2020 Community Leader  
 Jan 2021 The Bowral News  
 Feb 2021 Brunswick Voice; Inner City News; North West City News  
 Jun 2021 Esperance Weekender  
 Nov 2021 Narromine Star

Most of these are new, independent outlets, though a few were launched by existing media companies.

The Nyngan Weekly was launched by the publisher of the Gilgandra Weekly.<sup>1</sup>

*Inner City News* and *North West City News* are new print publications by Hyperlocal News, a Melbourne-based news outlet with existing papers in the CBD, Southbank and Docklands.<sup>2</sup> Since 2019 the company has also had a business name registered for Fishermans Bend News, though that publication has not launched.<sup>3</sup>

The Bowral News is a digital hyperlocal expansion by News Corp into the Southern Highlands, continuing a program of expansion by the company into regional areas.<sup>4</sup>

*The Local Paper* is based in Murrindindi Shire in northern Melbourne. Its early expansion was among the first entries into the project database, however, it has expanded considerably in the period since. New editions were launched at the following times:

Feb 2020	Mitchell Shire
Jul 2020	Lilydale and Yarra Valley
Nov 2020	Diamond Valley; The Heidelberg; Knox-Sherbooke; Southern Cross; Peninsula
Mar 2021	Manningham; Northcote Budget; Preston Post-Reservoir Times; Whittlesea
Apr 2021	Casey-Cardinia

These changes have been classified as ‘New print edition’ rather than ‘New masthead, station or website’ as they are primarily small service increases into adjacent markets and do not appear to be significant expansions in news production.

Separately, the New Norfolk and Derwent Valley News (New Norfolk, Tas) launched a monthly print edition in July 2020. It has been published online since 2008.

A few contractions were identified this month, all of which have been backdated.

The Village Voice (Lismore NSW) and Bathurst City Life (Bathurst NSW) merged in May 2021 to form a new publication, the Central West Village Voice. The new publication also has a reduced print schedule, with one edition per fortnight.<sup>5</sup>

Three publications were identified as having closed.

The *Tatura Guardian* served the small town near Shepparton since 1880. It was purchased by McPherson Media Group in 1966.<sup>6</sup> In 2019 the publication was closed, with coverage of the town instead shifting to the nearby *Shepparton News*.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Business Register 2021. Current details for ABN 43 000 160 225. <<https://abr.business.gov.au/ABN/View?abn=43000160225>>

<sup>2</sup> Hyperlocal News 2021. <<https://hyperlocalnews.com.au/>>

<sup>3</sup> Australian Business Register 2021. Current details for ABN 57 623 558 725. <<https://abr.business.gov.au/ABN/View?abn=57623558725>>

<sup>4</sup> Daily Telegraph. 2021. The Bowral News: NewsLocal launches its hyperlocal digital platform in the Southern Highlands. 18 January. *Daily Telegraph*. <<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/bowral/the-bowral-news-newslocal-launches-its-hyperlocal-digital-platform-in-the-southern-highlands/news-story/9751bb3fd16dc3b9fabbcc3847b14973>>

<sup>5</sup> Evans R. 2021. Always look on the bright side: an open letter from Rich Evans. 27 May. *Village Voice*. <[https://issuu.com/villagevoice.net.au/docs/village20210528\\_web](https://issuu.com/villagevoice.net.au/docs/village20210528_web)>

The *Inner West Times* was a Torch Publishing Company outlet that covered the Inner West Council in Sydney. It was closed in October 2020, with the owner blaming the ongoing impact of COVID-19.<sup>8</sup>

Mackay Local News was a news outlet founded in February 2021. It opened after the digitisation of the Daily Mercury by News Corp. The outlet closed in September 2021, with the owner describing a ‘media bloodbath’ in the town. As of 30 November 2021, the outlet’s website has been removed and a new landing page lists Central Queensland Media Pty Ltd, publisher of CQ Today and Gladstone Today, as the owner.<sup>9</sup> This appears to be confirmed by ABR records similarly suggest that the business name ‘Mackay Local News Today’ has been owned by Central Queensland Media since 4 November 2021.<sup>10</sup>

## 1.2 Changed records in the database

The following records which already existed in the database were changed due to new observations or information.

RECORD	NEW CHANGE TYPE	PREVIOUS CHANGE TYPE	CHANGE DATE	#
Bellarine and Surf Coast Echo, Ocean Grove, Vic	Masthead or station closure	End of print edition	07/04/2021	1
Murray Pioneer	Removed	Merger	N/A	1
Bendigo Advertiser	Removed	Merger	N/A	1
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>3</b>

*Table 2: Changed records, November 2021.*

Three changes were made in the database in November 2021, all to correct errors.

The *Bellarine and Surf Coast Echo* was a News Corp paper serving the Greater Geelong City and Surf Coast Shire local government areas in Victoria. It was closed in early April 2020 and was incorrectly listed as an ‘End of print edition’.

Two outlets, the *Murray Pioneer* and *Bendigo Advertiser* were incorrectly listed as ‘Mergers’. Each had other publications (*River News* and *Loxton News*; *Bendigo Weekly*, respectively) merge into them, but these outlets continued to publish without change and should not have been included. Both entries have been removed from the database.

<sup>6</sup> McPherson Media Group 2021. Tatura Guardian. <<https://www.mmg.com.au/portfolio/regional-publications/tatura-guardian/>>

<sup>7</sup> Tatura Guardian 2019. Times, they are changing. 18 June. *Tatura Guardian*. <<https://taturaguardian.pressreader.com/the-tatura-guardian>>

<sup>8</sup> Local News Plus 2021. Inner West Times. <<https://www.localnewsplus.com.au/innerwest/>>

<sup>9</sup> Mackay Local News 2021. <<https://mackaylocalnews.com.au/>>

<sup>10</sup> Australian Business Register 2021. Current details for ABN 56 642 029 070. <<https://abr.business.gov.au/ABN/View?abn=56642029070>>

## 2. Using this project data

It is worth discussing some caveats around this project to avoid misinterpretation of this data.

The first caveat is to acknowledge that the 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 the changes that have occurred. It is actively maintained by PIJI and contributions are received from news organisations, from civil society and academia, and from the public. Even then, we do not have visibility into all news production and availability around Australia, and we do not presume to have a complete log of all changes that have occurred over the past two years.

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 newspaper 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 change types that we collect, listed in terms of the hierarchy, are:

1. **Masthead or station closure / opening;** meaning an entire news outlet closing or opening. In most cases this means a publication within a larger organisation, but rarely it can mean a whole news company.
2. **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).
3. **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 reductions in locally-relevant, original content, but it can also include the launch of a new access point for existing content (such as a new radio bulletin produced in partnership with the local newspaper, as in Harvey WA). It can include changes to print publication frequency, but does not include print distribution area changes.

4. **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.
5. **Merger**, 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.

The data also flattens the complexity of what is being 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 would be presented as 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 make this assessment for every change that occurs.

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

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.

Finally, we also note that this project does not identify news deserts. Research projects seeking to identify news deserts track news availability and/or production and look for locations where there is none. The ANMP tracks changes, meaning that a news outlet that has been stable across 2019-21 or a place where there has been no production for longer than that timeframe is invisible to this project.

Despite these caveats we do believe that the Australian Newsroom Mapping Project offers information that, in combination with other research, can provide insight into the changing nature of journalism production and availability in Australia.



## About the Public Interest Journalism Initiative

The Public Interest Journalism Initiative (PIJI) is a specialist think tank researching how Australia can secure the future of public interest journalism. Established in 2018, PIJI's work informs practical policy solutions and public conversation on the importance of an effective, pluralistic news media of all sizes.

As a registered charity (ACN 630 740 153), PIJI is governed by a [Board of independent directors](#) and guided by an [Expert Research Panel](#) and [Policy Working Group](#). PIJI is a limited shelf-life initiative, due to cease operation in June 2023 in line with achieving its intended impact.

# [Public Interest Journalism Initiative]


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