

# Australian Newsroom Mapping Project Report March 2022

Quarterly Report:  
Metropolitan and regional areas

[Public  
Interest  
Journalism  
Initiative]

## Table of Contents

<b>1.</b>	<b><u>ABOUT THIS PROJECT</u></b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b><u>MONTHLY REPORT (MARCH 2022)</u></b>	<b>3</b>
2.1	OUTLET ADDITIONS	3
2.2	DATA CHANGES	7
<b>3.</b>	<b><u>QUARTERLY REPORT: NATIONAL TRENDS</u></b>	<b>10</b>
3.1	ACTIVE LOCAL NEWS PRODUCERS	10
3.2	LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS WITHOUT LOCAL PRINT OR DIGITAL NEWS PRODUCERS	12
3.3	NATIONAL CHANGES IN NEWS PRODUCTION	13
<b>4.</b>	<b><u>QUARTERLY REPORT: STATES AND TERRITORIES</u></b>	<b>17</b>
4.1	AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY	18
4.2	NEW SOUTH WALES	19
4.3	NORTHERN TERRITORY	20
4.4	QUEENSLAND	21
4.5	SOUTH AUSTRALIA	22
4.6	TASMANIA	23
4.7	VICTORIA	24
4.8	WESTERN AUSTRALIA	25
<b>5.</b>	<b><u>METROPOLITAN AND REGIONAL AREAS</u></b>	<b>26</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b><u>USING THIS PROJECT DATA</u></b>	<b>28</b>
	<b><u>ABOUT THE PUBLIC INTEREST JOURNALISM INITIATIVE</u></b>	<b>30</b>

## 1. About this project

The [Australian Newsroom Mapping Project](#) (ANMP) provides a birds-eye view of the health of public interest journalism in Australia. It compiles and analyses data on news production and availability at local, state and national levels.

ANMP 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 a complete database, but we do believe that this is the most comprehensive record of its kind. Data is collected and updated continuously, beginning from January 2019, with new data released each month. We regularly find changes that were missed or unreported at the time, which then are added as backdated entries.

The ANMP is a multi-stage project which will continue to roll out new data and analytical tools across 2022, such as the upcoming Australian News Index and addition of broadcast, national news and corporate data. To date, PIJI has released the following:

- [Tracking changes in news production](#) (April 2020)
- [Local news publishers](#) (December 2021)
- Monthly reports (beginning February 2021, which capture updates to the data and provide quarterly analysis).

This March 2022 report contains both monthly and quarterly results. The data that informs this 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).

Gary Dickson  
31 March 2022

### 1.1 Suggested citations

This report: Dickson G. 2022. *Australian Newsroom Mapping Project Report: March 2022*. Melbourne: Public Interest Journalism Initiative. <<https://piji.com.au/research-and-inquiries/our-research/anmp/anmp-data/>>

Project: Dickson G. 2020. Australian Newsroom Mapping Project. Melbourne: Public Interest Journalism Initiative. <<https://piji.com.au/research-and-inquiries/our-research/anmp/>>

### 1.2 License

The Australian Newsroom Mapping Project, these reports and the associated data are licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 \(CC BY-NC-SA\) International License](#).

## 2. Monthly report (March 2022)

As of 31 March 2022, the database contains 892 print and digital records of community, local or metropolitan scale. Of these, 738 are active news outlets.

### 2.1 Outlet additions

98 outlets were added to the database this month.

PIJI has added a new dataset this month: community newspapers, which had largely been left out of the initial data releases in December 2021 and February 2022. Nearly two thirds of the new entries (63 of 98) are community newspapers, with the others being print and digital local news producers. The full list of outlets added is contained within Table 1.1

Though these outlets are new to the database, none of them have launched in the past month. A very small number of outlets were identified as having either opened or closed within the project's survey period (from 1 January 2019). These are identified below and discussed in the following section (Table 2.1 *Data changes*).

Table 1.1: Data changes, 31 March 2022.

New masthead, station or website		Masthead, station or website closure		
#	OUTLET	LOCATION	SCALE	FORMAT
1	Banksia Bulletin	Quairading, WA	Community	Print
2	Barraba Gazette	Barraba, NSW	Community	Print
3	The Bleat	Darkan, WA	Community	Print
4	Boyup Brook Gazette	Boyup Brook, WA	Community	Print
5	Brookton Telegraph	Brookton, WA	Community	Print
6	Bruny News	Bruny Island, Tas	Community	Print
7	Burra Flyer	Korumburra, Vic	Community	Print
8	Burwood Bulletin	Burwood, Vic	Community	Print
9	Captains Flat Telegraph	Captains Flat, NSW	Community	Print
10	Carisbrook Mercury	Carisbrook, Vic	Community	Print
11	The Central Coast Voice	Sheffield, Tas	Community	Print
12	Childers Chitchat	Childers, QLD	Community	Print
13	The Core	Harcourt, Vic	Community	Digital
14	Creswick District News	Creswick, Vic	Community	Print
15	Crosswords	Southern Cross, WA	Community	Print

#	OUTLET	LOCATION	SCALE	FORMAT
16	Dargo Bush Bulletin	Dargo, Vic	Community	Print
17	Elpho Info	Elphinstone, Vic	Community	Print
18	Emerald Messenger	Emerald, Vic	Community	Print
19	Flowerdale Flyer	Flowerdale, Vic	Community	Print
20	Galston Glenorie & Hills Rural News	Galston, NSW	Community	Print
21	Garfield Spectator	Garfield, Vic	Community	Print
22	Gate Post	Newdegate, WA	Community	Print
23	Glenlyon District News	Glenlyon, Vic	Community	Print
24	Greenbushes-Balingup Newsletter	Greenbushes, WA	Community	Digital
25	Heyfield News	Heyfield, Vic	Community	Print
26	Hobart Observer	Hobart, Tas	Community	Print
27	Kyneton Connect	Kyneton, Vic	Community	Print
28	Lakes Link News	Lake Grace, WA	Community	Print
29	Lancefield Mercury	Lancefield, Vic	Community	Print
30	Landsborough and District News	Landsborough, Vic	Community	Digital
31	Leigh News	Inverleigh, Vic	Community	Print
32	Loch Sport Link	Loch Sport, Vic	Community	Print
33	Magnetic Community News	Magnetic Island, QLD	Community	Digital
34	Mary Valley Voice	Kenilworth, QLD	Community	Print
35	Mclvor Times	Heathcote, Vic	Community	Print
36	Meredith and District News	Meredith, Vic	Community	Print
37	Mission Beach News	Mission Beach, QLD	Community	Digital
38	Morawa Scene	Morawa, WA	Community	Print
39	Norseman Today	Norseman, WA	Community	Print
40	Northerly Aspects	Cloverdale, Vic	Community	Print
41	Northern Valley News	Chittering, WA	Community	Print
40	Pingelly Times	Pingelly, WA	Community	Print
43	Port Albert Tattler	Port Albert, Vic	Community	Print
44	Preston Press	Donnybrook, WA	Community	Print
45	Pyramid Hill	Pyramid Hill, Vic	Community	Print
46	Romsey Rag	Romsey, Vic	Community	Print

#	OUTLET	LOCATION	SCALE	FORMAT
47	Rowville-Lysterfield Community News	Rowville, Vic	Community	Print
48	Stratford Town Crier	Stratford, Vic	Community	Print
49	Sussex Inletter	Sussex Inlet, NSW	Community	Print
50	Tableland Talk	Strathbogie, Vic	Community	Print
51	Taradale Talk	Taradale, Vic	Community	Print
52	Tatura Bulletin	Tatura, Vic	Community	Print
53	Thorpdale Community News	Thorpdale, Vic	Community	Print
54	Topics	Tambellup, WA	Community	Print
55	Walpole Weekly	Walpole, WA	Community	Print
56	Wandering Echo	Wandering, WA	Community	Print
57	The Welcome Record	Dunolly, Vic	Community	Print
58	The Western Echo	The Gap, QLD	Community	Print
59	Wilcannia News	Wilcannia, NSW	Community	Print
60	The Williams	Williams, WA	Community	Print
61	The Windmill	Corrigin, WA	Community	Print
62	Woody Yaloak Herald	Haddon, Vic	Community	Print
63	Wonga-Balli Boomer	Wongan Hills, WA	Community	Print
64	Blue Mountains Phoenix	Katoomba, NSW	Local	Print
65	The Bridge	Yarram, Vic	Local	Print
66	Churchill and District News	Churchill, Vic	Local	Print
67	Cobar Weekly	Cobar, NSW	Local	Print
68	Coolah District Diary	Coolah, NSW	Local	Print
69	Cowra Phoenix	Cowra, NSW	Local	Print
70	Craytales	Jurien Bay, WA	Local	Print
71	Dimboola Courier	Dimboola, Vic	Local	Digital
72	The District Bulletin	Bungendore, NSW	Local	Digital
73	The District Reporter	Camden, NSW	Local	Print
74	Dunedoo District Diary	Dunedoo, NSW	Local	Print
75	East Gippsland News	Bairnsdale, Vic	Local	Print
76	Forbes Phoenix	Forbes, NSW	Local	Print
77	Fremantle Shipping News	Fremantle, WA	Local	Print

#	OUTLET	LOCATION	SCALE	FORMAT
78	Glenorchy Gazette	Glenorchy, Tas	Local	Print
79	Goulburn Phoenix	Goulburn, NSW	Local	Print
80	Griffith Phoenix	Griffith, NSW	Local	Print
81	Hawkesbury Phoenix	Richmond, NSW	Local	Print
82	Hillston-Ivanhoe Spectator	Hillston, NSW	Local	Print
83	Hilltops Phoenix	Young, NSW	Local	Print
84	The Lake News	Forest Lake, QLD	Local	Print
85	Merriwa District Diary	Merriwa, NSW	Local	Print
86	Mildura Independent	Mildura, Vic	Local	Digital
87	Mountain Monthly	Kinglake, Vic	Local	Print
88	Mudgee Phoenix	Mudgee, NSW	Local	Print
89	Mulga Mail	Geraldton, WA	Local	Print
90	Parkes Phoenix	Parkes, NSW	Local	Print
91	Pittwater Life	Manly, NSW	Local	Print
92	scone.com.au	Scone, NSW	Local	Digital
93	Shepparton Adviser	Shepparton, Vic	Local	Print
94	singleton.net.au	Singleton, NSW	Local	Digital
95	Torres News	Thursday Island, QLD	Local	Print
96	Traf News	Trafalgar, Vic	Local	Print
97	Valley and East Coast Voice	St Marys, Tas	Local	Print
98	Yass Phoenix	Yass, NSW	Local	Print

Table 2.1: Data changes, 31 March 2022.

CHANGE TYPE	RECORD	#
New masthead, station or website	Blue Mountains Phoenix, Katoomba, NSW	9
	The Bridge, Yarram, Vic	
	Cowra Phoenix, Cowra, NSW	
	Hawkesbury Phoenix, Richmond, NSW	
	Mudgee Phoenix, Mudgee, NSW	
	The Pennant, Penola, SA	
	South Eastern Times, Millicent, SA	
	Torres News, Thursday Island, QLD	
	Yass Phoenix, Yass, NSW	
Newsroom opened	ABC News, Batemans Bay, NSW	10
	ABC News, Carnarvon, WA	
	ABC News, Charleville, QLD	
	ABC News, Gladstone, QLD	
	ABC News, Hervey Bay, QLD	
	ABC News, Northam, WA	
	ABC News, Swan Hill, Vic	
	ABC News, Victor Harbor, SA	
	ABC News, Warragul, Vic	
	ABC News, Whyalla, SA	
Masthead or station closure	Barraba Gazette, Barraba, NSW	8
	Captains Flat Telegraph, Captains Flat, NSW	
	East Gippsland News, Bairnsdale, Vic	
	The Free Press, Kyneton, Vic	
	Goulburn Phoenix, Goulburn, NSW	
	Mildura Independent, Mildura, Vic	
	Mission Beach News, Mission Beach, QLD	
	singleton.net.au, Singleton, NSW	
TOTAL	27	



27 changes were recorded in the database in March: nine new publications, ten newsrooms opened, and eight publications that have closed over the project's survey period (see *Table 2.1: Data changes*).

Five of the new titles relate to the Phoenix brands of newspapers in outer metropolitan Sydney / regional New South Wales. Two newspaper companies are operating these titles: Word & Pixel Perfection Pty Ltd (publisher of the *Blue Mountains Phoenix*, *Cowra Phoenix* and *Mudgee Phoenix*, as well as older titles the *Canowindra Phoenix*, *Forbes Phoenix* and *Parkes Phoenix*); and Roundbox Media Pty Ltd (publisher of the *Goulburn Phoenix*, *Griffith Phoenix*, *Hawkesbury Phoenix*, *Yass Phoenix* and *Hilltops Phoenix*).

ASIC records, unsurprisingly, suggest a relationship between these two companies: current Word and Pixel Perfection director Joshua Matic is a previous director and secretary of Roundbox Media, while current Roundbox Media director Debra Clarke is a shareholder of Word and Pixel Perfection.

A February 2021 article provides further detail: the *Canowindra Phoenix* was the group's first paper; Matic took over Word and Pixel Perfection in October 2019 and launched the *Cowra*, *Blue Mountains* and *Mudgee* papers in early 2021.<sup>1</sup>

Of Roundbox Media's papers, the *Yass*, *Goulburn* and *Hawkesbury Phoenix* launched in November 2020. The *Goulburn* paper also appears to have closed: at the time of this report, the most recent article on its website is from September 2021.<sup>2</sup>

The remaining new papers added in March have a relationship to other outlets.

The *Torres News* (Thursday Island, QLD) has been reported on previously. Originally a standalone paper, it was merged with sister the *Cape York News* to form the *Cape and Torres News* in October 2019.<sup>3</sup> This merged paper was then closed in May 2021. In March we were informed that a demerged *Torres News* was purchased by the Torres Strait Islander Media Association and relaunched back in September 2021.<sup>4</sup> That relaunched paper has been added back into the database.

March also saw the return of two South Australian papers. Back in August 2020 *The Border Watch* (Mount Gambier), *The Pennant* (Penola) and *South Eastern Times* (Millicent) were closed by owner The Border Watch Newsgroup.<sup>5</sup> The *Border Watch* was quickly purchased by TBW Today, and was relaunched in October 2020 as part of the Today brand of

---

<sup>1</sup> Editor 2021. Phoenix newspapers expands to Cowra. *Canowindra Phoenix*. 18 February.

<<https://www.canowindraphoenix.com.au/phoenix-newspapers-expands-to-cowra/>>

<sup>2</sup> Editor 2021. Lockdown update for Goulburn. *Goulburn Phoenix*. 13 September.

<<https://www.goulburnphoenix.com.au/lockdown-update-for-goulburn/>>

<sup>3</sup> Dickson G 2021. Australian Newsroom Mapping Project: June 2021.

<<https://piji.com.au/research-and-inquiries/our-research/anmp/anmp-data/>>

<sup>4</sup> Torres News 2021. The Torres News is back! Torres News. 23 September.

<<https://www.facebook.com/TSIMAtorresnews/posts/4828780850466292>>

<sup>5</sup> Blackiston H 2020. 38 redundancies as Mount Gambier's local newspaper, The Border Watch, closes after 159 years. Mumbrella. 20 August.

<<https://mumbrella.com.au/38-redundancies-as-mount-gambiers-local-newspaper-the-border-watch-closes-after-159-years-639389>>

newspapers which has expanded significantly in Queensland over the past few years.<sup>6</sup> In March the same company announced that it would return *The Pennant* and the *South Eastern Times* to print. The first issues of the relaunched papers were released on 31 March.

Finally among new titles, *The Bridge* (Yarram, Vic) has been added to the database. It was launched by *Yarram Standard* journalist Deb Lucas after the closure of the *Standard* in March 2020.<sup>7</sup>

March also saw a large number of newsrooms opened by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. The public broadcaster announced in early March that it hired 55 new regional journalists thanks to funding from the digital platforms associated with the News Media Bargaining Code.<sup>8</sup> Some of these positions have gone to existing newsrooms in Burnie (Tas), Dubbo (NSW), Esperance (WA), Horsham (Vic), Karratha (WA), Katherine (NT), Longreach (QLD), Toowoomba (QLD) and Wagga Wagga (NSW). PIJI does not record resource changes in existing newsrooms due to the difficulty of maintaining accurate data about staffing levels; as such, these changes are not represented in the data.

The ABC also announced the opening of new bureaux in Batemans Bay (NSW), Carnarvon (WA), Charleville (QLD), Gladstone (QLD), Hervey Bay (QLD), Northam (WA), Swan Hill (Vic), Victor Harbor (SA), Warragul (Vic) and Whyalla (SA), which are captured in the database as 'newsrooms opened'.

Most of the closures recorded in March are backdated. About half are community newspapers that closed over the past two years and were identified during the month's work adding that data: the *Barraba Gazette* (Barraba, NSW), *Captains Flat Telegraph* (Captains Flat, NSW), *Mildura Independent* (Mildura, Vic), *Mission Beach News* (Mission Beach, QLD) and *singleton.net.au* (Singleton, NSW) all fall into this category.

Separately, the *Free Press* (Kyneton, Vic) dropped out of publisher North Central Review's list of titles in December 2021 and has not been updated since the end of last year<sup>9</sup>, and *East Gippsland News* publisher Yeates Media confirmed to PIJI that the newspaper closed in August 2021, though regional coverage continues through the *Bairnsdale Advertiser*.

---

<sup>6</sup> Morello S 2020. South Australia's The Border Watch makes a comeback after shutting down during the pandemic. ABC South East SA. 23 September.

<<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-09-23/south-australia-border-watch-newspaper-reborn/12693452>>

<sup>7</sup> Lucas D nd. About. The Bridge. <<https://www.thebridgelocalnews.com.au/about>>

<sup>8</sup> ABC 2022. Australia benefits from major expansion of regional and rural coverage. ABC. 10 March.

<<https://about.abc.net.au/press-releases/australia-benefits-from-major-expansion-of-regional-and-rural-coverage/>>

<sup>9</sup> The Free Press. <<https://ncreview.com.au/freepress>>

### 3. Quarterly report: National trends

Table 3.1: Count of active local news producers by scale and platform, 31 March 2022.

	COMMUNITY	LOCAL	METROPOLITAN	TOTAL
PRINT	58	492	8	558
DIGITAL	5	166	9	180
TOTAL	63	658	17	738

Table 3.1 shows the total number of active community, local and metropolitan news producers in PIJI's database at the end of the current quarter. The different graphic scales are defined as follows:

- **Community** scale news producers typically cover only a single town or suburb. They are overwhelming not-for-profit and produced by volunteers, often in connection with another local institution such as a community centre. They tend to focus on a place's social and small business news, with only rare attention to local government news.
- **Local** scale news producers primarily cover a small geographic area, from a single town or local government area up to a sub-state region (such as all the Cape York Peninsula and Torres Strait Islands). This is by far the largest category of outlet and includes both independent papers and websites, small and medium news companies, and the local editions of large companies like News Corp, Australian Community Media and Seven West Media.
- **Metropolitan** scale news producers have a coverage area which includes an entire state or territory capital city. News outlets in this category tend to cover a small amount of news over a larger area and provide only intermittent attention to any single place, unlike local and community scale news producers. News Corp and Seven West Media have newspapers in both this category (ie, *Daily Telegraph*, *PerthNow*) and related outlets at the local scale (ie, *Wentworth Courier*, *PerthNow Canning*). This is intended to reflect both the city-wide and dedicated local coverage produced by the relationship of these outlets to each other.

Outlets are also divided by their primary format (currently, print or digital). If a news outlet has a print edition, this is recorded as the primary format; otherwise, digital is recorded as primary. The overwhelming majority of print outlets also have a digital presence; however, each outlet is recorded here only once.

PIJI is developing radio and television broadcasters into data which we expect to release in mid-2022.

Local print and digital news producers, by local government area

1 2 3 4 5+

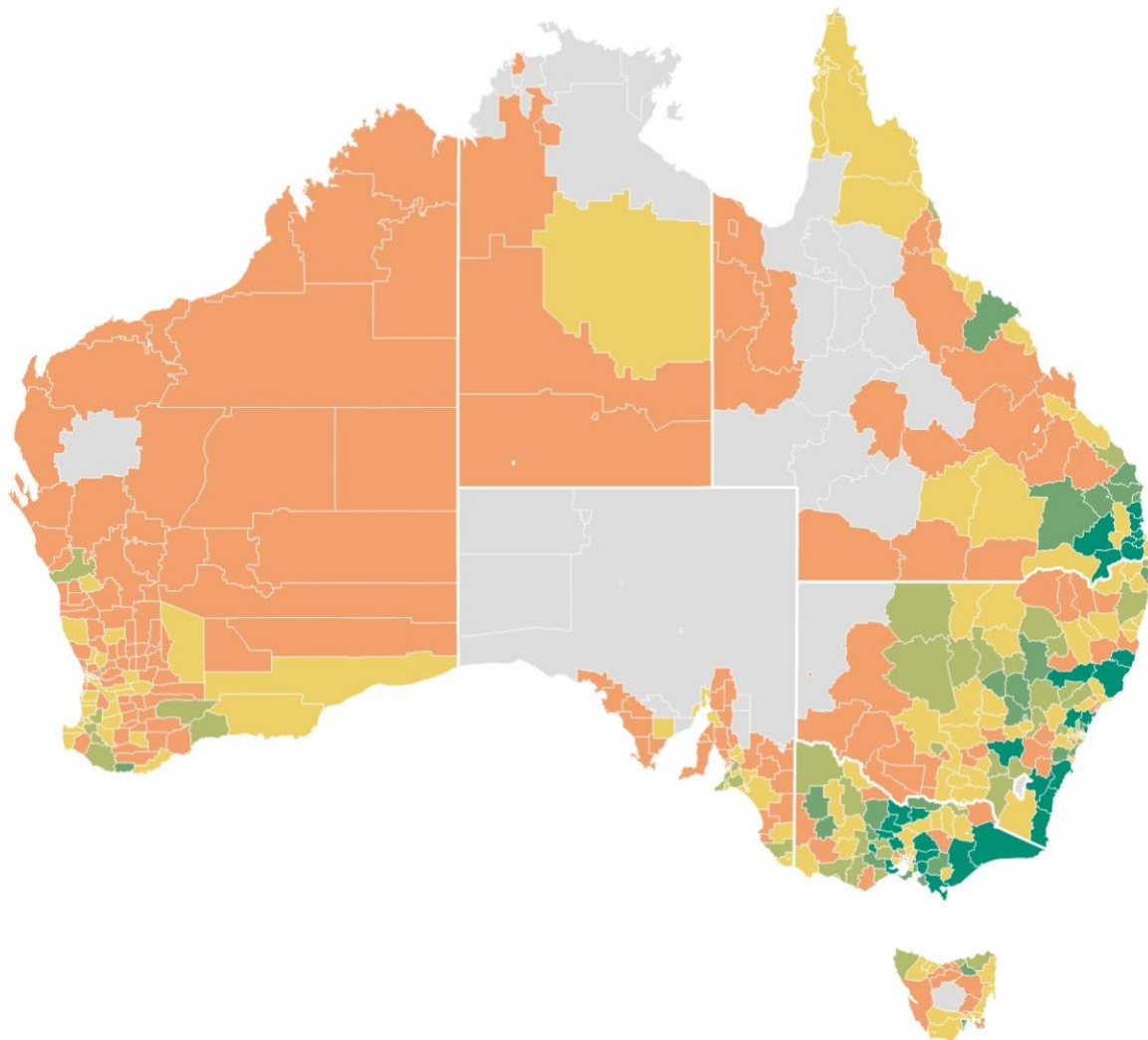


Figure 1: Count of local print/digital news producers by local government area, 31 March 2022.

Figure 1 shows the coverage of local and community-scale print and digital news producers by local government area around Australia. Metropolitan scale outlets are not included in the count of outlets in each local government area as their news production does not routinely cover a specific local geography.

An outlet may be assigned to a local government area whether it is present in that area or covers it remotely. Where outlets are seen to be covering an area remotely, PIJI has conducted a limited assessment of the frequency and nature of that coverage. Meeting a low benchmark of an average of at least one story per month is necessary for an outlet to be included in a remote LGA. A comprehensive and regularly-maintained assessment of coverage areas for all outlets is beyond our capacity.

### 3.1 Local government areas without local print or digital news producers

An ongoing area of interest in PIJI's data is which local government areas do not appear to have a local print or digital news producer.

Following changes in the data during March, PIJI has removed two local government areas from its list: Balranald Shire Council and Central Darling Shire Council, both in regional New South Wales. 31 local government areas remain on the list:

- Belyuen Shire, NT
- Coomalie Shire, NT
- East Arnhem Region, NT
- Roper Gulf Region, NT
- Tiwi Islands, NT
- West Arnhem Region, NT
- West Daly Region, NT
- Barcaldine Regional Council, QLD
- Barcoo Shire, QLD
- Carpentaria Shire, QLD
- Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire, QLD
- Croydon Shire, QLD
- Diamantina Shire, QLD
- Etheridge Shire, QLD
- Flinders Shire, QLD
- McKinlay Shire, QLD
- Mornington Shire, QLD
- Quilpie Shire, QLD
- Richmond Shire, QLD
- Winton Shire, QLD
- Woorabinda Aboriginal Shire, QLD
- Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire, QLD
- Berri Barmera Council, SA
- Franklin Harbour, District Council of, SA
- Goyder, Regional Council of, SA
- Kimba, District Council of, SA
- Peterborough, District Council of, SA
- Roxby Downs, Municipal Council of, SA
- Central Highlands Council, Tas
- Flinders Council, Tas
- Upper Gascoyne, Shire of, WA

We will continue to monitor these local government areas and update the list accordingly. If you have further information about a local print or digital news outlet that is missing and which covers one of these areas, please [let us know](#).

Please note that this data does not include radio and television outlets, including the ABC. We are currently preparing that data and expect that it will reduce the above list upon its release later this year.

### 3.2 National changes in news production

Data changes recorded against outlets in the database have two attributes: the change type, which describes the nature of the change, and the change category, which list the changes as either expansions or contractions in news production and availability. The tables below show changes that took place over the current and previous quarter.

Table 3.2 provides the cumulative total of each change type observed since 1 January 2019, benchmarked at the end of the current and previous quarters. Table 3.3 groups those records according to their change category.

Table 3.2: Count of records by change type, 31 December 2021 and 31 March 2022.

CHANGE TYPE	Q4/21	Q1/22	VARIANCE
New masthead, station or website	124	126	+2
Newsroom opened	4	14	+10
Increase in service	9	9	-
New print edition	15	15	-
Merger	17	17	-
End of print edition	106	106	-
Decrease in service	39	39	-
Newsroom closure	6	6	-
Masthead or station closure	87	87	-
TOTAL NUMBER OF RECORDS	407	419	+12

Table 3.3: Net change by change category, 31 December 2021 and 31 March 2022.

CHANGE CATEGORY	Q4/21	Q1/22	VARIANCE
Expansions	152	164	+12
Contractions	255	255	-
NET CHANGE	(103)	(91)	+12

PIJI's data is maintained and updated each month. New data changes are frequently identified as having occurred in past quarters. As such, the data presented in the tables above is best estimate of the news market at the reported moment in time, but will adjust with any new information.

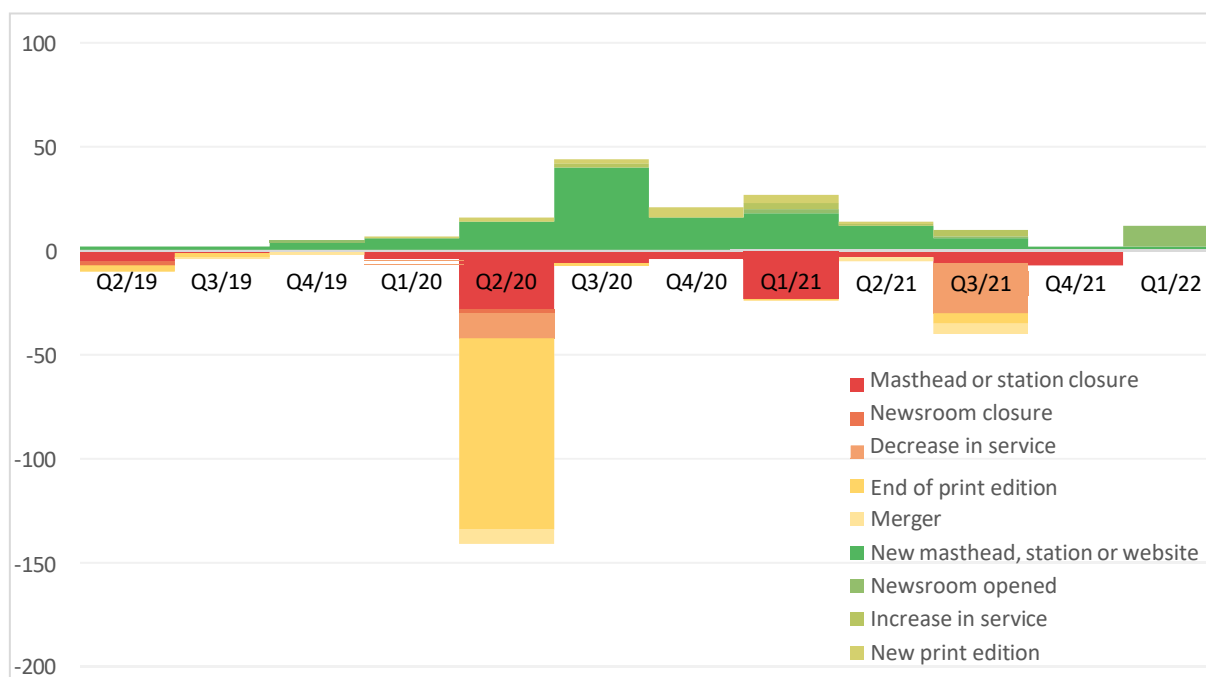


Figure 2: Change types by quarter, 31 March 2022.

Plotting quarterly data immediately highlights the impact of the onset of COVID-19 (Figure 2). We have recorded 25 March 2020 as the beginning of the economic impact of COVID-19, being the date that non-essential businesses were first ordered closed across the country. This project does not systematically collect information about the causal factors that lead to changes, but in the immediate aftermath of that order we observed significant decreases in news production and availability before the sector stabilised and began to rebound in June 2020, and more strongly in the following quarter (Q3/20).

There are some key events that group together large numbers of changes.

- In Q2/20, News Corp Australia significantly accelerated its shift to digital-only publishing by ending its print newspapers for 96 community and regional news titles across Victoria, New South Wales and particularly in Queensland, where it also closed more than a dozen papers.
- Also in Q2/20, Australian Community Media announced that it would temporarily suspend the majority of its regional non-daily newspapers. Many of those papers only partially returned; some without a print edition and many that no longer conduct original, local news production. Those titles are reflected in the 'Decrease in service' changes.
- Some Australian Community Media papers did not return from suspension at all, remaining online but relying on syndicated material for coverage. In Q1/21 we observed that ACM seemed to retire nearly two dozen of its mastheads, closing their individual websites and social media presences.<sup>10</sup>
- Regional and metropolitan television reaffiliation came into effect in Q3/21, which resulted in the closure of a large number of WIN and Nine local news bulletins in Queensland and Victoria. A small expansion of news bulletins also occurred in New South Wales. These records are tagged as 'Decrease in service' and 'Increase in service' respectively.<sup>11</sup>

- Also in Q3/21, we listed further Australian Community Media newspapers as ‘Decrease in service’ following reductions to the publishing schedule.<sup>12</sup>
- In Q1/22 the large growth in ‘Newsroom opened’ changes is a result of the ABC’s significant expansion in regional areas, adding 55 new jobs, 10 new bureaux and 9 expanded bureaux.<sup>13</sup>

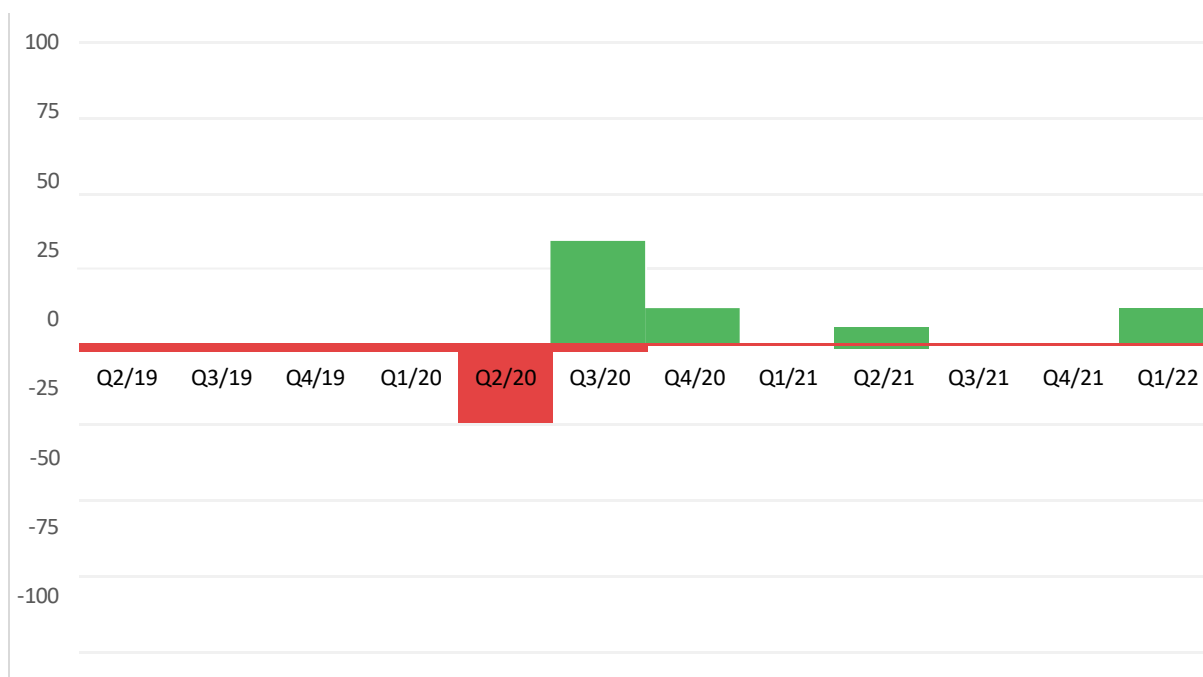


Figure 3: Net changes in news production by quarter, at 31 March 2022.

More than half of the changes from Q2/20 are the ‘End of print edition’ change type. While this change is recorded as a contraction event, it could reasonably be argued that the

<sup>10</sup> Dickson G. 2021. Australian Newsroom Mapping Project Report: April 2021. Melbourne: Public Interest Journalism Initiative. <<https://piji.com.au/research-and-inquiries/our-research/anmp/anmp-data/>>. pp. 2-3.

<sup>11</sup> Dickson G. 2021. Australian Newsroom Mapping Project Report: July 2021. Melbourne: Public Interest Journalism Initiative. <<https://piji.com.au/research-and-inquiries/our-research/anmp/anmp-data/>>. p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Dickson G. 2021. Australian Newsroom Mapping Project Report: September 2021. Melbourne: Public Interest Journalism Initiative. <<https://piji.com.au/research-and-inquiries/our-research/anmp/anmp-data/>>. p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> ABC 2022. Australia benefits from major expansion of regional and rural coverage. ABC. 10 March. <<https://about.abc.net.au/press-releases/australia-benefits-from-major-expansion-of-regional-and-rural-coverage/>>



transition from physical to online news distribution is a sign of positive change for an industry still in the process of digital transformation.

Acknowledging that ambiguity, Figure 3 removes both the 'End of print edition' and 'New print edition' change types so as to assess only those records that reflect changes in news production.

This data subset suggests growing news media market over the life of the project, with 140 expansions compared to 110 contractions since January 2019.

Isolating the data further to only the outlets that have opened or closed over the period (that is, the 'New masthead, station or website'; 'Merger' and 'Masthead or station closure' change types) shows a positive variance of +22.

We strongly caution that this research does not take into account the productive capacity of news outlets that are gained and lost; only the fact of their opening or closing. A newspaper with deep community ties, strong editorial structures and half a dozen full-time journalists that closed would look identical in this data to a replacement website employing one volunteer.

As close observers of the industry since 2019 we believe that more news productive capacity has been lost than gained, but demonstrating that is beyond the scope and resources of this project.

## 4. Quarterly report: States and territories

The following figures provide a total number of news outlets in each state and territory at the end of the March quarter and a breakdown of changes observed, both of the change types and of the overall change categories, plus the net position from 1 January 2019.

Table 4.1: Count of outlets by coverage scale and state/territory, 31 March 2022.

	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	TOTAL
COMMUNITY	-	3	-	4	-	3	25	19	54
LOCAL	7	238	4	124	44	24	169	56	666
METROPOLITAN	-	3	1	3	2	2	4	3	18
TOTAL	7	244	5	131	46	29	198	78	738

Table 4.2: Net change by change category and state/territory, 31 March 2022.

CHANGE CATEGORY	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	TOTAL
Expansions	1	56	2	42	14	4	39	6	164
Contractions	1	93	2	80	16	-	51	12	255
NET CHANGE	-	(37)	-	(38)	(2)	+4	(12)	(6)	(91)



Figure 4: Change types by state or territory, 31 March 2022.

## 4.1 Australian Capital Territory



	1	2	3	4	5+
	COMM.	LOCAL	METRO	TOTAL	
PRINT	-	4	-	4	
DIGITAL	-	3	-	3	
TOTAL	-	7	-	7	

Figure 5 / Table 4.3: Count of local print/digital news producers in the Australian Capital Territory, 31 March 2022.

News production in the Australian Capital Territory has remained mostly unchanged over the project so far. We have recorded four print local and three digital local outlets for a total of seven. Two of these – the *District Bulletin* and the *Queanbeyan Age* – sit outside of the ACT in New South Wales but provide some coverage of the territory.

Assessing coverage of the ACT is complicated by the presence of the federal government. Most news outlets across the country will contain at least occasional coverage of federal government activities, however, for the purpose of this research we have only included news producers covering other issues of relevance for residents of the capital. This may

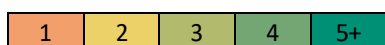
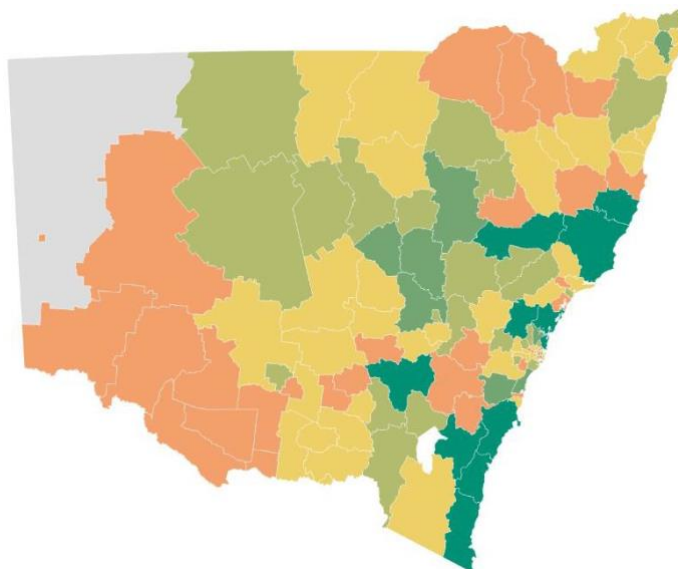
include the legislative assembly, local crime and court reporting, planning and development, business and community issues.

News producers in the capital range from the large media companies (*Canberra Star*, News Corp; *Canberra Times*, Australian Community Media) to small-medium news businesses focussed on the capital region like RiotACT, and independents such as the *Canberra City News*.

Only two changes in news production have been observed in the ACT since 2019: News Corp's launched of the *Canberra Star* in June 2019 and Australian Community Media's decision to merge the *Canberra Chronicle* into the *Queanbeyan Age* in early 2020

A note on the map: the Australian Capital Territory does not have local government areas and as such outlets in the ACT are coded to the entire territory. The map of the ACT provided as Figure 5 has postcode area subdivisions visible due to a technical constraint.

## 4.2 New South Wales



	COMM.	LOCAL	METRO	TOTAL
PRINT	3	168	1	173
DIGITAL	-	69	2	71
TOTAL	3	238	3	244

Figure 6 / Table 4.4: Count of local print/digital news producers by local government area, 31 March 2022.

News production in New South Wales is heavily centred in coastal areas, particularly from Bega Valley on the Victorian border north through the Illawarra, Sydney and Central Coast to Port Macquarie-Hastings and the Hunter Valley. Smaller hubs of production exist particularly in Young and Lismore and around Dubbo.

The number of outlets in these areas has grown since 2019, while there has been a shift away from the Murray/Riverina, Central West, New England and the Northern Rivers areas.

Changes in New South Wales have been heavily impacted by Australian Community Media's consolidation of its presence in the

state. Since 2020, PIJI has recorded the closure of at least 11 ACM newspapers in regional New South Wales, with a further 14 reducing their service in some way: either by a reduced publication frequency, or, in some cases, largely existing as digital shells that rerun network content produced at other papers.

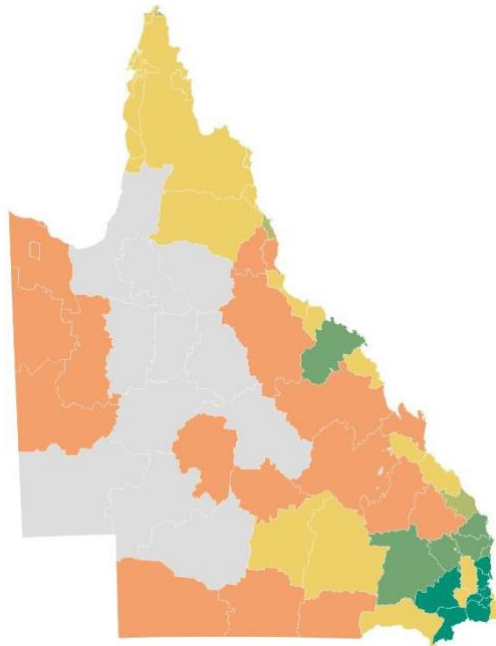
News Corp also closed some papers in the north of the state in early 2020.

Both companies have also opened outlets in regional New South Wales. ACM opened two papers in the Northern Rivers area, while News Corp has launched digital hyperlocal verticals in Lismore, Bowral, Wagga Wagga, and Wollongong, among other places.

There has also been growth among independent news producers, particularly in the Hilltops Council and other regions following larger company closures and mergers.



#### 4.4 Queensland



	1	2	3	4	5+
	COMM.	LOCAL	METRO	TOTAL	
PRINT	3	74	1	78	
DIGITAL	1	50	2	53	
TOTAL	4	124	3	131	

Figure 8 / Table 4.6: Count of local print/digital news producers by local government area, 31 March 2022.

There are many digital/print news producers in Queensland, spread across the state but with a particular concentration in the south-east and Whitsunday region, with smaller news production hubs around Cairns, Hervey Bay and Dalby.

Queensland has experienced significant changes since 2019. News Corp closed 15 papers in the state in May 2020 and merged another four into larger regional papers. 24 of their papers shifted to digital-only publishing in the same year.

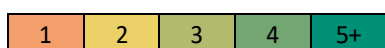
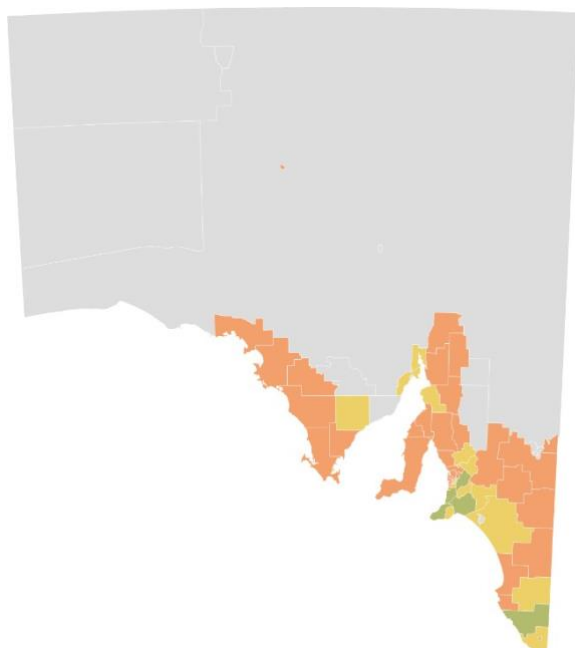
Independent outlets in Queensland have seen mixed success. In many regions where News

Corp retreated, multiple independent papers simultaneously opened to fill the void. This was particularly true in places like Dalby, Chinchilla, Cairns and Burnett. Over time, many of these startups have closed, leaving only one remaining in many markets.

Queensland has also been the site of sustained growth: the Today brand of newspapers has expanded from being a digital-only news outlet in Noosa to launching eight papers across different regions, buying distressed brands like the *Longreach Leader* and Mackay Local News and returning them to service, and small expansions interstate, particularly in South Australia.

Due to a technical limitation this map does not display the Wellesley or Torres Strait Islands. PIJI has no record of any news producers in the former. There are three local print news producers covering Torres Shire and Torres Strait Island Regional Council: *Cape York Weekly*, *Koori Mail* and *Torres News*.

#### 4.5 South Australia



	COMM.	LOCAL	METRO	TOTAL
PRINT	-	29	1	30
DIGITAL	-	15	1	16
TOTAL	-	44	2	46

Figure 9 / Table 4.7: Count of local print/digital news producers by local government area, 31 March 2022.

News production in South Australia is centred around Adelaide, the Fleurieu Peninsula, Murray Valley and Mount Gambier. News production in the south-east part of the state up to the capital appears to have improved since 2019, though with some fluctuations across that period.

The south-east of the state was hit hard by news closures in early COVID. Australian Community Media temporarily closed the *Naracoorte Herald*, *Murray Valley Standard*, *Flinders News* and others; while long-standing independents were forced to either merge multiple papers together (such as the *River News* and *Loxton News* into the *Murray*

*Pioneer*) or close completely (*The Border Watch*, *South-Eastern Times* and *Penola Pennant*).

New independent papers emerged in Naracoorte, Murray Bridge and Mount Gambier to fill those temporary gaps and have remained in service even as the closed papers have been slowly revived.

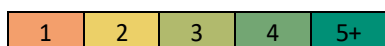
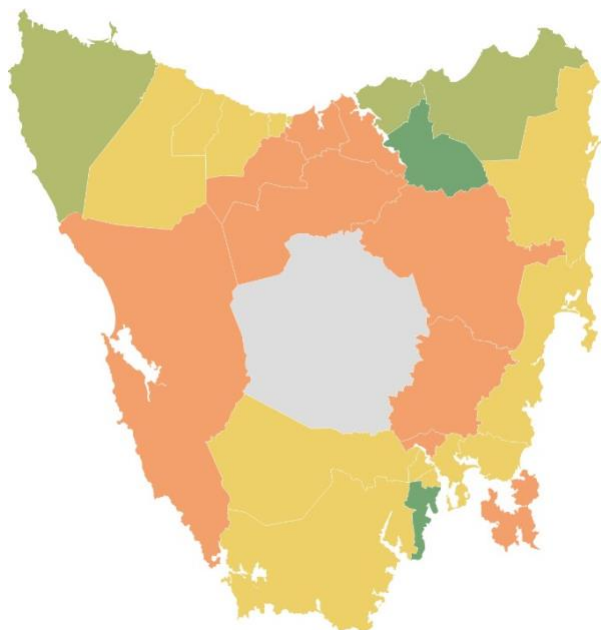
News Corp has expanded in the state, adding digital hyperlocal titles in the Barossa and Clare Valleys and Upper Spencer Gulf.

Along the Eyre Peninsula, however, there has been a reduction in the number of local news outlets. This is largely due to the retreat of ACM from the region: both the *West Coast Sentinel* and *Eyre Peninsula Tribune* were closed in 2020, leaving the *Port Lincoln Times* and new independent the *Eyre Peninsula Advocate* to cover the area.

The *Roxby Downs Chronicle* was a brief expansion paper produced by ACM in 2019 which has subsequently closed, leaving that local government area without any print or digital news outlets.

Due to a technical limitation this map does not display Kangaroo Island, which is covered by Australian Community Media's *The Islander*.

#### 4.6 Tasmania



	COMM.	LOCAL	METRO	TOTAL
PRINT	3	21	1	25
DIGITAL	-	3	1	4
TOTAL	3	24	2	29

Figure 10/ Table 4.8: Count of local print/digital news producers by local government area, 31 March 2022.

Tasmania has a higher proportion of independent news producers to large media companies compared to other states and territories, with News Corp and Australian Community Media present in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie, and the island otherwise covered by small-medium companies.

A growing presence in Tasmanian news media is Font Publishing, which has purchased multiple local outlets over the past few years, including the *Tasmanian Country*, *Derwent Valley Gazette*, *Sorrell Times* and others.

Yeates Media is a Victoria-based news company with local newspapers in Kingston, Huonville and Circular Head.

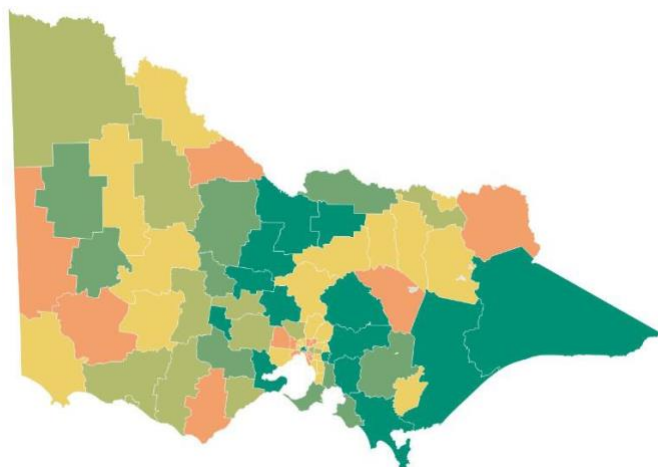
Independent outlets include the *Valley and East Coast Voice*, North-Eastern Advertiser and BridREport.

Due to a technical limitation this map does not display King Island, which is covered by the *King Island Courier*, nor Flinders Island and others in the Furneaux Group. PIJI has no local news producers in this latter group, though coverage of the island sometimes occurs from ABC Gippsland in Victoria.

Bruny Island is also not present on this map, though the mainland Tasmania part of Kingborough Council is. Bruny News operates on the island, while the *Kingston Classifieds*, *The Mercury* and *Kingborough Chronicle* cover other parts of the local government area.



## 4.7 Victoria



	1	2	3	4	5+
		COMM.	LOCAL	METRO	TOTAL
PRINT		24	144	3	171
DIGITAL		1	25	1	27
TOTAL		25	169	4	198

Figure 11 / Table 4.9: Count of local print/digital news producers by local government area, 31 March 2022.

Victoria has a dense and diverse media landscape, with a high number of independent local news outlets, small-medium news businesses, as well as large media companies, covering every part of the state but particularly the north, central and Gippsland. *The Age*, *Herald Sun* and others cover metropolitan Melbourne, with the latter’s local coverage supported by a network of *Leader* community newspapers and digital hyperlocals around the state. *The Local Paper* and Star News Group also have extensive local news coverage around the capital.

Australian Community Media is present in most regional cities in Victoria, with papers in Bendigo, Ballarat, Shepparton, Warrnambool and others.

In the regions, small-medium news businesses include North East Media, McPherson Media, Yeates Media and Elliott Newspaper Group.

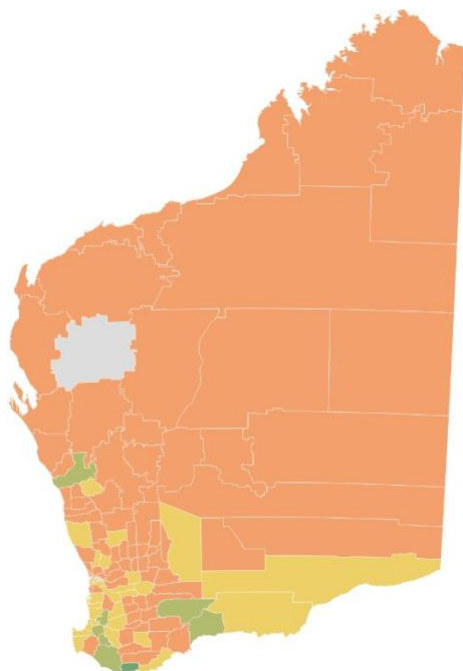
Independent newspapers exist in almost every local government area across the state.

Victoria also has many community newspapers, particularly in Melbourne and in north/central local government areas like Macedon Ranges, Mount Alexander, Bendigo and Loddon.

Despite multiple lockdowns, including in regional areas, Victoria lost comparatively few news outlets during COVID-19. Papers that did close include independent papers the *Kyneton Free Press*, *Yarram Standard* and *Great Southern Star*, Yeates Media’s *East Gippsland News*, ACM’s *Moyne Gazette* and *Hepburn Advocate*, and News Corp’s *Bellarine and Surf Coast Echo*.

Due to a technical limitation this map does not display Phillip Island, though the remainder of Bass Coast Shire is present. The island is covered by the *Phillip Island and San Remo Advertiser*.

## 4.8 Western Australia



	1	2	3	4	5+
COMM.					
LOCAL					
METRO					
TOTAL					
PRINT	18	54	1	73	
DIGITAL	1	2	2	5	
TOTAL	19	56	3	78	

Figure 12 / Table 4.10: Count of local print/digital news producers by local government area, 31 March 2022.

Western Australia’s media landscape is dominated by Seven West Media. Almost every local government area in the state is covered by a network of 19 SWM regional newspapers, including very remote areas. In Perth, the *West Australian* and *PerthNow* cover the whole metro and a network of *PerthNow* print papers exist across the suburbs.

The only local government area not included in SWM’s coverage is the Shire of Upper Gascoyne: PIJ could not identify regular coverage of Gascoyne Junction in a 2021 audit,

though it is likely that the region does fall into the footprint of at least one paper if a major event were to occur.

The other major feature of WA’s media landscape is a strong presence of community newspapers. WA has a network of community resource centres spread particularly across shires in the South West, Great Southern and Wheatbelt regions, and it is common for them to produce regular newspapers focussed on the social and business lives of their communities. Examples here include *The Windmill* (Shire of Corrigin), *Pingelly Times* (Shire of Pingelly) and *Crosswords* (Shire of Yilgarn).

Australian Community Media has reduced its presence in the state since 2019. It has closed three newspapers - the *Avon Valley Advocate*, *Donnybrook-Bridgetown-Manjimup Mail* and *Collie Mail* - and significantly reduced the publication output at the *Esperance Express*. PIJ has the *Express* listed as closed as we have not observed any original content published there from multiple audits through 2020-2021; however, the website does still exist, and it may re-emerge in the future.

As in other states, where ACM has retreated other local papers have emerged, including the *Esperance Weekender*, *Bridgetown Star* and *Collie River Valley Bulletin*.

## 5. Metropolitan and regional areas

The following figures provide a total and quarterly breakdown of changes according to whether the affected outlet is located in metropolitan or regional / rural Australia.

Table 5.1: Absolute and percentage change by change category and region, 31 March 2022.

CHANGE CATEGORY	Metropolitan		Regional / rural		Total
	#	%	#	%	#
Expansions	52	32	112	68	164
Contractions	72	28	183	72	255
NET CHANGE	(20)		(71)		(91)

Table 5.1 shows that regional and rural Australia has experienced the greatest change, accounting for 72 per cent of all contractions and 68 per cent of growth. The overwhelming majority of outlets that have either closed (92 per cent) or decreased their service (100 per cent) are from regional areas (Figure 13). Only slightly more outlets have opened (89) to those that closed (81) in regional/rural areas, while the capital cities gained five times more outlets than we identified as having closed (37 compared to 6).

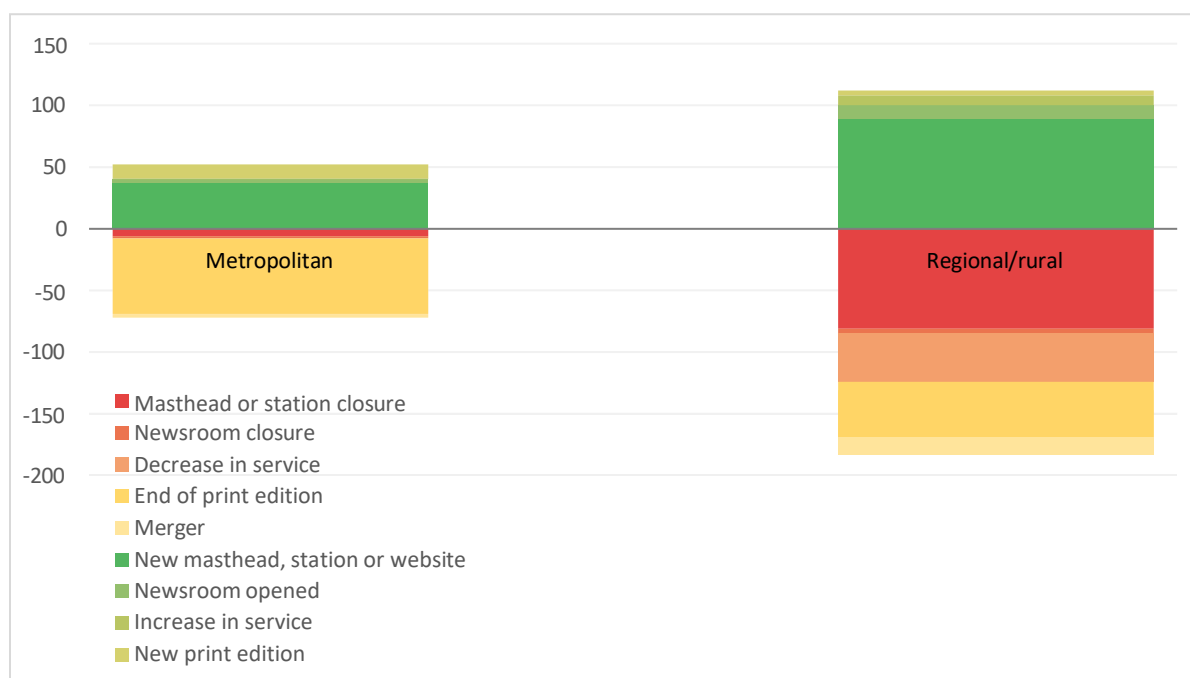


Figure 13: Change types by region, 31 March 2022.

Figure 14 isolates the data to changes in news production over the period (that is, all change categories except the 'End of print edition' or 'New print edition' types). It suggests that despite slight increases in the overall number of outlets in regional areas identified above, the impact other changes – eg. decreases in service and newsroom closures – may negate that growth overall.

As previously discussed, PIJI does not collect detailed information on the ongoing productive capacity of news outlets, including staffing levels, which may further affect these findings.

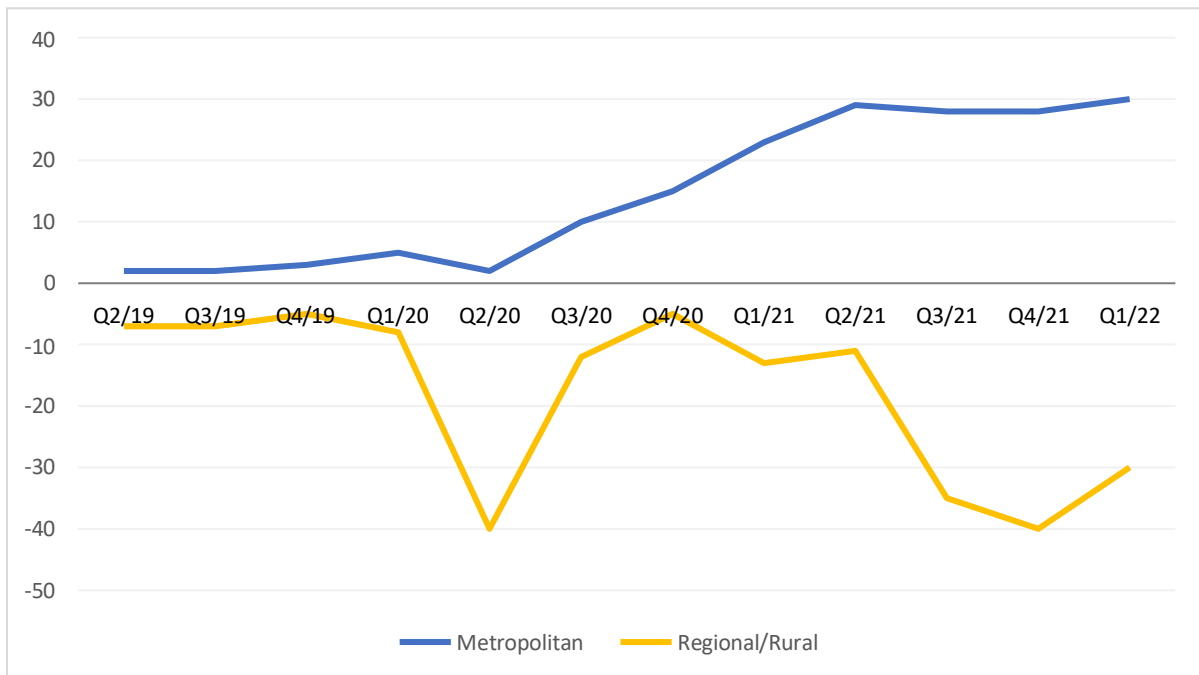


Figure 14: Net change in news production by region, 31 March 2022.

## 6. Using this project data

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

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.

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 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. PIJI is a limited shelf-life initiative, due to cease operation in 2023 in line with achieving its intended impact.

Our evidence-based approach focuses on three key research themes into public interest journalism: assessment of diversity, community value and support, and investment and financial sustainability.

# [Public Interest Journalism Initiative]


## CONTACT US

Public Interest Journalism Initiative

ABN 69 630 740 153

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

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

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

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

 [/publicinterestjournalisminitiative](https://www.facebook.com/publicinterestjournalisminitiative)

