

Newspaper competition in Australia

Declining competition and increasing concentration in Australia's newspaper market

Australia's newspaper market is dominated by four corporations, with minimal competition between them. Ten million Australians live in a city without print media competition. News Corp now publishes just 19 unique titles, down from more than 200 in 2016. Australian Community Media has gone from 170 titles to 62 with further reductions announced.

Discussion paper

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Summary

A competitive news industry operating in the public interest is vital to the proper functioning of democracy. However, Australia's news industry is highly concentrated, with 84% of newspaper revenue going to one of four conglomerates: Nine Entertainment, News Corp, Seven West Media, and Australian Community Media.

Competition between the conglomerates is rare. Of Australia's 20 largest cities, 18 lack competition between two comparable print media outlets. Ten million Australians, or 39% of the population, live in one of these 18 cities – that includes every capital city except for Sydney and Melbourne.

Newspapers have been in decline for decades, but they still matter. Aside from their still-substantial audience, particularly among older Australians, newspapers almost invariably have more resources in terms of journalists, editors and other content creators. The most popular online news source in any area tends to be the website of the largest print newspaper. Newspaper coverage routinely sets the agenda for radio news through the day.

Outside of the big cities, print news is in a dire state. More than a quarter of Local Government Areas, generally those in regional and rural areas, have no independent local news outlet. Some of have no local news at all. Hundreds of news outlets have shut down in the last five years - Australian Community Media has gone from publishing 170 outlets before the pandemic to just 62 today.

In 2020, News Corp moved the bulk of its regional outlets to an online-only model. Out of the 119 News Corp titles listed by the Australian Press Council, 86 have been shifted to News Corp's "digital only" model, their presence reduced to social media pages and a subsection on the website of the daily newspaper in their state's capital city. Only 19 are separate newspapers with their own websites or print editions. The vast majority of News Corp's titles are now little more than a social media page and local news subsection.

While some outlets have emerged to replace these gaps, they tend to be less regular and have fewer resources than their predecessors. And there are many towns that have been left with no news outlet.

Australia-wide, the newspaper industry is shrinking in its output and diversity. In a growing and diverse country, this bodes poorly for accountability, transparency and democracy.

Introduction

Journalism performs a vital role in any democratic society, keeping governments and institutions accountable to the people they represent. Great countries have great institutions, and the transparency provided by effective journalism helps ensure accountability. A diverse news industry operating in the public interest is vital to Australian democracy.

The Australian news market is among the most concentrated and least competitive in the world, second only to Brazil.¹ The situation is particularly bad for print newspapers, with four large conglomerates (News Corp, Nine Entertainment, Seven West, and Australian Community Media), controlling a collective 84% of the newspaper market by revenue.² News Corp alone controls 54% of the market. The biggest four players own all of Australia's capital city daily newspapers, as well as many local, regional, and rural outlets, and the bulk of popular online news websites.

In most Australian cities, the dominant newspaper has no print competition, or face only a much smaller rival. While print news is on the decline, it remains an important medium through which millions of Australians receive their news, especially in regional areas.³ Although there are successful online news outlets in Australia, they tend to be dominated by the same companies that control the country's print newspapers. Those that are not generally operate on a national rather than local scale.

Newspapers have been in decline for decades, with major revenue streams like classified advertising moving online. But newspapers still count.

Aside from their still-substantial audience, particularly among older Australians, newspapers almost invariably have more resources in terms of journalists, editors and other content creators. The most popular online news source in any given city tends to be the website of the largest print newspaper. This makes the state of print media a meaningful signifier of

¹ Flew, Fitzgerald, McTernan and Nicholls (2024), *Communications, media and internet concentration in Australia 2019-2022*, p 48, <https://gmicp.org/communications-media-and-internet-concentration-in-australia-2019-2022>

² As of 2022; Flew, Fitzgerald, McTernan and Nicholls (2024), *Communications, media and internet concentration in Australia 2019-2022*, p 28

³ Park, Fisher, McGuinness, Lee, McCallum, Cai, Chatskin, Mardjianto and Yao (2024) *Digital News Report: Australia 2024*, pp 79, 82, <https://www.canberra.edu.au/uc-research/faculty-research-centres/nmrc/digital-news-report-australia>

the state of the entire Australian news industry.⁴ Newspaper coverage routinely sets the agenda for radio news topics and interviews through the day.

When newspapers cease printing and move online-only, cuts to employment and resources follow almost invariably. Often they are reduced to little more than a social media page. The decline of print news corresponds with the decline of news in general.⁵ New online alternatives can be a valuable tool for their communities, but they face the same economic pressures and will often have the same restraints on resources and staffing as the outlets that preceded them. They therefore do not represent a like-for-like replacement.

Concern about centralised ownership and lack of competition has prompted numerous investigations and inquiries,⁶ but no major legislative action. In fact, since the turn of the century, governments have significantly loosened Australia's news market regulations on two separate occasions:

- In 2007 the Howard government scrapped foreign ownership limits and changed the “one out of three” rule to “two out of three”, meaning that a single owner could control any two of three types of media (Print, TV, Radio).⁷
- In 2017 the Turnbull government removed the “two out of three” rule entirely, as well as removing restrictions on television reach.⁸

Some, such as former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, hoped that the emergence of online media would lead to additional news diversity and avenues for competition.⁹ In the ten years since then, the opposite has occurred; hundreds of local and regional news outlets have shut down, and those that remain have much fewer staff and much smaller budgets.¹⁰

⁴ Park, Fisher, McGuinness, Lee, McCallum, Cai, Chatskin, Mardjianto and Yao (2024) *Digital News Report: Australia 2024*, pp 83-84 <https://www.canberra.edu.au/uc-research/faculty-research-centres/nmrc/digital-news-report-australia>

⁵ See for example: ACM's cuts in 2025, News Corp's cuts in 2020

⁶ Such as the Finkelstein Inquiry (2011) <https://theconversation.com/the-finkelstein-inquiry-into-media-regulation-experts-respond-5675>; and the Senate Inquiry into media diversity in Australia (2021) https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/Mediadiversity

⁷ Phillips (2015) *The history of media regulation in Australia*, <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/rearvision/the-history-of-media-ownership-in-australia/6831206>

⁸ Elton Pym (2017) *Explainer: How will the government's reforms change the Australian media landscape?* <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/explainer-how-will-the-governments-reforms-change-the-australian-media-landscape/zkyorfjal>

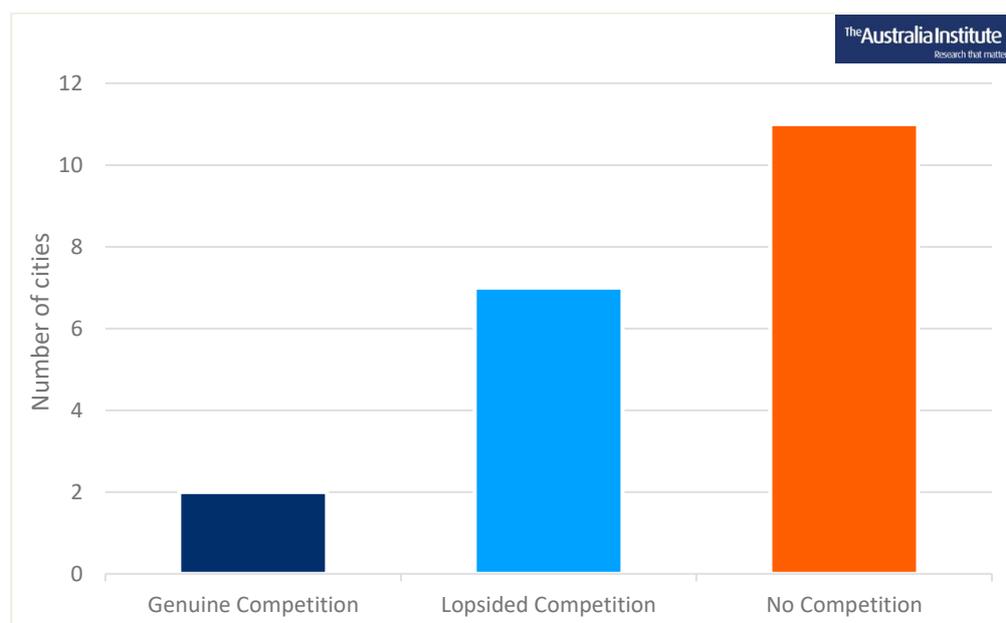
⁹ Brevini (2014) *Australia swims against the tide of democratic media reform*, <https://theconversation.com/australia-swims-against-the-tide-of-democratic-media-reform-24337>

¹⁰ Dickson and des Preaux (2024) *Australian News Data Report: September 2024*, p 19, <https://piji.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/2409-AND-Report-Sep-2024.pdf>

The dire state of news competition

Out of Australia's largest 20 cities,¹¹ which are home to more than three quarters of the country's population, 11 have only a single daily or weekly print newspaper.¹² Those 11 newspapers face either no alternative newspaper, an alternative newspaper that publishes infrequently (such as a monthly newspaper 'competing' against a daily one), or local newspapers that only cover small areas within a city. These newspapers hold an effective monopoly: they face no competition in city-wide print news. A further seven cities have lopsided competition, with a daily newspaper competing against a weekly one.¹³ Only two cities, Sydney and Melbourne, have genuine competition between two daily newspapers (between *Nine's Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* and News Corp's *Herald Sun* and *Daily Telegraph*).

Figure 1: Print news competition in Australia's top 20 population centres



Source: See Appendix

Five of Australia's eight capital cities have no competition in their print news, with all of those owned by either News Corp or Seven West Media (Seven). News Corp owns the only printed newspapers in Brisbane, Adelaide, Hobart and Darwin and Seven owns the only one in Perth. Australian Community Media (ACM)'s *Canberra Times* faces only weekly alternatives in the nation's capital. In eight of the 11 areas with only one print newspaper,

¹¹ From the ABS's "Significant Urban Area" Definition; when areas cross state lines, the larger part is taken as the relevant portion (for example in Gold Coast-Tweed Heads, Tweed Heads is excluded)

¹² Does not include lifestyle-oriented or magazine-style publications.

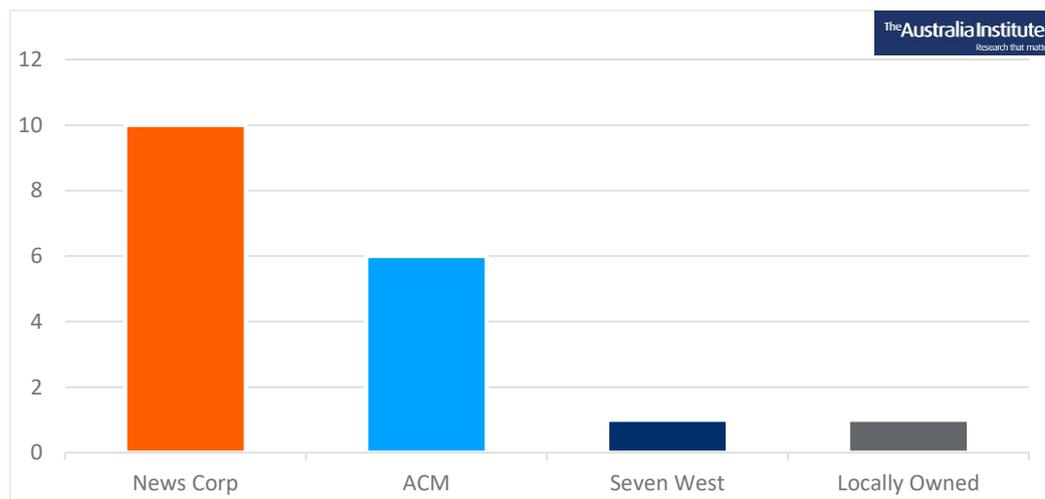
¹³ Includes one area (the Central Coast) where a weekly newspaper competes against a monthly alternative.

that newspaper is owned by News Corp, followed by ACM with two (Illawarra and Albury-Wodonga), and Seven with one (Perth).

There is a similar dynamic in the seven areas with lopsided competition, ACM owns the major newspaper in four areas (the *Canberra Times*, *Newcastle Herald*, *Ballarat Courier*, and *Bendigo Advertiser*) and News Corp in two (the *Geelong Advertiser* and *Cairns Post*). Only the Central Coast in NSW has an independent, locally owned newspaper, *Coast Community News*, as the main news source in the area. Nine Entertainment is the only one of the four conglomerates which does not own any newspapers that dominate a city’s media market, with its print papers competing with News Corp in Sydney and Melbourne.

This lack of diversity means that of the 19.6 million people in Australia’s twenty largest cities, 9.9 million of them (39% of Australia’s population) do not have access to a competitive print media market. All but one of the dominant newspapers in those cities are owned by one of Australia’s media conglomerates.

Figure 2: Owner of the dominant newspaper in cities with lopsided or no competition



Source: See Appendix

Although four large companies dominate Australia’s media landscape, the existence of so many one-sided media environments means that they rarely compete with each other. Competition between the four conglomerates exists in only Melbourne and Sydney, with the six cases of lopsided competition all being against independent or smaller publishers.

Seven West’s newspapers all serve Western Australia, and since News Corp sold *The Sunday Times* to Seven West in 2016 these papers have had only online or local competition. ACM was owned by Nine before being sold off in 2019 – in a rare interruption to the trend towards greater concentration of ownership – with ACM taking all regional newspapers and Nine preserving its ownership of its flagship urban dailies. Since then neither has attempted to expand into the other’s markets, meaning competition between the two is minimal. Aside from some online-only alternatives (such as Nine’s *Brisbane Times* and *WAToday*, or News Corp’s digital-only local news sections), print media competition exists almost exclusively in

Australia's two largest cities and between the two national newspapers, News Corp's *The Australian* and Nine's *Australian Financial Review*, neither of which have significant local news coverage.

In Canberra (ACM), Queensland (News Corp), and South Australia (News Corp), only one conglomerate owns any print news, with the only alternatives being independent or smaller publishers. Near-monopolies in Western Australia (Seven West) and the Northern Territory (News Corp) face competition from only a handful of ACM outlets that continue to publish. In an environment where news has become much less profitable than it once was – especially in print – it seems unlikely that the trend towards less competition will reverse.

The slow demise of local news

When reforms to Australia's media sector were introduced in 2017, Seven West's chairman Kerry Stokes said that they would provide a "better future for local news and Australian stories".¹⁴ As part of these changes, the Turnbull government agreed to create a fund for small and regional news publishers, which was labelled a "down payment for the future of journalism in this country".¹⁵ The reality for local news in the eight years since has been far less rosy.

The number of local and regional newspapers in Australia has been declining for decades. In 2008 there were more than 500 newspapers in the country, but a decade later 106 of those had been shut.¹⁶ In 2015 nearly a third of regional areas did not meet the then minimum legal requirements for media diversity.¹⁷ While the trend was already bad, the Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020 was a mass-extinction event. According to the Public Interest Journalism Initiative, the second quarter of 2020 alone saw more than 100 closures, with a net decline of 184 outlets from 2019 to 2024.¹⁸ Swathes of both independent and conglomerate newspapers were shut, leading to a less diverse market, especially in local and regional news.

Local news outlets are vital for information on local governments, politicians, businesses, and other public interest stories in the area they serve. However, in the news industry's transformation towards online distribution, local journalists and the stories they tell have often been left behind. Particularly in regional areas, the local paper has often been a central element of communities, and filling the space left behind after it disappears can be extremely difficult.¹⁹

In 2024, 29 Local Government Areas lacked a single local news outlet, either in print or online, while a further 111 were serviced exclusively by conglomerate-owned outlets.²⁰ This

¹⁴ ABC News (2017) *Government's media ownership law changes pass Senate with help from NXT, One Nation* <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-15/media-law-changes-bill-passes-senate/8946864>

¹⁵ ABC News (2017) *Government's media ownership law changes pass Senate with help from NXT, One Nation*

¹⁶ Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (2019) *Digital Platforms Inquiry – Final Report*, p 321, <https://www.accc.gov.au/system/files/Digital%20platforms%20inquiry%20-%20final%20report.pdf>

¹⁷ Johnson (2015) *Heartland: Why the bush needs its ABC*, p 7, <https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/heartland-why-the-bush-needs-its-abc/>

¹⁸ Dickson and des Preaux (2024) *Australian News Data Report: September 2024*, p 19, <https://piji.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/2409-AND-Report-Sep-2024.pdf>

¹⁹ Loftus (2024) *Regional news media's decline a 'threat' to democracy and social cohesion* <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-10-11/regional-news-media-decline-threat-to-democracy-social-cohesion/104443042>

²⁰ Angus, Ackermann, Kreitmeir and Raschky (2023) *Socio-economic determinants of Public Interest Journalism in Australia*, pp 10-17, https://piji.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/SoDa_PJI_report4.pdf

means more than a quarter of Local Government Areas have no independent local news. That does not include outlets with lopsided or online-only competition, meaning that even that likely understates the dominance of those conglomerates over Australian news.

NEWS CORP'S PAPER TIGERS

News Corp is Australia's largest newspaper conglomerate by far, and has long been a dominant force in local and regional media. With its acquisition of Australian Regional Media (ARM) in 2016, News Corp gained 72 local and regional news outlets, meaning that it owned more than 200 unique publications according to the ACCC.²¹ In the years since then, however, that number has rapidly declined, especially during and after the pandemic.

In 2020, News Corp initially suspended, then ended, printing 112 of its newspapers. Out of these, 36 were shut altogether and 76 were to become online-only.²² A further four have seemingly become online-only since then, for a total of 80.

Worse, many of these online-only publications exist essentially in name only. For example, the *Manly Daily* had been in print for 114 years before it was shut during the COVID-19 pandemic and became online-only. It now consists of a sub-section on the *Daily Telegraph's* website and social media pages.

The *Manly Daily* subsection of the *Telegraph* shares much of its content with the Mosman and North Shore subsections, and all of the last 20 *Manly Daily*-branded stories were written by the same journalist.²³ Much of the page is taken up by Sydney-wide, national, or sports news. A "hyperlocal" section contains stories by "staff writers" detailing court appearances, weather, and traffic updates in the Manly area, however it appears to be auto-generated – in the traffic updates, for example, all road incidents are described as "Notavailable(NotAvailable)" (see appendix).²⁴ The *Manly Daily* Facebook page posts several times each day, mainly with links to articles published in the *Telegraph*. Its Instagram page posts much less regularly, also in reference to articles in the *Telegraph* though without links,

²¹ Ong (2016) *APN News and Media to sell regional media division to News Corp for \$36.6m*, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-06-21/apn-news-and-media-divests-regional-media-division-arm-to-news/7528884>; ACCC (2019) *Digital platforms inquiry – final report*, p 321, <https://www.accc.gov.au/inquiries-and-consultations/finalised-inquiries/digital-platforms-inquiry-2017-19/final-report-and-executive-summary>

²² Wilkins and Schultz (2020) *News Corp axes print titles, jobs as regional news media hits crisis point* <https://www.crikey.com.au/2020/05/28/news-corp-axes-print-titles-jobs-as-regional-news-media-hits-crisis-point/>

²³ At time of writing

²⁴ "Staff writers" (2025) *Manly traffic: Crashes, delays, updates* <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/manly-daily/hyperlocal/manly-traffic-crashes-delays-updates/news-story/000fa7933e531257d0600d87553ad0e5>

and its Twitter (now X) page has been suspended, apparently for violating the website's rules.

Of the 80 newspapers that News Corp moved online since 2020, 61 have suffered the fate of the *Manly Daily*, becoming nothing more than social media pages and subsection of a masthead like the *Daily Telegraph*. A further 14 News Corp titles have "Digital Print Editions" available for subscribers, however, this does not represent a newspaper that is now simply published in electronic rather than hard-copy form. They do not have their own websites and their only local content is the first two pages (including the cover). At least one is even less fortunate – the *Gympie Times'* only local content is its cover. Even the local pages seem to be auto-generated: one *Daily Examiner* front page (see appendix) contained the headline "UNDEFINED", and other stories "undefined" and "undefined", and the same edition contained a tributes section that mourns "{{Articles.Headline.1}}".²⁵ All other pages contain generic or national content and advertising. The weather section of the *Coffs Coast Advocate* does not feature Coffs Harbour on its map, and reports on forecasts for Queensland, rather than NSW where it purports to serve. All four of the NSW Digital Print Editions contain tributes sections – that feature tributes from "across Queensland". Two of those advertised as having Digital Print Editions, the *Northern Star* and *Daily Examiner*, have not had a new edition released since May and June of 2024 respectively. The Digital Print Editions are inaccessible without a News Corp subscription, and are not archived by the National Library of Australia.

Five local News Corp newspapers have since made a limited return to print. Those five include three newspapers covering inner-Sydney suburbs (the *Mosman Daily*, *North Shore Times*, and *Wentworth Courier*), which returned for weekly print editions in 2020, followed by the *Sunshine Coast Daily* and *Mackay Daily Mercury* the following year. Like the "Digital Print Editions", the weekly printed newspapers do not have their own websites, and their online presence is limited to social media. Four regional newspapers – in Cairns, Townsville, the Gold Coast and Toowoomba – retain both a daily print edition and separate website.

There are also newspapers listed with the APC that are not, and have never been, in print, nor have they ever had a separate website. These were established as online-only newspapers, beginning in 2019, as part of a planned long-term transition to a "digital only" model. The pandemic accelerated those plans, and News Corp has established 25 such titles in total. Just like those that were moved online, they appear to be little more than a subsection of the big capital city dailies. Most, such as the *Illawarra Star* and *St George Shire Standard*, only had a single reporter covering their respective areas when they launched.²⁶

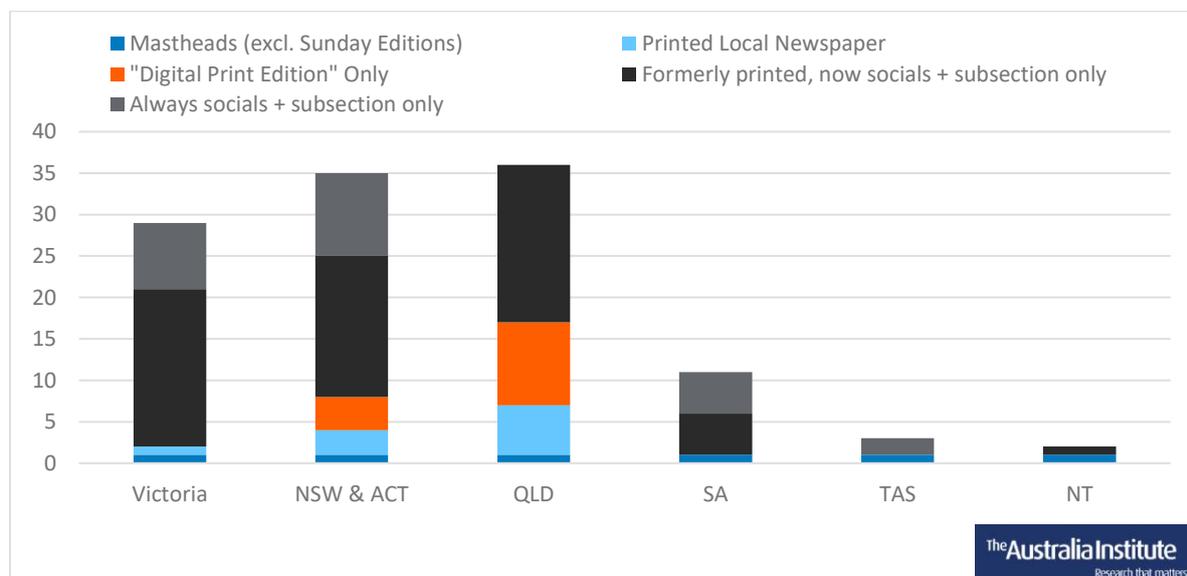
²⁵ The Daily Examiner Digital Print Edition (2024) *Fri Feb 9th 2024 – 4am Edition*, pp 1-2, 12.
<https://dpe.dailyexaminer.com.au>

²⁶ Crittenden (2019) *Welcome to the Illawarra Star: a new digital news platform*,
<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/illawarra-star/welcome-to-the-illawarra-star-a-new-digital->

In fact, all of the digital-only outlets launched by News Corp up to July 2020 had only one journalist.²⁷

Many News Corp titles are only superficially separate publications from each other and from the major masthead publications in each state. The extent of this consolidation is obscured by the list of titles published by the Australian Press Council (APC).²⁸ The APC currently lists 132 News Corp titles. Seven are ‘prestige/lifestyle’ magazines, and six are Sunday editions of other newspapers, leaving 119 national and state-based mastheads, local and regional newspapers. Of the 119 distinct news titles News Corp lists with the Press Council, only 19 remain as fully separate publications, including non state-based titles *The Australian*, news.com.au and *Weekly Times*. Of the 119, 86 are only social media pages and a subsection of the website of a capital city daily, and 14 have social media, a subsection, and a “Digital Print Edition”. Figure 3 below uses breaks down the APC data on News Corp titles by state.

Figure 3: The News Corp news network by state



Source: Australian Press Council (2024) *Australian Press Council Mastheads by Publisher Member*.
 Note: excludes national publications – *The Australian*, news.com.au and *Weekly Times*, as well as lifestyle/magazine titles (such as taste.com.au or Vogue) and Sunday editions.

news-platform/news-story/f9cd1f12b465259e9c2fd7fe2d50159b; Barr (2018) *St George Shire Standard: a new local digital news platform*, <https://www.news.com.au/national/nsw-act/st-george-shire-standard-a-new-local-digital-news-platform/news-story/91926a98149b632c63413d09f8c91e0d>

²⁷ Rigby (2020) *News Corp to launch more than 50 digital-only regional titles*, <https://mumbrella.com.au/news-corp-to-launch-more-than-50-digital-only-regional-titles-634523>

²⁸ Australian Press Council (2024) *Australian Press Council Mastheads by Publisher Member*, https://presscouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/2025_18-March-2025.pdf

As shown in Figure 3, News Corp prints only one “masthead” publication in each state and a handful of local papers in Victoria, NSW and Queensland.²⁹ The vast majority of the News Corp titles listed by the APC now exist only as a social media pages, with their website redirecting readers to a subsection of their state’s daily masthead (either the *Daily Telegraph*, *Herald-Sun*, *Courier Mail*, *Adelaide Advertiser*, *Hobart Mercury*, or *NT News*).

Out of the 29 titles listed in Victoria, only two – the Geelong Advertiser and Herald Sun – remain as stand alone publications. The remaining 27 have all been stripped down to only a subsection and social media pages. In Queensland, more regional outlets have been preserved than in other states. Even there, though, the majority of newspapers are “digital-only”, and only seven out of 36 have their own websites or print editions.

In NSW, only four News Corp newspapers remain in print, the *Daily Telegraph*, *Wentworth Courier*, *Mosman Daily* and *North Shore Times*. Four have “digital print editions”, and 27 having only social media pages and a masthead subsection. The situation in the other states and territories is similar: in South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory only capital city daily newspapers (*Adelaide’s Advertiser*, *Hobart’s Mercury*, and *Darwin’s NTNews*) remain.

The only local News Corp outlets to survive the past half-decade serve a handful of large regional hubs and affluent Sydney suburbs, with the rest of their suburban, regional and rural output relegated to the digital-only model. This seems to be a unique arrangement to News Corp – the other conglomerates have an increasing focus on online news, but their outlets all seem to have retained individual websites and identities.

Under a decade ago, in 2016, News Corp held more than 200 titles described by the ACCC as “unique publications”. Today, the number of unique, separate News Corp news titles is 19.

THE DECLINE OF ACM AND ALTERNATIVES

Australian Community Media (ACM) is currently the largest regional newspaper publisher by number of outlets, but like News Corp, ACM’s titles have been in steep decline since its separation from Nine in 2019. At its peak, it owned and published 170 local and regional newspaper titles.³⁰ By 2024, four years after the start of the pandemic, it had just 62 listed by the Australian Press Council (all of which have their own websites and print editions). In

²⁹ The APC classifies the Geelong Advertiser as a state masthead, but is counted here and in Figure 3 as a local newspaper.

³⁰ Meade (2020) *Dozens of Australian newspapers stop printing as coronavirus crisis hits advertising*, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2020/apr/14/dozens-of-australian-newspapers-stop-printing-as-coronavirus-crisis-hits-advertising>

2025 ACM shuttered more outlets and announced a plan to move all its remaining daily newspapers to a weekly format.³¹

While some of these newspapers were sold off to smaller publishers, the vast majority are entirely gone. This decline comes mainly from its offerings in smaller regional towns, including all its holdings in Queensland, and most in Victoria.

In the gaps left by both ACM and News Corp, some towns saw new alternatives emerge, however many of those shut down in the months and years after.³² Where they have endured, they often have not been able to reach the level of resourcing afforded by their predecessors. The *Centralian Today* in Alice Springs publishes half the number of issues of its News Corp owned predecessor. The same is true with Stanthorpe's *Today*, and with other regional Queensland papers.

Despite a stark decline in the number of individual news outlets published by the four largest media owners in Australia, this has not led to a noticeable loosening of their collective hold on the market. Instead, it has often meant a decline in the volume and diversity of local news, or the absence of genuinely local news entirely.

³¹ Holdsworth (2025) *Australian Community Media flags future further reduction in print editions*, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-02-07/acm-newspapers-print-editions-saturdays/104908300>

³² Dickson and des Preaux (2024) *Australian News Data Report: September 2024*, p 19, <https://piji.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/2409-AND-Report-Sep-2024.pdf>

Conclusion

Four large conglomerates control 84% of the Australian newspaper market.³³ Despite this, 18 of the 20 most populous urban areas in Australia, where 39% of Australians live, do not have a competitive market between two print media outlets of the same size. While most Australians now get their news online, the lopsided dynamics of print media competition are invariably mirrored with their digital counterparts, with online alternatives offering little reprieve. When online news first began appearing, many heralded it as an opportunity for new independent voices to diversify Australia's media. While new alternatives have appeared, the same key players have maintained their dominance through to the internet age, and with mergers and acquisitions they have become more influential than ever.

The situation is similarly grim outside of the 20 most populous areas of Australia. The decline of News Corp and ACM's local and regional holdings has not led to a broadening of the Australian media market, with more than a quarter of Local Government Areas having no independent local news. Maintaining regular news coverage of regional areas was not profitable for big corporate newspapers, and other entrants have found it difficult to change that dynamic. Where the reach of the big conglomerates has receded, they have been replaced either by smaller, less regular outlets, or by nothing at all.

While more Australians get their news online than from the print editions primarily discussed in this paper, the newspapers that dominate in print also tend to dominate on the web. Australia has not seen the flowering of competition and diversity of news that optimists thought would happen in the digital era. Although online alternatives that have emerged can be a valuable tool for their communities, they face the same economic pressures and will often have the same restraints on resources and staffing as the outlets that preceded them. National online news services, such as the ABC, News, Nine, Seven, and Guardian websites, may offer some level of competition where print media is lacking. For example, 24% of Australians read ABC News online country-wide, roughly equal to the digital reach of the four largest News Corp capital city broadsheets combined. However, it seems unlikely that national news services can offer the same focus on area-specific news that a local alternative would, making their ability to fill gaps in competition questionable.

From Australia's biggest cities to its smallest towns, news is less local, written by fewer journalists, that live in fewer places, than ever before. And almost all of it is owned by the same handful of companies that have controlled the market for decades.

³³ Flew, Fitzgerald, McTernan and Nicholls (2024), *Communications, media and internet concentration in Australia 2019-2022*, p 28

Appendix

Table: The newspaper markets in Australia's 20 largest cities

City	Population	Competition	Major Paper	Owner	Competing Paper	Major?
<u>Sydney</u>	4,830,047	Yes	Daily Telegraph	News Corp	Sydney Morning Herald	Daily
<u>Melbourne</u>	4,817,843	Yes	Herald Sun	News Corp	The Age	Daily
<u>Brisbane</u>	2,447,280	No	Courier Mail	News Corp	none	-
<u>Perth</u>	2,098,239	No	The West Australian	Seven West	none	-
<u>Adelaide</u>	1,368,209	No	Adelaide Advertiser	News Corp	none	-
Gold Coast	607,665	No	Gold Coast Bulletin	News Corp	none	-
Newcastle - Maitland	508,437	Lopsided	Newcastle Herald	ACM	Newcastle Weekly	Weekly
<u>Canberra</u>	490,517	Lopsided	Canberra Times	ACM	CBR Weekly/City	Weekly
Sunshine Coast	382,903	No	Sunshine Coast Daily	News Corp	none	-
Central Coast	343,180	Lopsided	Central Coast Community News (weekly)	Local ownership	Central Coast Sun (bi-monthly)	Every two months
Wollongong	305,691	No	Illawarra Mercury	ACM	none	-
Geelong	289,630	Lopsided	Geelong Advertiser	News Corp	Geelong Independent	Weekly
<u>Hobart</u>	226,653	No	Hobart Mercury	News Corp	none	-
Townsville	179,011	No	Townsville Bulletin	News Corp	none	-
Cairns	153,425	Lopsided	Cairns Post	News Corp	Cairns Local News	Weekly
Toowoomba	142,163	No	The Courier (Toowoomba)	News Corp	none	-
<u>Darwin</u>	127,215	No	NT News	News Corp	none	-
Ballarat	111,973	Lopsided	The Courier (Ballarat)	ACM	Ballarat Times	Weekly
Bendigo	103,034	Lopsided	Bendigo Advertiser	ACM	Bendigo Times	Weekly
Albury - Wodonga	97,793	No	The Border Mail	ACM	none	-

Based on research and analysis of the newspaper market in each city. Newspapers that publish much less frequently (such as daily vs monthly) and those that do not cover the entire city (such as local newspapers that only cover specific suburbs) are not counted as competitors here.

Population: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Significant Urban Area population

