



# Resourcing, technology & audiences

An industry-led agenda for journalism practice and research



# **RESOURCING, TECHNOLOGY & AUDIENCES:**

AN INDUSTRY-LED AGENDA FOR  
JOURNALISM PRACTICE  
AND RESEARCH

### **The News, Technology and Society (NTS) Network**

at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia, brings together interdisciplinary researchers who focus on research related to the social impacts of news, journalism and emerging technologies to build internal research capacity and support impactful collaboration with partners across the news and media industry. It is organised around four themes: news, digital platforms and cultures; news production and audiences; news literacies, information integrity and fact-checking; and media governance, policy and guidelines.

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### **Acknowledgement of Country**

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to their Ancestors and Elders, past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

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# Executive Summary

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**News media continues to be highly exposed to technological transformations, from digital platforms to artificial intelligence. Researchers are highly engaged with these challenges—but academic publishing can be slow, and there can be differences between what researchers focus on and what industry needs.**

This report brings together key findings from a half-day, in-person industry roundtable held in late September 2025 that aimed to facilitate better exchanges between industry and academia. Industry participants were drawn from four key segments of the Australian news sector: (i) journalism associations; (ii) large commercial media; (iii) small/independent/community media; and (iv) public media.

The roundtable discussion was divided into two halves, the first focusing on industry challenges and the second on how research can help address these challenges.

The challenges identified in the first half of the roundtable have been thematically grouped across four areas: (i) Resourcing and personnel; (ii) The influence of technology; (iii) News audiences; and (iv) Sector environment and impact.

Resourcing and personnel challenges included insufficient time and organisational resourcing to support innovation and experimentation, difficulties in implementing sustainable digital business models, and challenges associated with the training of staff. In regards to the influence of technology, concerns were raised about internal difficulties in responding to AI's rapid pace as well the lack of compensation from AI companies. Algorithms and the power of big tech were additional concerns in this category. News audience challenges included changing consumption habits, trust, and media literacy. Lastly, sector environment and impact included continuing concerns about competition, lack of government support, and the impact of journalism.

For the second half of the roundtable, participants identified various ways in which researchers can support industry. These included whole-sector studies of the viability of different digital business models, as well as research on how and in which ways government advertising is supporting Australian journalism. Further researching the news needs of local and regional communities was also called for. Participants identified influencers as an emerging actor whose impact and quality needs to be assessed, as well as for more research on Australian AI literacy.

# Introduction

**The news media is one of Australia's most technologically exposed sectors (Meese, 2023). Newsrooms have had to transition to digital distribution and then manage the emergence of digital platforms and artificial intelligence in quick succession. The sector is under constant technical and financial pressure and as a result, organisations must adapt quickly.**

Researchers study important issues, from the spread of misinformation to the use and deployment of AI in newsrooms (Spina et al., 2023; Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024). However, there can often be a time lag between what is happening in the industry and when researchers publish their results (Cools, Helberger, & de Vreese, 2025). There can even be stark differences between what industry needs and what researchers focus on.

Because of these differences, there is a need for a stronger feedback loop between the news media sector and academia. While areas of interest may not always fully overlap, establishing ongoing industry engagement ensures that academics can not only identify emerging challenges early but also provide research that can address real newsroom pressures.

The News, Technology and Society (NTS) Network convened a half-day, in-person industry roundtable in late September 2025 as a way to facilitate better exchanges between the industry and academia. This roundtable built on an earlier co-hosted event with UTS in 2024 that explored how the Australian news industry was responding to generative AI in journalism (Attard, et al., 2025; Thomson, et al., 2025).

For our roundtable, 14 participants came to Melbourne to discuss the news industry's challenges and to identify key areas of research. Participants were drawn from four key segments of the Australian news & media landscape: (i) journalism associations; (ii) large commercial media; (iii) small/independent/community media; and (iv) public media. In Section 1 of this report, we share a thematically grouped overview of these challenges. In Section 2, we discuss the areas that the industry representatives said they wanted more research on. More details about our method and the roundtable are provided in Appendix 1: Method.





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## Section 1

# Challenges: Mapping the news industry's challenges

## News Industry representatives identified 43 challenges their organisations were facing across four thematic areas:

- **Resourcing and personnel;**
- **The influence of technology;**
- **News audiences; and**
- **Sector environment and impact.**

These challenges do not always sit neatly within one single area. For example, challenges around AI might sit at the intersection between both ‘the influence of technology’ and ‘resourcing and personnel’.

Not all challenges were relevant to all organisations or even to all of the four segments represented in the roundtable. Challenges centred on resourcing and personnel and around the influences of technology, for example, cut across all four segments represented. In contrast, challenges related to news audiences were only raised by representatives from public media and large commercial media. ‘Sector environment and impact’ challenges were only raised by small/independent/community media and public media.

An at-a-glance overview of these challenges by prevalence can be seen in Appendix 2. A mapped version of the challenges by segment type can be seen in Appendix 3.

## Resourcing and personnel

### Challenges about resourcing and personnel were frequently mentioned by representatives across all four segments.

For some, the challenges originated because of **insufficient time** and lack of organisational resourcing to support experimentation, testing, innovation, and development. In the words of one of the participants working in public service media:

*What we need is time and flexibility to test and pilot ideas ... I've got a couple of things that I would love to get off the ground, but also on a daily basis that's me going to one of my editors and saying, 'So, on top of the 17 things that I've asked you to do over the last month, what I'd really like to do is test out a new tool that might apply some of our style guide into our articles' ...our teams are really structured around editorial output and don't necessarily have that flex [around testing].*

Participants also flagged organisational culture as a potential challenge when it stymied innovation and resisted change.

Unique to the small/independent/community media organisations were concerns about the **sustainability of their business models**. One of the representatives from this segment noted how advertising was not sustainable anymore. However, a digital subscriptions-driven model also had its issues. In their words:

*There's not enough people to buy [digital] subs[criptions] to support journalism in many of these markets. A lot of people have tried, it's not working. The only really good example of where it's been tried at scale was NewsCorp in Queensland when they shut down [printed editions in 2020]. And when they did that, they decimated newsrooms, they sacked 80% of the journalists, they do a fraction of the stories they once did, and the stories they're doing are largely crime. So, you know, for me the discussion needs to be about what [we can] do around sustaining the news.*

Some of the smaller organisations said they were able to find a balance in providing place-based journalism with local reporters but also cutting costs by centralising aspects like editing and layout and design.

In one of the relevant representative's words, 'We've got people on the ground like no other media does, but a lot of the back-end stuff would be done through centralised services so we keep the costs down significantly'.

Participants also spoke at some length about resourcing in terms of **labour**. This included challenges related to the training and development of staff, workforce sustainability, especially for younger journalists, and supporting their staff. Community broadcasters, in particular, were mentioned as being quite vulnerable because they are often volunteer-run, which can make the labour unpredictable and can challenge the outlet's ability to operate consistently. One of the representatives from this segment said,

'The changing nature of work and volunteering impacts our development of a skilled, sustainable workforce that can adapt to evolving needs of communities'.

Outlier challenges within this area, mentioned only by representatives in the small/independent/community segment, include the legal/financial risks of publishing in relation to the potential for **defamation lawsuits** and the challenge of producing **multimedia content**. Speaking to the defamation risk, one of the participants said, 'Defamation settings create outsized risk for publishers, insurance is costly, and a single dispute can consume scarce resources compared to social platforms and users of platforms who seem to be allowed to go unchecked'.

## The influence of technology

**Challenges around the influences of technology were the second most prevalent. These challenges cut across all four segments but the specific sub-types did vary by segment.**

As an example, only representatives from large commercial media and from public media identified their AI approach or responding to AI as challenges. In contrast, smaller publishers were concerned about the influences of big tech companies on the distribution of news and information and on the influence of algorithms in relation to when, where, and how their content was encountered.

Concerning the organisation's **internal approach to AI or how to react to AI being used externally**, some representatives shared how the rapid pace of AI's changing capabilities made it challenging to keep up with. Others from the small publishers segment were worried about their content being used to train AI models without consent or compensation. In the words of one of the small publishers:

*I think AI is going to provide us with some great benefits ultimately but the scary thing is then how the content gets used and how you get monetized for it. That's going to be one of our challenges, creating content but then someone goes into ChatGPT or Gemini or whatever and gets all your information and there's no form of recompense, so there's got to be a solution to that.*

While some larger news conglomerates, such as News Corp Australia, have inked deals with AI companies such as OpenAI (Thomson & Meese, 2024), participants from smaller news publishers were worried that these deals would not be made with those operating in the small/independent/community segment.

Both large and small players in the media landscape reported using AI to help with resourcing or publishing and distribution challenges. As an example, one of the representatives from one of the broadcasters in the room shared that:

*One of our biggest pain points is making sure TV stories are making their way onto the news website. There's the constant pressure of broadcasting 11-12 stories a night. If their stories don't end up on the website then there's pressure about that. Like, 'Why aren't our stories there?' It's definitely an issue that everyone has, so what we've done is we've leant on AI that now uses the TV script to turn into a baseline story [for review by a human editor] ... That has been fundamentally life-changing for our organisation.*

Other representatives from large commercial outlets shared how they used AI to include SEO keywords in headlines and stories while smaller outlets said they were using AI for sub-editing. In the words of one representative from one of the smaller, independently owned outlets:

*The print advertising numbers aren't coming in. So, we've had to make quite a big part of the team redundant. We have used AI to supplement that. So, we've got an AI subeditor. We've got an AI journalist and ... they do the base work. They do the first draft, second draft, and then we get a human in for the final draft before we go live.*

Participants also shared challenges around low AI literacy in their organisations and wanting to use AI cautiously due to the perception that 'audiences don't trust AI'. While research on news audiences' reactions to generative AI in journalism is still nascent, early results suggest that audience acceptance of the technology in journalism depends on how it is used and whether the use is disclosed (Archer, 2024; Collao, 2024; Thomson, et al., 2025).

Regarding **advances in tech, more broadly, and the influence of big tech**, participants from smaller news organisations said it was incredibly challenging to try to compete with Google and Facebook for digital advertising revenue (for more on this, see Meese, 2023). They also lamented the withdrawal of Meta from the Commonwealth government's News Media Bargaining Code, as these participants said their segment was heavily dependent on that revenue.

Concerning the impact of **algorithms on news consumption**, participants from larger commercial media organisations noted a decline in Google traffic to their websites and the 'implications of Google Zero starting to kind of take effect'. One representative from this segment observed:

*Especially with things like Google AI overview and algorithms ... changing every single week, it's like how do we tailor our content and how do we ... form that strategy offsite for people to find our journalism and then go back direct and, you know, engage and be a loyal reader because if they aren't coming to us already, how do they know we exist?*

Representatives from the same segment noted the challenge of trying to maintain their organisation's brand voice and authority in a social media environment that prefers 'publications ... or headlines that are a bit [click]bait-ier'.

Some of the smaller publishers noted that their **organisations' productivity was hindered by not embracing technology** while some of the public media representatives thought that the unique affordances of each social media platform sometimes distracted from the storytelling aspects of journalism. They said they found it challenging to **keep a focus on the story rather than on the platform**.





**Challenges around news audiences were the third most prevalent mentioned by the industry stakeholders present; however, notably, these audience-related challenges were only mentioned by representatives from the public media and large commercial media segments.**

None of the representatives from the small/independent/community segment raised audience-related challenges on behalf of their organisations, which might reflect the higher levels of trust that local news has compared to national or international news (Park, et al., 2025) and the more intimate relationships that are possible between journalists and audiences in smaller communities.

For the large commercial and public media organisations whose representatives raised these challenges, they were concerned about **changing audience news consumption habits**, including news avoidance, which they perceived were driven, in part, by changes in technology. In one of the commercial broadcaster's words:

*I think that there's no denying that TikTok's completely changed the way that media in general is consumed. Vertical, short, snappy. I mean, it's got the gambling machine concept to it. And I think that it has impacted how people consume all media, which includes news. And I think long-form is being damaged, written journalism is being damaged, as a result of it.*

Participants also claimed that 'everyone's busier. It's just the way people are, they're juggling so much more', which also affected if and how they engaged with the news. In response, some organisations have created audience editor roles to try to better understand audience behaviours and allow that understanding to inform editorial publication strategies.

Maintaining **audience trust** was flagged by some of the representatives from one of the public broadcasters represented in the room. For them, even though they enjoyed higher levels of trust compared to large commercial media, there was sometimes a tension with being associated with the government and the influence this had on people's perceptions of trust.

The smaller publishers, in contrast, said their size and presence in the communities they served positively affected audiences' perceptions of trust. One of the participants from this segment put it like this, 'We see in broadcast and in journalism and particularly at a local level around those relationships and people understanding what's going on in their community being embedded and having that audience trust as a result because they're so known'.

The final two audience-related challenges were **varying levels of media literacy** by audiences, which is timely as Australia looks in the coming years to develop its first national media literacy strategy (Rowland, 2024), and for the representatives from public service media organisations, '**ensuring a true representation of Australian society**'.



## Sector environment and impact

**Participants identified other challenges to do with competition in their area, government regulation, and the impact of their journalism. These challenges were raised by representatives from public media and small/independent/community media.**

The first of these challenges was that smaller news publishers said they were increasingly feeling like they were **in competition with other publishers, such as town councils**. In the words of one of the representatives from this segment:

*I will put on the table that the biggest threat or a bigger threat ... in regional areas is actually local government. So, the highest paid-journalists in many of the markets in which we operate are not in newsrooms. They're working for local government ... The slow creep of councils just doing a bit in newsletters and covering stuff that's not council updates ... as that grows and communities become reliant on the council for their news, that undermines our ability to do what we're doing and to fund what we're doing.*

Also related to the government and also related to concerns from the small publishers segment is a challenge around the **uncertainty of government support or action** around local, public interest journalism. In the words of one of the representatives from this segment:

*One of the big challenges at the moment I think is the [news media] bargaining code. That was really important to our sector in terms of revenue. And all of a sudden that got taken away when Meta pulled out. So, as soon as the government does something [through the News Media Assistance Program], I think it will provide more sustainability ... I don't think it's going to happen any time soon with Trump and all what he's doing but I think it will ultimately come. It's just really important to come as soon as possible.*

Relatedly, smaller publishers were also frustrated by the slowness with which the Commonwealth government has approached the regulation of generative AI.

The final outlier challenge in this area, which was raised by a representative from the public media segment, **was ensuring journalism has impact**<sup>1</sup>.

Overall, the first part of the roundtable provided a sector-wide snapshot of the news industry's challenges, which centred primarily around resourcing, technology, and news audiences, and allowed for an understanding of which of these challenges were unique to particular types of organisations and which were shared more widely across the sector (see Appendix 2). The second part of the report sets out an industry led research agenda for media and communication into the future.

<sup>1</sup> Some of the challenges attendees identified were shared via an online form prior to the roundtable while others emerged during or were further contextualised through the roundtable discussion. Because of this, not all challenges have supporting quotes. The prevalence of each challenge by number of mentions across organisational segments can be seen in Appendix 2.







## Section 2

# Vision: An industry led research agenda

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**The challenges identified in the first half of the roundtable already took us some way towards setting out a vision for future research. Shifting news audience behaviours and attitudes, effective resourcing and technological change stood out as the three key pain points. In the second session, participants went on to set out specific areas of research, more often than not associated with these topics.**

Business model sustainability was an ongoing area of concern for participants. Long-term efforts like the Australian News Data Project (ANDP), which operated from 2020-2024, have helped to track the rise and fall of the sector, and the work has now been taken up by the Australian Communication and Media Authority (ACMA, 2025). However, there was a call for more specific projects. For example, one participant noted that while various international outlets had considered business model diversification, there had not been a rigorous whole-of-sector study of whether that approach was viable in Australia.

It was also noted that while Government was a key subsidy provider of less well-resourced outlets through advertising, this differed significantly across State and Federal Governments. Some State Governments spent strategically whereas others seemed to be more ad-hoc. Participants suggested that better tracking of government advertising through dedicated research would be beneficial.

There was a call for continual research around local and regional news. While existing Australian work was acknowledged (Hess and Waller 2017; Park, Thomson, & Jee, 2025), a participant noted that the relationship between community needs, economic sustainability and democracy could be further explored.

With respect to technological change, there was ongoing discussion about the need to ensure that good storytelling could be centred across ‘trends and formats’. These suggestions pointed to the need to also look beyond sectoral change and towards research around effective narrative construction. These comments point towards potential intersections between journalism research and teaching and literary studies or creative writing.

Other comments noted the emergence of influencers (Hurcombe, 2024) and whether the role of the journalist needed to be protected in a context where many audiences were getting their information from online commentators and personalities. As one participant noted, ‘the slippery slope to editorializing and advocating is very, very steep.’

While other topics were not directly mentioned in the second session, we can infer some additional research areas from the earlier discussion around challenges. Our participants called for more spaces to safely test and pilot ideas. This is one area where there could be scope to work with universities. AI literacy was also mentioned as an issue in and beyond the newsroom, as well as working out the best and safest use of these newer technologies. Developing expertise and use case assessments in-house will be key sources of insight, as partnered research could help establish sector-wide guidelines and standards. Finally, there were ongoing concerns about algorithmic performance, suggesting that work that can help newsrooms understand how platforms present their news to audiences remains critical (Bailo et al. 2021; Meese et al. 2024).

# Conclusion: Timelines and Trust

**There are opportunities for collaboration between academics and the news sector around key issues ([Cools, Helberger, & de Vreese, 2025](#)).**

In some cases, this looks like journalism researchers continuing key projects on things like local news or algorithms and sharing their findings more widely. In other cases, it means focusing less on grand narratives and focusing on the practical realities of journalism, from implementing viable business models to building AI literacy.

To achieve this goal, both sides need to work together. Academic timelines are often slow and quick turnarounds are difficult without additional resourcing. Institutions are also complex and it can be hard to find the ‘front door’. However, scholars can provide an independent account of the sector, and validate findings for one or more parties. In a constrained environment, it can be hard for newsrooms to think beyond the next quarter. However, setting out a long-term agenda and drawing on academic expertise to solve those ‘not now’ problems when it makes sense, can help address those bigger questions about long-term sustainability which continue to challenge the sector.



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# Appendices

# Method

The roundtable was convened under the Chatham House Rule so we cannot disclose the names or affiliations of those present but the roundtable included contributions from 14 news industry representatives across four segments: (i) journalism associations; (ii) large commercial media; (iii) small/independent/community media (including peak bodies that represent these organisations); and (iv) public media.

The types of people present were senior leaders within their organisations or departments and included roles such as managing editors and directors, heads or directors of digital news and strategy, audience editors, and heads of peak organisations representing journalism and broadcasting bodies. Attendees were from Melbourne and the surrounding area, Sydney, and Brisbane.

Prior to the roundtable, each attendee was asked to share one or more specific challenges that they perceived their organisation was facing. These challenges were mapped by organisation and segment type (public media, small/independent/community media, large commercial media, and journalism associations) so the attendees could see areas of commonality or difference across the news industry.

The roundtable, which was audio-recorded, was facilitated by Jacinta Parsons, a working journalist with nearly 20 years of professional experience. The first part of the roundtable focused on the news industry's challenges. It allowed attendees to introduce themselves and expand upon the challenges their organisation faced. After introductions and an initial discussion of organisational challenges, participants were shown the visualisation that mapped the challenges identified before the roundtable and invited to clarify or tweak how the challenges were presented

or add additional challenges that they thought were missing. The second part of the roundtable focused on topics relevant to their organisations that attendees wanted more research on.

The audio from the roundtable—totalling nearly 30,000 words—was transcribed initially using AI and then manually checked and refined by the report authors within 10 days of the event. The challenges and research priorities were thematically analysed and narrativised for this report and were also informed by notes the roundtable's organisers took throughout the day. A draft of this was shared with roundtable attendees to ensure accuracy and appropriate interpretation of the discussion on the day.



# At-a-glance overview of challenges by prevalence

Challenge area	Number of mentions
<b>Resourcing and personnel (umbrella category)</b>	<b>17</b>
Resourcing (including time to test/pilot) and organisational culture	7
Business model sustainability	5
Labour (training, sustainability of, especially for younger journalists, support of)	3
Legal/financial risks of publishing (defamation)	1
Producing multimedia journalism	1
<b>Influences of technology (umbrella category)</b>	<b>14</b>
AI approach (internal) and approach to AI (external)	4
Advances in tech (including influence of big tech)	3
Influences of algorithms on news consumption	3
Maintaining brand authenticity on social media	2
Productivity hindered by not embracing tech	1
Keeping focus on story rather than on platform	1
<b>News audiences (umbrella category)</b>	<b>9</b>
Changing audience consumption habits	3
Maintaining audience trust	2
News avoidance	2
Representativeness of audiences	1
Varying media literacies of audiences	1
<b>Sector environment and impact (umbrella category)</b>	<b>4</b>
Competition with other publishers, eg councils	2
Uncertainty of government support or action	1
Ensuring journalism has impact	1

# Mapped version of the challenges by segment type





