

**ABC Submission to the
News Media Assistance
Program Consultation
Paper**
February 2024



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The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation paper “News Media Assistance Program” issued by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts. This submission provides the ABC’s perspective on the areas of interest to the Department in relation to government intervention in support of public interest journalism.

The ABC plays a critical role in the news media and public interest journalism in Australia, fostering an informed and engaged citizenry, which is the cornerstone of a healthy Australian democracy. It is an essential element in the Australian media landscape. It provides a foundation for public interest journalism across the country and has a focus on presenting a diversity of views. It ensures that Australians always have access to a free source of independent news and information.

The ABC supports the principle of news diversity. A variety of news outlets extend and increase coverage and provide additional perspectives, further informing and enriching public debate. More concentration among news outlets, either through consolidation or closures, may mean that stories are missed and voices are lost. This danger is particularly acute at the community or “hyperlocal” level where it is more difficult to sustain commercial newsgathering efforts.

Local news outlets can play a key role in combating the spread of misinformation by reporting local factual information and expert opinions. A decline in access to local news not only leads to a less-informed society, it also creates an information “vacuum” that aids the spread of factually inaccurate information creating a misinformed society.

The Australian Government has a role to play in regard to ensuring media diversity and access to local news. However, it must pursue this objective in a way that will not undermine the actual or perceived independence of Australia’s media services.

As a public media organisation and Australia’s largest news provider, the ABC has a strong interest in a diverse media environment. It operates with consideration for commercial and community news providers and works with them and alongside them to ensure important public interest stories are told. This position provides the basis for the ABC’s responses to the questions raised in the consultation paper.

1. Access

Access to, and the availability of, independent news is a critical pillar of democratic societies.

The ABC strives to make its news accessible to as many Australians as possible. The ABC is available for free on radio, on television and online, minimising the financial barriers to accessing news. ABC news content is available in a number of languages, including Mandarin, Bahasa Indonesia and Tok Pisin. ABC local radio terrestrial broadcasts are available to more than 99% of Australians, supporting the widespread availability of local news and information, regardless of location. Its platforms and content are designed to meet the needs of those with diverse abilities.

Despite the efforts that the ABC goes to ensure all Australians have access to news, it cannot fill all the gaps. A diverse media landscape is required to ensure all areas of Australian society have access to high quality news and journalism and a range of perspectives. Availability and access are achieved when all Australian citizens can find a range of high-quality and relevant journalism on their preferred platforms, regardless of ability, age, education, financial status, English language skills, and location.

It is important for the Government to consider all the different ways that people access news in any intervention plan, and provide support across a diverse range of platforms. Some Australians may find traditional print media to be the most accessible news source, while others may prefer digital. Indeed, those with high education and income levels are more likely to rely on online sources for news (33%) than people with low or medium levels of income and education. In contrast, TV is mainly preferred by those with low levels of education (52%) and income (46%).¹

Broadcast audiences are declining but are nonetheless significant, and are expected to remain so for some time. The ABC will continue to offer broadcast television news for the foreseeable future.

The availability of digital news improves the accessibility of news for many Australians, while at the same time digital-only news sources limit access for other Australians due to the barriers to internet access that are still present. While internet services are available to more than 99 per cent of the Australian population, availability doesn't equal access by consumers. Factors such as internet take-up, service cost and service capability are relevant to consideration whether a person has access to online news.

A significant proportion of Australians do not have access to broadband, and many cannot afford subscription news services. The Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) found that, in 2023, 9.4 per cent of Australians were highly excluded from the benefits of Australia's digital transformation. The report also found that Australians who identify as First Nations, are aged 75+, or with lower education, employment and income were more likely to be highly excluded.²

These Australians rely on free-to-air services, such as the ABC, to deliver news via television and radio, which don't require access to the internet. The ABC covers local news stories through its 58 regional locations and 48 local broadcast stations, and broadcasts news on television via the ABC main channel and its ABC News channel. However, the ABC is not funded to provide comprehensive coverage at a hyperlocal or community level, which includes reporting on all local government activities and local councils. Sustainable local news outlets are required to give all Australian communities access to relevant news and information.

Social media continues to be a popular way for Australians to access online news. The overall use of social media platforms for news has been on the rise, and in 2023 the most popular platforms for accessing news were Facebook (32%), YouTube (23%), Instagram (14%), Twitter (12%), WhatsApp news (10%) and TikTok (8%). 42% of TikTok users use the platform for news.³

¹ Park, S., McGuinness, K., Fisher, C., Lee, J., McCallum, K., Cai, X., Chatskin, M., Mardjianto, L. & Yao, P. (2023). [Digital News Report: Australia 2023](#). Canberra: News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra

² Australian Digital Inclusion Index (2023) [Key findings and next steps - Australian Digital Inclusion Index](#)

³ Park, S., McGuinness, K., Fisher, C., Lee, J., McCallum, K., Cai, X., Chatskin, M., Mardjianto, L. & Yao, P. (2023). [Digital News Report: Australia 2023](#). Canberra: News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra

Depending on the platform, audiences pay attention to different news sources. On Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube, people pay most attention to news from mainstream media and journalists. In contrast, TikTok news users pay more attention to news from ordinary individuals and social media personalities.⁴

While easily accessible, there is a risk to democracy and society on relying too heavily on social media to inform. Social media has been shown to be less informative and result in a nonpositive effect on learning about political and current affairs.⁵ On social media platforms, opinion and news are too easily conflated, and misinformation is common.

In this environment, where news organisations are heavily reliant on the algorithms of social media platforms, news organisations are more susceptible to instability. Changes to those algorithms can significantly impact discoverability and audience reach. There are some indications that social platforms will de-prioritise news content in future.

The widespread availability of news and information at each level of government is critical to a functioning democracy, as it encourages awareness, accountability and transparency throughout all levels of government. Local news outlets play a particularly important role in informing community members about local government, elections, and other civic events.

The ABC supports the Government's efforts in encouraging a thriving and diverse media, and believes it is the role of government to create conditions for news to flourish across all types of platforms and audiences.

2. Quality

The ABC supports the argument that high-quality public interest journalism is key to maintaining a healthy democracy and cohesive society. Underpinning this notion is that advances in digital (and often globally owned) technology have accelerated the spread of mis- and disinformation, and of biased and opinionated news.⁶ Australians feel overwhelmed by the amount of false information they encounter, which translates into the desire for more high-quality and trustworthy news.⁷

Given these developments, the ABC recognises that a quality framework that assures certain ethical and professional journalistic standards would be helpful to assess whether commercial news outlets qualify for government support.

The government should consider professional and ethical standards and guidelines when assessing the eligibility for support. In the case of the ABC, its commitment to the provision of high-quality news and information services for all Australians is mandated in legislation, and the

⁴ Park, S., McGuinness, K., Fisher, C., Lee, J., McCallum, K., Cai, X., Chatskin, M., Mardjianto, L. & Yao, P. (2023). *Digital News Report: Australia 2023*. Canberra: News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra

⁵ [Learning Political News From Social Media: Network Media Logic and Current Affairs News Learning in a High-Choice Media Environment - Adam Shehata, Jesper Strömbäck, 2021 \(sagepub.com\)](#)

⁶ UNESCO (6 November 2023) Online disinformation : UNESCO unveils action plan to regulate social media platforms: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/online-disinformation-unesco-unveils-action-plan-regulate-social-media-platforms> (accessed 11 January 2024). World Economic Forum (2024) Global Risks Report 2024: <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2024/> (accessed: 11 January 2024).

⁷ Park, S., McGuinness, K., Fisher, C., Lee, J., McCallum, K., Cai, X., Chatskin, M., Mardjianto, L. & Yao, P. (2023). *Digital News Report: Australia 2023*. Canberra: News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra

Corporation’s editorial policies and guidelines, as well as its robust complaints process, constitute a further strong quality commitment.⁸

Being a member of a press council, responding adequately to complaints and/or having a minimum number of employed journalists that are recognized by a press council are additional measures that demonstrate compliance with professional and ethical journalistic standards and guidelines. The existence of an editor-in-chief, a minimum number of accredited journalists employed locally on a full-time basis as well as the availability of and participation in recognised journalistic training are quality criteria that can be used to assess the eligibility for media subsidy. This must be balanced with the recognition that smaller local outlets are unlikely to have adequate scale to meet the full extent of this criterion.

Including original content as a quality criterion will also ensure that news continues to be produced by a local journalist for a local audience rather than being simply distributed through a central editorial office.

Any assistance program must be designed at a distance from government and must not open opportunities for political influence on editorial, operational or financial decisions. Outsourcing the responsibility to assess whether a commercial news outlet qualifies for media assistance to an independent body would ensure such journalistic independence.

Such strong regulation exists for Australia’s national broadcasters, with their editorial, operational and financial independence being secured through legislation, in particular the *Australian Broadcasting Act 1983* (“ABC Act”) and the *Special Broadcasting Service Act 1991* (“SBS Act”). The ABC Charter, which is contained in section 6 of the ABC Act, further ensures the ABC’s utmost commitment to high-quality editorial standards and practices. To protect the ABC’s independence, the Corporation is further primarily accountable to the ABC Board whose duty it is to “maintain the independence and integrity” of the Corporation that it oversees.⁹

3. Media Diversity

Diverse media ownership is an important democratic safeguard. It creates opportunities for a range of views to be heard and helps to ensure that no single voice or viewpoint dominates public debate. It increases the opportunities for, and likelihood of, coverage that better reflects the diversity of Australian communities. It also creates healthy competition that encourages providers to seek and tell untold stories and reach for the quality that wins audiences and awards.

In today’s media landscape there are more outlets, more platforms, and new types of providers than ever before. However, sources of genuine, well-researched, and fact-based newsgathering have not grown or strengthened in equal measure.

The ABC Charter establishes that the ABC is part of an Australian broadcasting system that consists of national, commercial, and community sectors and requires the ABC to take account of

⁸ The Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act (1983) (the ABC Act) sets out that the ABC must “develop and maintain an independent service for the broadcasting of news and information by the Corporation” and states that the ABC Board is obliged to “ensure that the gathering and presentation by the Corporation of news and information is accurate and impartial according to the recognised standards of objective journalism”.

⁹ *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983*, s 6 and s 8(1)(b).

the commercial and community sectors in the provision of its services.¹⁰ This requirement frames the ABC's operations as one provider among others, recognising the value of, and support for, media diversity in Australia.

The Charter also establishes the ABC as an independent media provider that stands apart from both government and commercial interests. It is a pillar supporting the democratic principle of a free press that strives to keep citizens informed and hold the powerful to account.

Local news outlets play a vital role in keeping their communities informed. Over the past 10 years newspapers have closed and radio and television audiences have declined as the business models and revenue sources of traditional outlets have been disrupted. Thousands of journalists have lost their jobs.

In Australia, the number of recognised journalists in Australian has fallen by an estimated 5,000 in the decade to 2021.¹¹

Each outlet that closes reduces the sources of public interest journalism available to them. This, in turn, creates gaps or “news deserts” where there is little, if any, regular news reporting at a community and local government level.

The Government has a critical role to play in supporting a viable and diverse public interest journalism sector in Australia, including funding and protecting the independence of public service media, and ensuring that industry regulation encourages a viable and diverse commercial media sector. The Australian Government has provided some support for commercial local media through its Public Interest News Gathering program and other measures in response to the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.¹² These measures are welcome, but the Government and industry must find a support and revenue model that will enable them to continue longer-term.

The government introduced the News Media Bargaining Code as a policy tool to encourage ‘big tech’ to contribute to news publishers in Australia. The aim of the code was not to address the concerns of news deserts in Australia, nor to “redistribute resources across the news sector or to guarantee that all businesses receive funding”.¹³ While helpful to some, including the ABC, small publishers have largely been left out of the agreements.

Another important area of focus should include supporting greater media literacy, which includes educating the public to better understand the work of journalists and the value of local news. This important step can help to address the public's declining support for journalism, and encourage a better understanding of the importance of local news. Media literacy education includes encouraging citizens to evaluate the information sources they currently use.

The ABC is encouraged by the ACMA's media diversity measurement framework and efforts made to identify and measure media diversity in Australia. However, the removal of localism as a stand-alone area of examination under the framework may reduce its ability to measure the degree of

¹⁰ *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983* (Cth), ss 6(1)(a) and 6(2)(a)(i).

¹¹ [MFAA Opening statement to Senate inquiry into media diversity in Australia](#) (2021)

¹² [Relief for Australian media during COVID-19](#)

¹³ News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code, The Code's first year of Operation, November 2022. *The Australian Government the Treasury*

localism within news content, which is an important element in understanding the extent to which Australians have adequate access to a diverse range of news related to their local area.

For its part, the ABC is currently engaged in research to establish how the ABC can best support local news providers. The ABC has developed a research partnership with Deakin and Griffith Universities to (a) fill data gaps regarding the location and nature of local news ‘deserts’ across regional and rural Australia and (b) identify how the public broadcaster might partner with other news outlets to best support vulnerable areas of the local news ecology. The Australian Local News Resilience Project (2023-2026) (ALNRP) has been made possible thanks to an Australian Research Council Linkage grant (LP220100053).

In the first year of the project, the research team identified a need for a new measurement tool to be developed to specify the types of local news gaps that exist across regional and rural Australia. The Deakin and ABC lead investigators have invested significant time and resources into the development of the Australian Local News Proximity Index (ALNPI) to help fill the existing gaps in evidence. The composite index assesses and predicts a local news outlet’s commitment and ability to provide critical information needs in the place they purport to serve (by suburb or locality). A news outlet’s commitment to place is determined using a quick, 25-question survey that can be completed by the news provider. It determines a news outlet’s physical presence and local news focus, helping the ABC identify potential collaborative solutions to specific problems.

While the ABC is using the index to investigate how it might partner with other media outlets to best direct support to vulnerable news areas, it does not have the resources to use the tool to map local news presence across Australia. However, the ABC recognises there are clear benefits for the index to be used to help inform governments and industry about the types of local news gaps that exist across the country. The ABC suggests the government might consider adopting the ALNPI to achieve some of the objectives highlighted in the News MAP consultation paper. Further details about the index are provided in the Deakin University submission. Finally, in line with a recommendation in the report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts Inquiry into Regional Newspapers (2022) that the ABC work with the Department to facilitate partnerships with small regional publishers and broadcasters, the ABC is also open to working more closely with the Department to ensure the ALNRP can best support the sustainability of local public interest journalism.¹⁴

The ABC’s research partnership with Deakin and Griffith universities was, in part, driven by interest around trial models for supporting local news ecosystems. The first such model, the BBC Local Democracy Reporter Service (LDRS), began in 2017. The service has placed more than 160 reporters in a range of large and small media outlets and has generated thousands of stories. These stories are available to other news outlets, allowing them to offer public interest journalism at no cost. Similar programs have been established in New Zealand and Canada.

It is possible that the ABC’s research partnership will identify a model with some similarities to the LDRS. However, such a model would require the support of local news providers and must take into account Australia’s vast distances and areas of sparse population. It is also likely that a practical model would require government funding in some form.

¹⁴ Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts (2022) The Future of Regional Newspapers in a Digital World: Inquiry into Australia’s regional newspapers: report. https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Communications/Regionalnewspapers/Report

4. Engagement

The ABC understands that in this context, the Government is referring specifically to the propensity and capability of citizens to critically engage with and interpret news content. To achieve this objective, there is a need to understand and monitor levels of media literacy across society.

While greater engagement is a critical outcome that the Government and news organisations must always strive for, it can also be a complex issue, as it is widely acknowledged that what is in the public interest does not always correlate with that in which the public is interested.

Whether or not there is sufficient interest, public interest journalism is a public good that must be supported and available to citizens. Engagement must not be a measure of importance and value. Indeed, 60% of Australians surveyed say public service media, such as provided by the ABC and SBS, is important to society, and 52% say it is important to their lives.¹⁵

Related to engagement is the growing concern of news avoidance globally. In Australia, more than two-thirds of Australians say they are actively avoiding news some of the time, representing a 12 percentage point increase in news avoidance among Australians since 2017.¹⁶

Barriers to engagement that may exist are detailed in the response to Q1 – Access. The Government may consider incentives targeted at increasing inclusiveness, accessibility, and a broadening of languages covered to enhance engagement.

The ABC supports a role for government in promoting and educating for media literacy to improve engagement. The critical engagement of citizens in public interest journalism underpins a thriving democracy. Bad actors can use low media literacy as a tool to manipulate citizens and interfere in democracy.

5. Considerations for Future Policy, Regulatory & Program Design (Consultation Questions 5-8)

5.1. Funding programs to support public interest journalism

In Australia, media subsidies provided by the Government are most commonly provided in the form of direct financial aid to support the hiring of journalists and to provide financial assistance.

If supporting and revitalising local public interest journalism is a key policy rationale, direct subsidies could continue to be used to cover the costs of employing local journalists, as was the case with the Regional and Small Publishers Innovation Fund, and the Journalist Fund of 2022–23, among others.

¹⁵ Park, S., McGuinness, K., Fisher, C., Lee, J., McCallum, K., Cai, X., Chatskin, M., Mardjianto, L. & Yao, P. (2023). [Digital News Report: Australia 2023](#). Canberra: News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra

¹⁶ Park, S., McGuinness, K., Fisher, C., Lee, J., McCallum, K., Cai, X., Chatskin, M., Mardjianto, L. & Yao, P. (2023). [Digital News Report: Australia 2023](#). Canberra: News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra

In addition to adequate financial resources, media diversity would further benefit from an effective prominence framework. Such a prominence framework would not only address video-on-demand services on internet-connected TVs and related devices but also acknowledge that other platforms (e.g. search engines, social media, news aggregators) may act as powerful gatekeepers between public interest news providers and Australians.¹⁷ The prominence framework that the Government is seeking to enact through the Communications Legislation Amendment (Prominence and Anti-siphoning) Bill 2024 will be an important part of the solution to achieving greater prominence for free-to-air television providers in Australia who deliver news and public interest journalism to Australians.¹⁸ Countries like Germany have introduced “localised public value registers” to improve the geographic diversity of public interest content.

In Australia, as in many other countries, the diversity and quality of commercial public interest journalism in local and regional news markets has severely declined in recent decades, with the pandemic having accelerated this trend. Given that regional and sparsely populated areas are hardest hit by news deserts and news gaps, prioritising news outlets that address the information needs of those living in regional and remote Australia seems to be a sensible approach.¹⁹

As highlighted in Question 2, independent assessment of whether a news outlet qualifies for media assistance and whether it complies with a specified quality framework throughout the funding period appears to be the most robust way to ensure editorial independence.

5.2. Support for business models

The ABC generally encourages measures that will support media diversity. ABC planning and operations also take into account the broadcasting services provided by the commercial and community sectors. These positions make the ABC an active and constructive stakeholder in Australia’s media landscape.

The ABC notes that research by the Public Interest Journalism Initiative (PIJI) shows a correlation between population and the viability of local news outlets.²⁰ The presence of a major employer in a regional centre also appears to support viability. This suggests a straightforward relationship between a local news outlet and the size of the available advertising market where the outlet depends primarily on advertising for revenue. Other revenue sources may include subscription, which also depends on a sufficiently large audience, and philanthropic funding, which may be difficult to sustain on an ongoing basis.

Audience fragmentation across a wide variety of media platforms add to the challenges involved in building a revenue base. Local news providers may need to offer a web-based service, app, and a print edition or broadcast service as well as operating on a variety of social media accounts to

¹⁷ ABC (2023) ABC submission on options to support the independence of the national broadcasters: <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/pfpp-australian-broadcasting-corporation-abc.pdf> (accessed 30 January 2024).

¹⁸ <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/media-communications-arts/television/prominence-connected-tv-devices>

¹⁹ Angus, S. D., Ackermann, K., Kreitmair, D., Raschky, P. (2023) Socio-economic determinants of Public Interest Journalism in Australia: https://piji.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/SoDa_PIJI_report4.pdf (accessed 23 January 2024). Magasic, M., Hess, K. & Freeman, J. (2023) Examining the Social, Civic, and Political Impact of Local Newspaper Closure in Outback Australia. *Media and Communication*, 2023, 11(3), 404-413: <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v11i3.6697> (accessed 2 February 2024).

²⁰ Angus, S. D., Ackermann, K., Kreitmair, D., Raschky, P. (2023) Socio-economic determinants of Public Interest Journalism in Australia: https://piji.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/SoDa_PIJI_report4.pdf

reach their local audiences. Operating in such a multi-platform way increases the costs of reaching a local audience. At the same time, it is difficult to draw revenue from each platform unless they all have a sufficiently large audience in their own right.

At present it seems unlikely that global digital platforms will make further deals with smaller media operators unless platforms are designated under the News Media Bargaining Code legislation. Other measures, such as a levy on the global media platforms drawing profits from Australia, may be effective in generating a revenue stream for local news operators. However, this could create downstream problems around the need for such additional funding to be distributed and directed to public interest reporting in local news services. This includes the potential issue of maintaining the independence of news outlets receiving funding via the Government.

Like most news providers, the ABC is also investigating the potential use of artificial intelligence (AI) in its operations. While some aspects of the technology have the potential to make news services cheaper to produce, there is also concern about the impact of AI on the news ecosystem as a whole. At this stage, it is difficult to predict the level of potential risk to the quality and availability of news content. Some news providers are already providing AI-generated content within news services in Australia. However, it remains to be seen whether or not audiences will accept and value AI-generated news. It is also unclear whether or not an AI-based service can deliver comprehensive coverage and analysis reliably in real time, as audiences have come to expect from journalists. Facing such questions, news organisations like the ABC will continue to engage with AI in the hope that it can be made to strengthen, and not compromise, trustworthy news services and the role and value of journalism.

5.3. Additional Options

As noted above, the ABC is currently undertaking research into the best ways it might be able to support public interest journalism at the local level. On the broader question of supporting public interest journalism in general, the ABC itself provides an important mechanism. The critical value of this lies in the ABC's legislated independence which ensures that funding considerations do not influence the ABC's coverage and analysis. Public interest journalism depends on such reporting without "fear or favour". The ABC also operates with, and is subject to, an array of mechanisms established around it.

6. Support for Media Literacy

A national study on adult Australian's media literacy shows that Australians lack confidence in their own media abilities, and very few have access to any media literacy support when they need it.²¹ The study found that almost half of Australians said they have either no support (30%) or only one source of support (17%) to assist them with their media participation, and that Australians who experience disadvantage have much less confidence and fewer sources of support than more advantaged Australians.

²¹ Dezuanni, M., Notley, T., Di Martino, L. (2021). [Towards a National Strategy for Media Literacy. Research report.](#) Australian Media Literacy Alliance.

The report identified the following priority groups that should be considered for media literacy interventions:

- People living in low-income households
- People with a low level of education
- People living with a disability
- People living in regional Australia
- Older Australians
- Indigenous Australians
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Australians.

An important observation to emerge from the study was that media literacy should be considered a lifelong process that receives attention and support throughout the life stages, including early education, primary and secondary schooling, post school education, adult education and in the later years of life. Along with this, the report highlighted that it is essential to recognise that it is unlikely that Australians will develop media literacy skills if they have limited basic literacy skills.

Improving the media literacy skills of Australians is of critical importance. Media literacy empowers individuals and enables them to participate more fully in a democratic society, which is increasingly reliant on digital media and emerging technologies.²² Media-literate people are also equipped to identify misinformation and disinformation, and protect themselves from cybercrime.²³

Alternately, low media literacy could mean a less-informed citizenry who are more vulnerable to manipulation, and may exercise impaired decision-making when it comes to elections and democracy. Low media literacy can exacerbate the spread of misinformation and disinformation, as those without adequate abilities can find it hard to distinguish between false and reliable content, and could cause trust in reliable news sources to decline. This has repercussions for a stable and cohesive society.

Education is needed to address a range of challenges including misinformation on digital platforms, cybercrime and online abuse,²⁴ rapid changes in the media and communications technologies, threats to our democracy and the establishment and rising distrust of mainstream media.

The ABC actively participates in improving the media literacy skills of Australians. The ABC is a founding member of the Australian Media Literacy Alliance (AMLA). ABC Education has a Media Literacy section in its portal which has resources to support teachers and students such as videos, interactives and articles to support the teaching and learning of media literacy. This content has been available since 2018.²⁵

In addition to the online resources, in 2021 the ABC delivered a media literacy workshop program together with the Judith Neilsen Institute for remote schools in WA. That work formed a pilot for

²² Public Service Media Strengthening Media Literacy, EBU, October 2023

²³ European Commission (2023) Guidelines pursuant to Article 33a(3) of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive on the scope of Member States' reports concerning measures for the promotion and development of media literacy skills: <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/redirection/document/93866> (accessed 15 February 2024).

²⁴ [Calls for Australian families to "have the talk" in 2024 | Australian Federal Police \(afp.gov.au\)](#)

²⁵ The ABC's media literacy portal can be found at www.abc.net.au/education/media-literacy/

the expanded program the ABC is undertaking later this year, a media literacy program for remote schools developed in partnership with the Australian Electoral Commission. The program, delivered by ABC journalists, includes workshops with high school students focusing on sources, misinformation and social media.

AMLA undertook a research study in 2021 to outline a direction for the development of a national strategy for media literacy in Australia. Based on the results from the study, AMLA recommended that the Australian Government commit to developing and appropriately resourcing a strategy for the development of media literacy across all life stages, enabling the engagement of all levels of government and community.²⁶

It is important for the government to support long-term studies that can establish trend data over time. AMLA's Adult Media Literacy Survey has already established a valuable baseline and could be supported to continue as a regular survey overtime, providing trend data.

AMLA's Adult Media Literacy Survey²⁷ includes a number of measures that could be tracked over time. These include:

- % of Adult Australians with access to media literacy support
- % of adult Australians who believe that media literacy is important
- Level of media abilities (in different demographic cohorts)
- % who can edit a video and post it online
- % who can find an online community to become involved in
- % who can interpret a social media platform's data policy
- % who can use software to improve a photo
- % who can determine if they are being harassed online and seek help from the right authorities
- % who can change privacy settings.

AMLA's *Towards a National Strategy for Media Literacy* highlights examples of governments around the world that have made significant commitments through policy and funding to develop the media literacy of citizens.²⁸ These include the Netherlands Government, which has funded public institutions since 2008 to implement a national framework that focuses on supporting all citizens to become media literate²⁹ and Finland, where the National Audiovisual Institute (KAVI), established in early 2012, has a statutory duty to promote media education in Finland and where media literacy is integrated into the national curriculum across all years starting at early childhood education.³⁰ The obligation for governments of EU Member States to develop and implement initiatives that are directed to increase and promote media literacy skills is set out in

²⁶ Notley, T., Chambers, S., Park, S., Dezuanni, M. 2021, [Adult Media Literacy in Australia: Attitudes, Experiences and Needs](#). Western Sydney University, Queensland University of Technology and University of Canberra.

²⁷ Notley, T., Chambers, S., Park, S., Dezuanni, M. 2021, [Adult Media Literacy in Australia: Attitudes, Experiences and Needs](#). Western Sydney University, Queensland University of Technology and University of Canberra.

²⁸ Dezuanni, M., Notley, T., Di Martino, L. (2021). [Towards a National Strategy for Media Literacy. Research report](#). Australian Media Literacy Alliance.

²⁹ See <https://www.mediawijzer.net/about-dutch-media-literacy-network/>

³⁰ See <https://medialukutaitosuomessa.fi/mediaeducationpolicy.pdf>

Article 33a(1) of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD).³¹ In 2023, Member States had to publish for the first time on the measures taken to strengthen media literacy skills. The categories that these measures fall into include legal and/or policy measures, organisational measures, engagement and awareness-raising activities, including media literacy curricula, and evaluation measures and methods.³² In Europe, the responsibility for building media literacy skills “in all sections of society, for people of all ages, and for all media” is further not constricted to Member States but extended to media service providers, including video-sharing platforms providers.

³¹ European Commission (2023) Guidelines pursuant to Article 33a(3) of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive on the scope of Member States' reports concerning measures for the promotion and development of media literacy skills: <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/redirection/document/93866> (accessed 15 February 2024).

³² European Commission (2023) National reports on media literacy measures under the Audiovisual Media Services Directive 2020-2022: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/national-reports-media-literacy-measures-under-audiovisual-media-services-directive-2020-2022> (accessed 14 February 2024).