GEN AI AND JOURNALISM
TOWARDS COMMON PRINCIPLES

UTS Centre for Media Transition

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The UTS Centre for Media Transition thanks the Minderoo Foundation for their generous funding of this project and the news media editors, product development personnel and technology company representatives who took part in our research.

The research has received ethics approval from UTS (ETH21-5787-24-2)

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Images: Rosa Alice created the generative AI art in this report using Adobestock Firefly. Adobe states that this generative AI model is trained on a dataset of Adobe Stock images, openly licensed work and public domain content where copyright has expired. The images generated are based on a style reference image and content type (art). Prompts included keywords and phrases relating to the report's themes. We acknowledge that generative AI art draws on human creativity and it's not possible to acknowledge all the artists whose output it draws upon.

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Suggested citation: Attard, M., Davis, M., D'Souza, M. and Markus, T. 2025 *Gen AI and Journalism: Towards common principles.* Centre for Media Transition, University of Technology Sydney, Australia, cmt.uts.edu.au. **https://doi.org.10.6084/m9.figshare.29818829**

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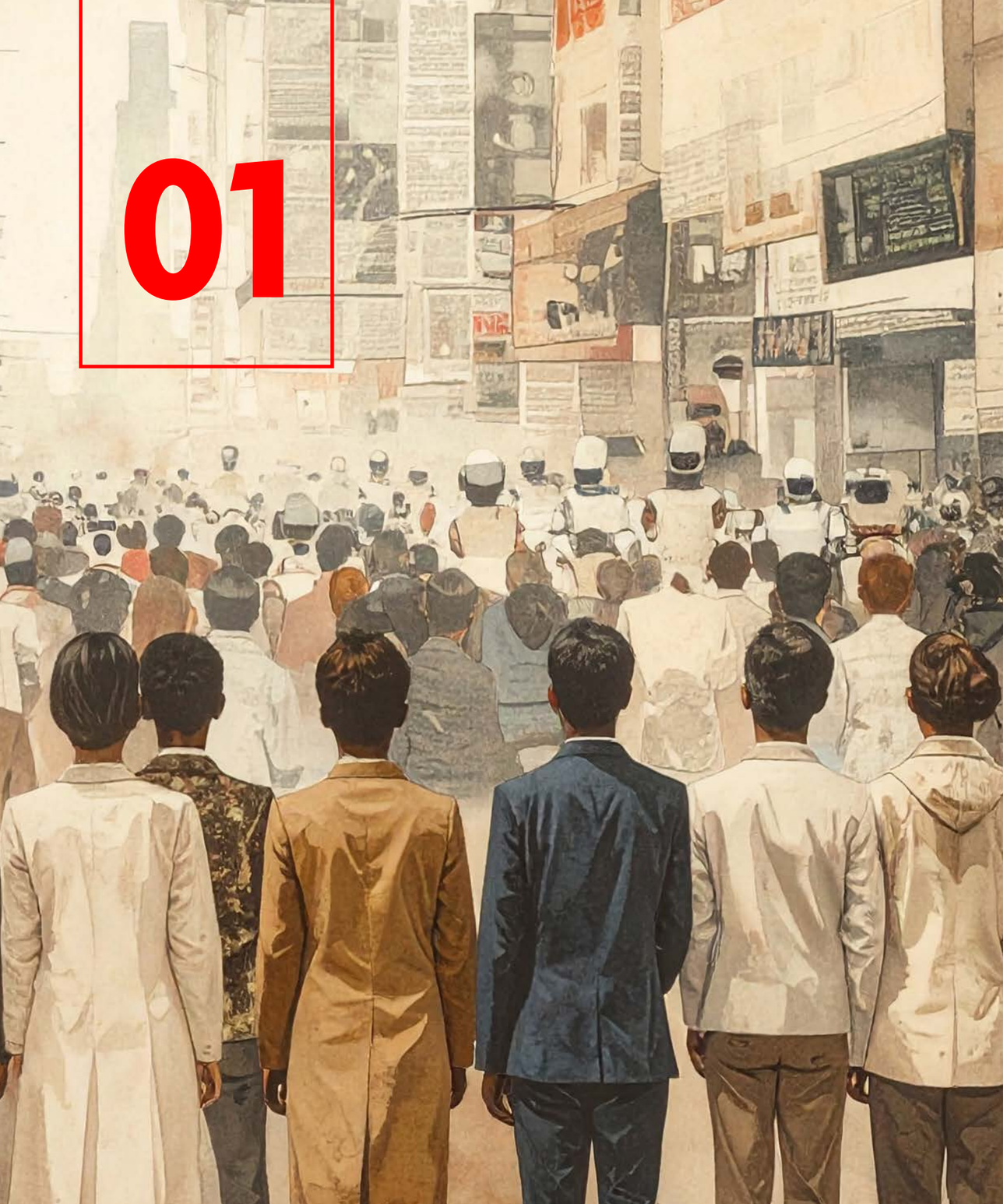

01

INTRODUCTION

In the three years since the dawn of generative AI, with the hope it carried for efficiencies in news production, the industry in Australia is still struggling to survive with dwindling coffers from fractured audience bases and the flight of advertising revenue to digital platforms. That hope came as trust in news media was already alarmingly depleted. Yet, three years on, Australian newsrooms are still struggling and still searching for ways to overcome the known challenges of the technology, which include bias, verification and hallucination. From the perspective of sustainability, Australian media organisations are still grappling with questions around how they can be recompensed for the use of their news product to train large language models (LLM) despite some having entered into commercial arrangements with AI companies. Whilst there is a professed desire to increase industry conversation, including around working with AI companies to resolve technical issues, competition between media organisations appears to still preclude the possibility of industry-wide action to commercially negotiate with the tech industry.

Generative AI undoubtedly offers opportunities to improve news-production efficiency and even the quality of journalism, through sophisticated tools to allow deeper research and more comprehensive examination of data. These are definitely pluses. However, it also poses increasingly complex challenges to the strategies used by media companies to ensure the information they produce remains trustworthy, that the efficiency benefits outweigh the cost of human oversight and the risk of the technology producing error or bias, and that technological innovation is in the service of public interest journalism.

In December 2023, just one year after the release of OpenAI's ChatGPT, CMT released a landmark report on generative AI and its impact on public interest journalism. Our findings then indicated a significant degree of caution in the way newsrooms were thinking about the technology. Editors generally were taking a 'test and learn' approach. Some were encouraging staff to experiment whilst prohibiting any public-facing publication of the output resulting from that experimentation. Others were limiting experimentation to dedicated teams. At the time, some had officially adopted generative AI to assist with research, particularly analysis and summarisation of large amounts of information. There was an optimism about the future possibilities of generative AI, particularly in the research phase of reporting, but this was – and remains – tempered by an overriding commitment that the technology, and any other cognate technology, could only be used to serve the purposes of public interest journalism. To the editors and journalists we spoke with, the proliferation of deep fakes, some of them sophisticated and

difficult to detect, and the disinformation campaigns being perpetrated by bad actors, left them with an even stronger commitment to taking any and all precautions to ensure the integrity of their news output. There was a strong sentiment that concern over mis- and disinformation in the broader information ecosystem was tempering the excitement over the possibilities presented by generative AI, even if the technology afforded significant cost savings.

When editors and journalists did allow themselves a moment to reflect on the upside of generative AI, it was in the opportunities it presented to relieve the arduous back-end processes like SEO and meta-tagging, which have increased over the past decade as digital journalism has become the norm. Some had begun to turn their minds to how AI could improve accessibility – for example using voice to text and vice versa, for audiences with particular needs.

One year later, in late 2024 when we conducted interviews for this report, we found an incremental but significant advance in the way newsrooms were considering the use of generative AI. Some had now embraced limited audience-facing uses. These include using text to voice to reach broader audiences, particularly in the production of service information such as fuel and weather reports. However, it is clear that Australian newsrooms are most comfortable with using AI to augment rather than automate production, and the majority of experimentation is still occurring in the back end rather than audience-facing uses. Experimentation varies according to market size, medium and the financial model of the organisation, with larger organisations, including the public broadcasters, having more resources – both financial and human – to dedicate to the task. There is also more experimentation in radio than print. What has remained common across the two phases of our research is that experimentation is outpacing implementation.

Globally, newsrooms have been increasing their use of AI more rapidly than in Australia. Indeed a 2023 global survey found that almost half of newsrooms were actively working with generative AI, even though its use was infrequent and confined to a small number of users (Roper et al., 2023). By 2025, a Thomson Reuters survey found 49.4 percent of journalists used AI daily (Radcliffe, 2025). In Australia, the picture is different: usage is markedly lower. A 2025 MediaNet report found 63 percent of journalists had not used genAI in their work during the previous year (Medianet, 2025).

Lower usage in Australia seems in part to be driven by a perceived lack of benefit relative to the resources needed to implement AI effectively, as well as a deep concern for the integrity of news. This includes both the integrity of journalistic process to ensure news output is reliable and trustworthy, and concern for the way that news output can be used, and misused, once in environments out of their control. These environments include how news is algorithmically distributed on digital platforms – a longstanding concern of news companies – and more recently, how news is used as training data and in augmented retrieval for AI models.

Whilst there is a mismatch between the rate of technological development and the ability of newsrooms to test for usefulness and, most importantly, risk, there is also a realisation that public uptake of AI is accelerating with the accompanying need for journalism to provide more secure and trustworthy information to stem the known problems of bias and inaccuracy with AI tools.

With an eye to what media organisations can themselves control, there has been movement in the development of editorial guidelines in the use of generative AI – even during experimentation phases. These, however, are 'add ons' rather than wholescale rethinking and rewriting of the guidelines relied upon by journalists.

AI development is largely in the hands of a few players in the United States and China, though France and Canada have also become players. These are overwhelmingly private companies, and news companies are finding it challenging to negotiate with these companies in an environment where the rules of engagement are still unclear. Increasingly, the distribution of news is shifting to AI companies, in an extension of the shift to digital platforms over the past two decades. This places greater strain and reliance on media companies to behave ethically, in the public interest, and to create their own guardrails for the production of information that provides a degree of immunity against the rise of mis- and disinformation. Moreover, and more concerning for the news sector, there is now the distinct possibility that even robust journalistic processes might be undermined by an AI tool, impacting the reliability of the news output even after publication.

All of this comes as the 2025 Digital News Report (DNR) shows that Australians are "becoming more comfortable with news produced mainly by AI, with one in five (21%, +4 from 2024) saying they are ok with it." Australians remain more comfortable with news produced by humans, even if journalists are aided by AI. But the level of comfort increases with familiarity with and knowledge of the technology. As the 2025 DNR shows, "regardless of their level of comfort, customers recognise the pros and cons of the technology. Nearly half (46%) say AI news is cheaper to make and one third (33%) view it as more up to date." This is no doubt worrying for the news industry; AI relies to a large extent on published news for its content, and its currency is variable. The good news for the industry is that Australians also consider AI-produced news to be less trustworthy, accurate and transparent than news produced by journalists.

Like their counterparts abroad, Australian news organisations, particularly larger ones, have created experimental teams made up of editorial, product development and legal personnel to investigate the scope and limitations of AI usage. These are, in short, AI sandpits, where journalists are

LOWER USAGE IN AUSTRALIA SEEMS IN PART TO BE DRIVEN BY A PERCEIVED LACK OF BENEFIT RELATIVE TO THE RESOURCES NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT AI EFFECTIVELY, AS WELL AS A DEEP CONCERN FOR THE INTEGRITY OF NEWS.

encouraged to experiment within safe spaces, whilst formal and informal prohibitions on public-facing output remain intact. On the whole, there is less caution abroad.

At the New York Times, a machine-learning engineer working on the newspaper's AI strategy also works as a journalist, and has been using AI technology to not only explain AI workings but also the way it is being used to inform Times journalism to an increasingly curious audience (Dylan Freedman, Reuters Institute, March 2025). For example, the Times researched how certain words were disappearing under the new Trump administration by extracting text from some 5000 snapshots of federal government website pages before and after Donald Trump re-assumed power. The reportage appears alongside explanation of methodology. The sandpit at the Financial Times uses AI at both the ideation stage and the story stage of journalism: journalists experiment with prompts to generate story ideation and headlines (Adami, 2025) but prompts are also embedded in stories to drive engagement in the comments sections. The latter changed the way the Financial Times thought about 'engagement,' which usually referenced the length of time spent reading an article. Engagement was deepened by the extent to which readers engaged with the AI prompts. The BBC uses AI to assist in research and to amplify its journalism, some of which is audience facing, e.g. translation. Another AI tool developed by the broadcasters' Verify unit can detect deepfake photography with 90 percent accuracy; BBC is now adding explainability to this tool, so audiences know how the detection percentages are calculated and why the tool is necessary (Adami, 2025). Malinarich, BBC director of growth, innovation and AI told the Reuters Institute the broadcaster is aware how deepfakes can outlast and outrun technology, but the tool is thus far efficient, despite the human checks required to oversee its output. In June 2025, the BBC rolled out two new AI tools for news production; human-supervised summarisation and local news scaling. News summarisation has already been implemented, with journalists able to use a single, editorially approved prompt to receive a summarisation for editing and review. BBC Style Assist is able to standardise style across BBC output: it is designed to assist in the journalism received by the BBC from its Local Democracy Reporting Service in which the broadcaster partners with local news organisations to produce and co-publish public interest journalism. The Washington Post app has a search button that works much the same as ChatGPT search, proffering narrative responses to questions with information sourced from its own archives, and linking to the latest news stories about the question.

Nordic newsrooms are also experimenting and taking bigger leaps into audience-facing developments. Naja Neilson, Media Director at Sweden's Sveriges Television (SVT) noted newsroom directors need to be braver with the "damned if you do and damned if you don't" decision making, and that sticking with the dictum that there must be a human in the loop with every AI interaction will only prevent newsrooms from taking advantage of what opportunities AI

has to offer, whilst doing little to curb its known challenges (Newsroom Robots podcast, 2025). Neilson believes journalists should focus on what they do well – storytelling and on the ground reporting – and leave AI to do the heavy lifting with workflows. Gard Steiro, Editor-in-Chief and CEO of Verdens Gang (VG) in Norway says the obstacle to date of deploying AI in audience-facing output has been that experimenting has been bifurcated between product developers and editorial, neither of whom speak the same language. Steiro says this is breaking down in Nordic countries and making way for the faster deployment of AI tools to boost productivity and audience retention, but the shift needs to occur more rapidly to secure the sustainability of journalism. Neilson also believes audiences should be brought into the developmental uses of AI because the parameters editorial leaders place on product developers might be too restricted or conversely, too expansive for audience needs.

In Australia, concerns about the known challenges of generative AI, including bias and problems around verifying information, remain, if somewhat mitigated by in-house testing and decisions concerning the limited utility of generative AI. Discussion about the opportunity presented to media organisations, beyond back-end processes, has shifted positively to balancing risk against opportunity and utility. This may be paying off as a strategy. In the first phase of our research, a number of editors noted that one upside to the advent of generative AI capacities might be a converse flight back to legacy media as a trusted source of news and information. In July 2025, OzTAM data showed dramatic growth across prime-time news bulletins for commercial networks, as audiences returned. News directors at the major commercial legacy newsrooms were quick to attribute the growth to the rise of fake vision which appears to be flooding social media platforms, and a desire by audiences for news that can be trusted.

There is also an increased willingness of media organisations to collaborate as they navigate the new technological landscape and its affordances. The ABC saw the public benefit which can come from collaboration, such as sharing research, with smaller, less financially stable newsrooms. However, whilst there was a new (and unexpected) desire to collaborate with each other, there was scepticism about the possibility of meaningfully collaborating with the tech industry. As noted above, there is concern about the inequality in the relationship evidenced in their lack of control over the technical specificities of the generative AI products being rolled out and in the loss of traffic to AI search.

The interviews which form the basis of this research were conducted in two phases. In the first phase, we interviewed 13 news editors and six product leads from 14 media organisations from August to November 2024. Some of those interviewed in this phase had also been interviewed for our 2023 report. In the second phase, we conducted a day-long workshop in November 2024 in conjunction with the ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and the Royal Melbourne Institute for Technology (RMIT), attended by 16 participants.

The interviews conducted in Phase 1 were semi-structured, with a set of questions was posed to all participants, based on a literature review conducted in mid-2023, updated as the research proceeded. All participants were also questioned specifically about the AI experimentation and implementation in their organisations. We covered current uses of AI, experimentation and implementation processes, views on risks to news integrity, audience trust, legal risk, risk to the news industry and the broader media environment, and attitudes to collaboration between news organisations and between news organisations and AI companies. In this phase of research, we sought to extend our 2023 remit from attitudes to a relatively new technology to processes of implementation and how media organisations were adapting editorial policies and guidelines.

In the workshop conducted at UTS, some attendees had been interviewed in Phase 1. Amongst those who had not were representatives of tech companies, a representative of an independent media advocacy organisation and an editor of an international news monitoring and fact checking organisation. The workshop was split into three sessions: (1) use cases and implementation, (2) principles and guidelines development, and (3) issues faced by all participants considering AI implementation including risks to news integrity and collaboration with each other and the tech sector. The workshop was an opportunity for media organisations and tech companies to come together and share knowledge as well as concerns based on practical experience and perceptions. Some findings from this workshop have been included in the ADM&S report Generative AI and Journalism: Content, Journalistic Perceptions and Audience Experiences.

Finally, this research has received ethics approval at the University of Technology Sydney and conforms with all relevant requirements and guidelines. Participants were provided with and were required to sign consent forms. We have complied with the requests of participants who wanted their identity, role and organisation to be deidentified.

This report contains the following chapters:

... CONCERNS ABOUT THE KNOWN CHALLENGES OF GENERATIVE AI, INCLUDING BIAS AND PROBLEMS AROUND VERIFYING INFORMATION, REMAIN, IF SOMEWHAT MITIGATED BY IN-HOUSE TESTING AND DECISIONS CONCERNING THE LIMITED UTILITY OF GENERATIVE AI.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 Since our first report in 2023, there has been increased experimentation with generative AI across synthetic voice, image generation and content summarisation.

2 Synthetic voice has emerged as a significant opportunity for broadcasters, with many actively experimenting with a variety of low-risk use cases. Some are experimenting with hyperlocal weather news, and at least one commercial operation appears to be experimenting with regional fuel reports.

3 Image generation has emerged as a low-risk area of experimentation for internal use or for data visualisations, although full-scale generation remains off limits.

4 Some newsrooms are experimenting with backend content summarisation and summarisation of media releases which regularly flood newsrooms.

5 In response to concerns about the ability of commercial manufacturers to resolve known challenges including those around bias and verification, significant progress has been made in the development of custom LLMs.

6 Despite the experimentation, there is still significant reluctance to use AI to produce audience-facing content, outside of strictly service-related information.

7 The most prolific use of AI remains in back-end operations where proprietary tools are being streamlined to improve editorial workflows by automating processes.

8 Many media organisations are increasing their interrogation of the utility of the technology as a way to preserve information integrity: if a human can do the research without using generative AI, then the utility of the technology diminishes. If the oversight necessary to ensure information integrity outweighs efficiency gains, utility diminishes.

9 Most editors felt that whilst the risks associated with AI use need to be considered, fundamental journalistic standards – accuracy, impartiality, fairness and independence – remain unchanged. They are tending to lean on guidance notes on AI usage rather than wholescale changes to editorial policy.

10 Most of the news organisations surveyed have developed formal internal guidelines. Others have created editorial principles and set management and accountability structures to control use by editorial and content staff.

11 There is an increased desire amongst media organisations to collaborate with each other on risks and opportunities. The main public broadcaster sees future collaboration as a public service to smaller, less financial stable media organisations.

12 Participants recognised the need to act responsibly in their implementation of AI but many wanted a broader discussion about the corresponding responsibilities of the tech sector, so as not to undermine the sustainability of news or the integrity of the information ecosystem.

02

THE GLOBAL VIEW

In this chapter, we examine key global developments in generative AI over the 18 months since we published our first report, and explore its ongoing impact on public interest journalism, with a focus on guideline development in Australia and globally. This chapter is not intended to be an exhaustive account of all developments in generative AI, which in part is due to how rapidly the field is evolving. Instead, it offers a detailed snapshot of events since our 2023 report and their impact.

Generative AI landscape

Technical advancements

Since the release of OpenAI's ChatGPT in November 2022, development has only accelerated, and generative AI has become more accessible through integration into everyday applications. Over the past 18 months, advances across generative, non-generative and reasoning AI have taken us closer to mimicking human-like interactions with computers with multimodality, intelligent assistants, autonomous agents, and complex reasoning. These systems can now even generate high-quality, realistic video and audio from just a single prompt.

Multimodality

When ChatGPT was released, it ran on GPT-3.5, a large language model (LLM) trained exclusively on massive amounts of text data. As such, this unimodal iteration of ChatGPT was trained on and could generate only text, but not images, audio, or any other data types (Stryker, 2024). While effective for performing specialised tasks, unimodal models are restricted to that single data pool and lack the infrastructure to discern nuances or complexities in a varied environment.

Multimodal models are more advanced machine-learning (ML) systems capable of interpreting and generating multiple types of data, including text, images, video, audio, and code, within a single interaction (Meta, 2023a; Brindha et al., 2025). For example, these models can generate an image from a text prompt or produce a video using a combination of image and audio inputs. To do this, the models learn to recognise and connect patterns across different data types, providing richer context and more nuanced responses (Singh et al., 2024).

Building and running multimodal systems requires significant computational power and extremely large, varied datasets. To achieve this, developers assemble massive training quantities of open-access and copyrighted material from across the internet, spanning trillions of text tokens and extensive collections of images, video, audio, source code, social media content, and music.

Major tech companies from the United States have taken the lead in AI development and have helped multimodal functionality become a widespread feature of generative AI. In 2023, Meta launched ImageBind, an open-source research project capable of integrating six different modalities. (Misra

et al., 2023). There have also been continual upgrades to Meta's flagship open-source release, Llama, which can be freely downloaded and customised by users. In May 2024, OpenAI launched its leading large language model, GPT-4o ('o' for omni), and incorporated it into ChatGPT. GPT-4o supports multiple languages, remembers user conversations, and offers native voice-to-voice interaction (OpenAI, 2024a). A lighter version, GPT-4o mini, followed two months later, and is optimised for devices with lower computational power. Google's Gemini 2.0, released in December 2024, can perform real-time document reasoning, object detection, and video summarisation (Hassabis et al., 2025). Other recent entries include xAI's Grok, now integrated into the social media platform X, and Claude by Anthropic.

Development in synthetic voice and video generation demonstrate how far generative AI has come. Synthetic voice technology uses advanced algorithms trained on diverse datasets to replicate human speech patterns, tone, and cadence (Downie & Hayes, 2025). These AI-generated voices are now commonly used in virtual assistants, automatic transcription services, and content creation tools, enabling users to generate realistic speech with minimal input.

Text-to-image tools were already a popular feature of generative AI offerings, with users creating more than 15 billion images across 2022 and 2023 via OpenAI's DALL-E 2, Adobe Firefly, Midjourney, and Stability AI's Stable Diffusion (Valyaeva, 2023). Video-generator models like OpenAI's Sora and Google's Veo 3 can produce high-quality, hyper-realistic footage from simple text or image prompts – no additional film equipment or editing software required – making them especially appealing to marketing firms and online-content creators (OpenAI, 2024b; Morrone, 2025). While these advances open new creative possibilities, they have also sparked anxiety within the traditional film industry. In Hollywood, fears over job displacement and the erosion of filmmaking craft have led to push back from unions and guilds, which are calling for tighter regulation across production. In contrast, China's film industry is actively adopting AI, using it to revitalise and reimagine classic cinema (Lee, 2025).

China's embrace of AI, driven by years of strategic national investment in education, has positioned it as a serious global competitor, helping to narrow the gap with dominant US-based players like OpenAI, Google, and Microsoft (Kuo, 2025). DeepSeek's eponymous chatbot topped the US charts in January 2025, shedding billions off the market with reported claims of the company's lower production costs. Other non-US AI platforms have also gained prominence, including France's Mistral AI, which has developed its own general-purpose and reasoning models, and Canada's Cohere, which partnered with the Canadian government to scale AI adoption across the public sector (Government of Canada, 2025).

Integration and Growth

Generative Search Engines

With the arrival of generative search engines and chatbots, people are starting to change the way they search for information. A notable milestone was Google's rolling out of AI Overviews in May 2024, a Gemini-powered feature within Google Search that offers concise, conversational summaries at the top of the results page (Reid, 2024a). AI Overviews works by analysing the user's search query and generating a summary of relevant information from web sources, often in the form of short paragraphs, bullet points, or images, with embedded links for further reading. As of mid-2025, AI Overviews has expanded to more than 200 countries (Budaraju, 2025). This means that every time users in these regions search with Google, they are interacting with a form of generative AI. As Google puts it, 'AI Overviews… reach more than one billion global users every month' (Venkatachary, 2024).

Microsoft has also made Copilot available in Bing Search and Edge, while recent models of Windows PCs now have a Copilot key on the keyboard which summons the application when pressed (Muchmore, 2025). Additionally, DeepSeek, Perplexity AI, OpenAI (with ChatGPT Search) and xAI's Grok have rolled out real-time search products.

Application Integration

Generative AI models for text, image, and video are increasingly integrated into everyday tools and devices. Microsoft's AI assistant, Copilot – powered by OpenAI's GPT-4 – is available through Microsoft 365 apps like Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, and Teams, providing real-time support within familiar workflows. On the consumer front, Android devices including Samsung Galaxy and Google Pixel use smaller generative models in photo editing, translation, and search applications. Meanwhile, businesses are adopting both open-source and proprietary models from companies like OpenAI, Meta, Mistral, and IBM to customise AI solutions for their specific business needs and to gain access to more reliable and sophisticated tools than those available free of charge.

This widespread integration is set to accelerate with more devices containing AI features. A Deloitte report predicted that in 2025 'the number of people interacting with generative AI will likely get a boost through premium smartphones – and through personal computers' (Arkenberg et al., 2024). The authors also predict that by the end of the year, half to all PCs sold will have generative AI-processing capabilities and that the share of shipped generative AI–enabled smartphones could exceed 30%.

Adoption Trends

Increased integration and exciting advances have led to rapid and widespread adoption rates. According to the 2025 BOND report, co-authored by tech analyst and venture capitalist Mary Meeker, 'the pace and scope of change related to the AI

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technology evolution is indeed unprecedented' (Meeker et al., 2025, p. 2). Meeker and her co-authors note that Google took 11 years to reach 365 billion annual searches, which ChatGPT achieved in just two years, making it 5.5 times faster. ChatGPT also reached 100 million users within two months, outpacing TikTok's nine-month trajectory and Instagram's two-and-a-half years. By April 2025, weekly active ChatGPT users had reportedly climbed to near a billion (TED, 2025, 0:09:43).

ChatGPT is the clear frontrunner, but others are not far behind. In January 2025, Mark Zuckerberg reported that Meta's AI usage was around 700 million monthly users (MAUs); and in March 2025, Google's Gemini was reported to have around 350 to 400 million MAUs, with both continuing to grow (Musumeci, 2025). To sustain their growing usership, the so-called 'big six' tech companies – Alphabet, Amazon, Apple, Meta, Microsoft and Nvidia – have increased their AI infrastructure spend by billions (Meeker et al., 2025).

Recent literature offers a clearer picture of what AI adoption looks like at a population level. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *Human Development Report 2025 on AI* projected a significant increase in its use (Conceição, 2025). Based on a survey of more than 21,000 people across 21 countries conducted between November 2024 and January 2025, the report found that 'AI use is already substantial (for about 20 percent of respondents)' and is expected to shoot up fast' (p. 4). Additionally, around 'two-thirds of respondents in low, medium and high HDI [human development index] countries expect to use AI in education, health and work' within one year (p. 4).

Adoption rates have also climbed across international newsrooms. In a Thomson Reuters Foundation survey, conducted in October and November 2024, 81.7 per cent of 221 respondents from more than 70 countries across the Global South and emerging economies said they were using AI in their journalism (Radcliffe, 2025, p. 12). Nearly half had integrated the tools into their daily workflows and about a third reported using them at least once a week. This is compared to the 75 per cent of respondents who reported using AI in the 2023 Polis global survey (Beckett & Yaseen, 2023).

Generative AI adoption appears slower in Australian newsrooms. According to Medianet's 2025 Media Landscape Report, 37 per cent of journalists said they have used generative AI – up from 25 per cent the previous year – while those who said they did not use it at work fell from 74 per cent to 63 per cent (Medianet, 2025). Additionally, 22 per cent said the technology had influenced their news gathering process. Despite this gradual uptake, concerns about its impact on journalism have grown, with 88 per cent of respondents expressing worry – up from 79 per cent the previous year.

Newsroom Use Cases

Newsrooms around the world are actively experimenting with generative AI across the news production process, including research and newsgathering, content creation, and news delivery. This includes using custom models or tools integrated into content management systems (CMS) to streamline internal workflows, as well as experimenting with public-facing formats such as chat-style interfaces and personalised news delivery (EBU, 2025a). There appears to be decreasing hesitancy in using it for public-facing material. Some of the most interesting news cases are in the field of news personalisation and delivery, if not the wholesale creation of content.

Media group Schibsted has been actively experimenting and working with AI, with many of its Nordic news organisations integrating AI functionality for newsgathering and content curation (Schibsted, 2025). It has collaborated with the Norwegian Research Center for AI Innovation to develop 'NorLLM', a suite of AI models catering for the Norwegian language and currently available for testing. Schibsted's cross-brand team has also developed a feature that generates AI-powered summaries of news articles, which has helped boost click-through rates among younger readers. Several of its newspapers now offer a text-to-speech option, using artificial voices trained on recorded content to produce a customised vocal tone that allows audiences to listen to stories.

Verdens Gang (VG), a Norwegian outlet under Schibsted, has used AI to support investigative journalism, most notably in a project uncovering illegal adoptions. Journalist Martin Folkvord and his team consolidated 6,000 pages of documents and initially used ChatGPT to detect signs of unlawful adoptions. When the model failed to yield anything, Folkvord developed a custom GPT and revised the prompt, instructing it to search for seven specific indicators of illegal adoption within the documents. 'We realised that ChatGPT is not good at doing evaluations, for instance determining if an adoption is illegal. But it is good at summarising documents," Folkvord explained (Shibsted, 2024). VG engineers then created a script to automate the process and structure the results. The system ran overnight, processing all 6,000 pages and identifying 900 relevant findings in a Google Sheet, dramatically accelerating a task that may have taken weeks using manual methods.

VG has also developed other editorial AI tools to help journalists. This includes Jojo, a tool for generating transcriptions for audio and video files, which has since been made available publicly (Vijay, 2024); Melderen, which can compose a news story from the content behind a link; and Innsynsboten, a tool that can assist with writing an appeals letter after access to a government document is refused (Shibsted, 2024).

Sweden's Aftonbladet, also part of the Schibsted group, used ChatGPT to support investigative reporting. As part of an investigation, the team analysed thousands of video clips from Riks, a YouTube channel affiliated with the right-wing Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna). They instructed the AI to identify discussion topics and classify them as positive, neutral, or negative. While most content was coded as neutral, the negative classifications significantly outnumbered the positive, in which clips often disparaged other political parties and painted a picture of Sweden in decline.

Like VG, Aftonbladet has introduced internal toolsets to explore AI in journalism and upskill its newsroom (Roy, 2024). Their AI Hub, formed in 2023, has helped integrate AI-generated summaries into its CMS, introduced a service that automatically generates video subtitles, and developed the 'AI Buffet' – a suite of tools designed to support journalists. These tools include Spånaren, which analyses articles to suggest follow-up angles and questions; the SEO Super Optimiser, which assesses articles for search optimisation; and Budder Reader, which provides proofreading and structural feedback. In 2024, Aftonbladet introduced 'Election Buddies', chatbots created to assist users with questions during the EU elections, later adapted for the US elections (Schori, 2025).

Other Schibsted publications such as E24, Svenska Dagbladet, and Aftenposten have also demonstrated innovative AI applications (Schibsted, 2024). At E24 in Norway, journalists received a tip that a government minister had plagiarised her master's thesis. Using an AI tool to analyse the text, the team found that sections of the thesis were indeed identical to earlier student essays. This enabled the team to verify the claims and publish their investigation more quickly. At Svenska Dagbladet, AI was used to analyse hundreds of podcast episodes for a series titled 'AI Listens to Podcasts' which generated visual statistics, such as the most frequently mentioned words, through charts and graphs. At Aftenposten, journalists applied AI facial-recognition technology to examine hours of footage from the October 7, 2023 Hamas attacks in Israel. This helped them identify one of the attackers, a local police officer. In doing so, they streamlined what would otherwise have been a time-intensive process.

As seen in the above examples, one of the key advantages of AI tools in the newsroom is their ability to parse through large amounts of data quickly, assisting with investigating reporting and verification. At ProPublica, for example, reporters explored this out by feeding over 3,400 National Science Foundation grants into an LLM – grants that had been flagged by Senator Ted Cruz as 'woke' for promoting diversity, equity and inclusion or 'neo-Marxist class warfare propaganda' (Ornstein, 2025). The model was prompted to act as an investigative journalist, identifying themes that might be labelled 'woke' by a critical observer. It flagged seemingly unrelated grants, such as one on mint plants for using the words 'diversify' and 'female', and another about a medical device for including terms like 'victims' and 'trauma'. ProPublica's Charles Ornstein said that while AI does not replace human journalists, the test demonstrated its potential as a reporting tool that can 'examine data creatively and pursue the stories that help [journalists] understand the forces shaping our world.'

AI-powered assistants and chatbots, like Aftonbladet's Election Buddy, are being used by other news organisations to help their audiences interact with news in a more dynamic way. In 2024, Argentina's Clarín launched Ualter AI, an assistant that offers readers a choice between different reading formats. Ualter can generate summaries, arrange the text in chronological order, highlight key points, extract select data like numbers and names, and reorganise the story into a question-and-answer format (Nafría, 2024). Axel Springer, the Financial Times, Washington Post, and TIME have each launched AI-powered chatbots – Hey_, Ask FT, Ask the Post AI, and TIME AI Chatbot. Hey_, Ask FT and Ask the Post AI allow users to search archives and receive summarised responses (Senft, 2023; Roth & Kennemer, 2024; WashPostPR, 2024a). The TIME's chatbot offers interactive features such as conversational search, summaries, and audio related to its Person of the Year history (Howard, 2024).

At Minority Africa, journalists have explored how generative AI can support daily editorial decision-making in a small newsroom (Okereke, 2025). CEO and managing editor Caleb Okereke led the development of 'Iraka' (meaning 'voice' in Rutooro, a language in parts of Uganda), a custom GPT tool trained on anonymised past editorial submissions and decisions to help assess incoming story pitches. Built from a curated sample of 120 past pitches selected from over 2,500 entries, Iraka was designed to reflect the organisation's mission and editorial tone. When carefully prompted, it predicts likely editorial outcomes and provides feedback in the style of past comments. As of June 2025, the team continues to evaluate the tool's performance while exploring options for its broader use.

The BBC is moving in a similar direction when it comes to summarisation and backend applications. In June 2025, it announced that it was publicly testing two generative AI pilots to explore how the technology can support news production (Davies, 2025). These include generating 'At a glance' bullet-point summaries of longer articles, and a tool called 'Style Assist', which reformats stories to align with the BBC's editorial style. To support this, the BBC used an LLM trained on its own content to match the organisation's tone and standards. Beyond the newsroom, the BBC also uses AI to generate personalised recommendations on its iPlayer platform and employs synthetic voice technology to deliver frequent weather updates via the BBC Weather app (BBC, 2025).

Other organisations that have already rolled out AI-powered summaries include The Wall Street Journal (WSJ), Bloomberg and Yahoo News (Scire, 2025). At WSJ, stories can be condensed into three bullet points, or Key Points, and come with a 'What's This?' explainer, telling audiences that while the summary was AI-generated, it was checked and approved by human editors. At Bloomberg, they began testing AI-powered summaries in 2024 and have since introduced Takeaways, which appear on breaking news or longer-form articles. Chief product officer of news, Chris Collins, says that they have received positive feedback from audiences, and that while summaries are 'designed to enhance the reading experience and complement our journalism – they are not a substitute for the depth, context, and analysis that our reporters provide' (Scire, 2025). At Yahoo News, summaries are treated as optional, in which users must click a Generate Key Takeaways button to receive the summary. Introduced in 2024, this pulls information from the article directly, reducing potential for errors or inaccuracies (Scire, 2025). Like Bloomberg and WSJ, human overview is a core part of the process to ensure the feature provides accurate information.

Generative AI tools are also being used to target social media engagement and improve accessibility features. In 2023, Colombia's Cuestión Pública launched Odin, a GPT-3.5-powered tool that retrieves data from its investigative archives and drafts social media threads, reportedly reducing the production time of a thread from three hours to 15 minutes (Linares, 2024). In 2024, Politico introduced a tool for

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live broadcasts that transcribes and segments speech, then generates summaries via retrieval-augmented generation or RAG (Verma, 2025). The Washington Post added AI-generated audio newsletters, while NBC used an AI clone of sports commentator, Al Michaels's voice for Olympic recaps (WashPostPR, 2024b; Arkin, 2024).

Some newsrooms have, nevertheless, been testing generative AI for full content creation – but with mixed results. In March 2025, Italian outlet Il Foglio released a fully AI-generated newspaper, complete with editorials and opinion pieces. While it showcased an incredible part of the technology – full-scale content creation – the experiment highlighted some of its flaws. There were reportedly factual errors, missing attributions, and misspellings. Poynter's Alex Mahadevan wrote that it was 'a case study of how bad AI is at writing the news' (Mahadevan, 2025).

On the other hand, Klara Indernach on the German platform EXPERSS.de has been a relative success. In 2023, the media brand Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger Medien integrated the advanced system Klara Indernach, not just as a tool but a blonde, blue-eyed digital colleague that can interact with her peers (WAN-IFRA, 2023). Klara, however, does not work completely independently. She takes writing orders from the editorial team and works with a companion editor who cross-checks her writing to ensure ongoing accuracy. Klara writes approximately 11 per cent of the platform's articles, driving around 8-12 per cent of total article hits, as well as summarises information quickly and conducts background research (Nicoud, 2024).

Another related use case from Venezuela demonstrates how broad the application of generative AI tools has become. In July 2024, to protect journalists from identification and arrest while reporting on post-election crackdowns involving mass arrests and protester deaths, newsrooms turned to AI-generated presenters (Phillips & Torres, 2024). Operación Retuit (Operation Retweet) united multiple news and fact-checking organisations, with journalists contributing verified content for daily newscasts. These bulletins were fronted by two AI avatars, La Chama and El Pana, or Bestie and Buddy, who were able to deliver the news safely and anonymously.

Ethical Concerns

In our 2023 report, we explored several key limitations of generative AI in Australia, including hallucinations, bias, data integrity and privacy concerns, and the potential for misuse. As discussed below, recent research indicates that these issues are still prevalent and are influencing our attitudes towards the technology, with low levels of trust and concern over job displacement.

Generative AI models can struggle with information that falls outside their training parameters and cannot always discern truth from falsehoods, which often leads to inaccuracies and hallucinations. A February 2025 BBC investigation found that leading AI assistants – ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, and Perplexity – struggled to reliably differentiate between fact and opinion when answering news-related questions (Elliott, 2025, p. 12). Of 400 responses analysed, 100 per assistant, 51 per cent contained major issues. Among those citing BBC content, 19 per cent included incorrect statements, numbers or dates, and 13 per cent contained altered or fabricated quotes. For example, Gemini misrepresented NHS health advice, while ChatGPT and Copilot wrongly claimed Rishi Sunak was still prime minister. BBC News CEO Deborah Turness acknowledged AI's promise but warned, 'how long will it be before an AI-distorted headline causes significant real-world harm? The companies developing generative AI tools are playing with fire' (Turness, 2025).

Generative AI, and AI more broadly, is only as reliable as the data it relies on. Agents, assistants, and chatbots depend on accurate and up-to-date information; even when they are trained on high-quality data, the probabilistic way that they synthesise information can generate inaccurate output or even hallucinate non-existent objects, sources or people. When the data is fragmented or outdated, these problems are exacerbated. So, what happens if the data runs out? According to a 2024 MIT-led study, this may already be happening (Longpre et al., 2024; Roose, 2024). The group observed a decline in publicly accessible data following a spike in website owners blocking AI web crawlers, which are automated tools that extract content for training AI systems. This pushback is driven by rights holders whose work has been freely scraped to build highly profitable AI platforms. To do this, websites have deployed robots.txt files to restrict crawler access, while others have thrown up paywalls or updated their terms of service (Welsh; 2025; Roose, 2024). Although licensing deals with major publishers have begun to address these concerns, many smaller rights holders remain excluded, raising further questions about who gets compensated for their data and who does not.

A June 2025 Apple paper also noted these issues with complex reasoning models (Shojaee et al., 2025). The authors found that while larger reasoning models (LRMs) performed well on simple tasks, both LRMs and standard LLMs experienced a 'complete collapse' in accuracy with more complex challenges. Andrew Rogoyski of the University of Surrey told the Guardian that this shows the industry is 'still feeling its way' and may be reaching a 'cul-de-sac in its current approach' (Milmo, 2025). Additionally, a New York Times article revealed that hallucination rates in newer systems, including complex reasoning models, were rising, with at least one testing at a hallucination rate of 79 per cent (Metz & Weise, 2025).

The arrival of AI-generated search functions has perhaps drawn some of the strongest criticism. Critics observed that summarised AI responses can often contain misinformation, obscure attribution, and undermine journalistic standards. For example, there are hundreds of Reddit posts with complaints about Google's AI Overviews, criticising its accuracy and forced integration into Google Search. Lance Ulanoff of TechRadar went to so far as to question its necessity, arguing that AI should enhance, not dominate, the search experience (Ulanoff, 2024).

News organisations are worried because of what AI-driven search tools might do to their business models and to news production. For example, in a May 2025 report by the Tow Center, interviewees highlighted risks such as copyright infringement through RAG prompts – where summaries are generated from external sources – and 'disintermediation', where third-party AI platforms bypass news organisations to deliver content directly to audiences (Brown & Jaźwińska, 2025). These things, it was argued, could undermine brand integrity in cases where high-quality journalism was misattributed or presented alongside lower-quality content, blurring distinctions and diminishing trust in reputable news sources. Reduced traffic also means less revenue, subscriptions and audience engagement, with one interviewee saying that 'the idea of AI being a single source of truth is, I think, profoundly disruptive' (p. 24).

According to Google, users of AI Overviews reported a higher satisfaction and were using it as a jump off point to visit other sites, and claimed that 'we've done a better job of finding the right info and helpful webpages for them' (Reid,

2024b). Nevertheless, various analyses and anecdotal reports note a sizeable reduction in click-through rates following AI Overviews' arrival. The Mail Online reported that its average clickthrough rate was 56.1 per cent lower on desktop and 48.2 per cent lower on mobile when AI Overviews appeared for a search query, and even when the publication was featured as a top link within AI Overviews, click-through rates were still significantly lower (Tobitt, 2025a). According to a February 2025 Tollbit analysis, AI chatbots drove 95.7 per cent less click-through traffic than traditional searches, and Similarweb data cited by The Wall Street Journal showed organic traffic to sites like Business Insider, HuffPost, and The Washington Post has halved in recent years (Tollbit, 2025; Simonetti & Blunt, 2025).

Chatbot search has not yet overtaken traditional search. Despite a slight dip, Google.com still leads with 13.7 billion daily searches, compared to ChatGPT's 1 billion (Venditti, 2025). However, what this means in the long run remains to be seen, as AI-generated search engines still require a behavioural adjustment from users and publishers.

LAWSUITS AND DEALS

Some of the major news organisations have been pursuing a dual strategy with AI developers to regain control over news content production while setting boundaries for AI use. Primarily from the United States and Europe as well as a small number in India, AI developers have been slapped with claims of copyright infringement by publishers primarily from the United States and Europe as well as a small number in India, for scraping reams of copyrighted works from across the internet without permission. To legally protect their works and obtain compensation in return, these larger news organisations are also entering into licensing arrangements with AI developers. Others have forged deals withour pursuing copyright claims.

Lawsuits

While AI developers have not typically been forthcoming about the exact origins of their training data, most are known to use a significant amount of open access information and copyrighted material they did not originally seek permission to use (Heikkilä, 2024; Buick, 2025). This poses significant challenges for the news industry.

A 2025 study by Thomson et al. surveyed a sample of international journalists about their views on AI-generated content, and copyright emerged as the third most frequently cited concern regarding AI-generated visuals (Thomas et al., 2025, p. 22). When news content is used to train generative AI models, the original authors have often gone uncredited and unpaid. This issue is further complicated by cases where AI tools have reportedly misattributed false or misleading information. For example, an OpenAI chatbot allegedly cited two American news outlets as sources of inaccurate medical advice (Lee, 2024). Additionally, many in the news industry worry that the widespread replication of journalistic content undermines the value of the original work, with generative AI increasingly viewed as a direct competitor that redirects revenue away from news creators (Brown & Jaźwińska, 2025).

This has given rise to complex legal issues that are currently being examined by the courts in the United States and other jurisdictions. At the end of 2023, only a few organisations had initiated legal proceedings. By mid-2025, however, the number of copyright-related lawsuits had risen to over 40 in the United States alone, with additional cases emerging in Europe and India (ChatGPT Is Eating the World, 2025; Tobitt, 2025b).

The central question being litigated is whether AI developers can legally use copyrighted materials to train their machines without permission. Also under examination is whether copyrighted works that are then replicated by AI tools from training data amounts to infringement, and if so, who holds liability (user or developer?). An additional, related question being raised is whether AI-generated material can be copyrighted.

Copyright Infringement

To secure the licensing rights to all the copyrighted data required to sustain AI systems would be time consuming and extremely expensive (Buick, 2025). As would negotiating how to apply cross-jurisdictional copyright and intellectual property laws originally intended to protect authors and creators, not machines.

Until recently, AI developers were not seeking permission or licensing arrangements with rights holders. Instead, they have relied on copyright exceptions to justify not seeking authorisation from rights holders before using copyrighted works for training data or for RAG. In the United States, the exception of fair use allows for copyrighted material to be freely used in certain circumstances. Outlined in the U.S. Copyright Act, this typically covers comment/criticism, news reporting, teaching, scholarship or research. Four factors are considered when deeming fair use, the first of which is whether the use is transformative in that it adds something new or has altered the purpose of the underlying work (Justia). Factors two and three go to the nature and the amount and substantiality of the portion used, while the fourth factor assesses the potential market effect on the original work resulting from the use.

One of the most high-profile cases has been the New York Times suit against OpenAI and its investor, Microsoft. The New York Times alleges OpenAI committed copyright infringement by storing, processing and reproducing training datasets containing its work (The New York Times Company v. Microsoft Corporation et al., 2023). The newspaper argues that this resulted in ChatGPT regurgitating New York Times articles verbatim, even down to style and tone, which has led to unfair competition and trademark dilution. Two other groups with similar claims later joined the New York

SOME OF THE MAJOR NEWS ORGANISATIONS HAVE BEEN PURSUING A DUAL STRATEGY APPROACH WITH AI DEVELOPERS TO REGAIN CONTROL OVER NEWS CONTENT PRODUCTION WHILE SETTING BOUNDARIES FOR AI USE.

Times in its suit, the Daily News LP et al. and The Center for Investigative Reporting, Inc. In relief, the New York Times is seeking damages, an injunction against ongoing infringement, and the 'destruction…of all GPT or other LLM models and training sets that incorporate Times Works' (p. 68). In defence, OpenAI claims that fair use covers the process of training data, and that any regurgitation of New York Times articles was unintentional.

This question of whether training constitutes fair use is also being explored in other cases, including the suit brought by News Corps' Dow Jones & Company against Perplexity AI Inc; a collection of news publishers involving Conde Nast, the Atlantic and Axel Spinger, against Cohere Inc; and several Canadian news outlets against Open AI (Tobitt, 2025b).

While these cases remain ongoing, early judicial decisions concerning the use of training data suggest that whether copyright infringement has occurred will likely turn on the particular facts of each matter. In February 2025, a Delaware court handed down summary judgment in favour of Thomson Reuters against ROSS Intelligence. ROSS's copying of Westlaw's legal headnotes to train its system was found not to constitute fair use, as it was carried out for a commercial purpose, lacked transformative character, and done in the pursuit of developing a competing product that threatened Westlaw's market position.

However, in June 2025, two California courts ruled in favour of Anthropic and Meta AI in separate copyright infringement cases brought by book authors. In the case of Bartz v. Anthropic PBC, the court's finding on fair use hinged on whether the copyrighted works used for training were lawfully obtained. The judge held that Anthropic's use of purchased books to train its model, Claude, qualified as fair use because it was deemed transformative by way of serving the purpose of enabling creativity and advancing scientific progress. However, this was distinguished from Anthropic's alleged use of pirated books for the same purpose, which did not constitute fair use; that issue is to be addressed in a separate trial.

In Kadrey v. Meta Platforms, Inc., the court's finding mostly depended on issues concerning transformativeness and market harm. Meta AI's use of copyrighted works in training data was said to be transformative because it took on a 'further purpose' and 'different character' to the underlying works. The court held that the authors' failed to establish enough evidence to make out that Meta AI's use had caused market harm or dilution to the original material. As such, the court left open the possibility that future claims in this area might succeed.

Building on these disputes, the Dow Jones and New York Post's claim against Perplexity AI directly involves RAG (Dow Jones & Company, Inc. v. Perplexity AI, Inc., 2024). The publishers argue Perplexity AI is copying both at the input and output stage, and that it is using RAG to generate answers by duplicating substantial portions of their articles, either verbatim or in close paraphrase.

Absent permission or a valid fair use defence, the replication of substantial portions of copyrighted material would usually constitute infringement. Additional complexity arises, however, when assessing the extent to which AI systems have actually copied or 'memorised' protected training data, and whether liability for any resulting infringement rests with the end user or the AI developer. These issues are likely to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and will depend on the circumstances (Gilbert + Tobin, 2025).

Nevertheless, OpenAI has argued in response to the New York Times lawsuit that instances of 'memorisation [were] a rare failure of the learning process' and claimed it has implemented safeguards to prevent such outputs (OpenAI, 2024c). OpenAI, on the other hand, has adopted a markedly less permissive stance when its own proprietary technology is involved. After learning that DeepSeek had allegedly used OpenAI to develop its own models, an OpenAI spokesman initially responded with 'We take aggressive, proactive countermeasures to protect our technology' (Sherry, 2025).

These copyright infringement concerns are central to a case filed in June 2025 by Disney and Universal against the image-generation platform, Midjourney. The studios allege that Midjourney allows users to reproduce copyrighted material, from which the platform profits, and that the company has failed to implement adequate safeguards to prevent this. The studios' complaint includes side-by-side comparisons of copyrighted images (for example, those of Darth Vader and The Simpsons) and those generated by Midjourney, which Disney and Universal claim are virtually identical. The studios' filing was unambiguous in its position, labelling Midjourney 'the quintessential copyright free-rider and a bottomless pit of plagiarism' (Disney Enterprises Inc. v. Midjourney Inc., 2025, p. 2).

In Australia, the corresponding copyright exception to fair use is fair dealing. As in the United States, it remains uncertain whether this exception applies to the use of copyrighted material in generative AI training and outputs. Australia's Copyright Act was not drafted with generative AI in mind, and clarification may require both appropriate legislative reform and judicial interpretation. A significant step toward addressing this gap took place in late 2023, when the Attorney-General's department established the Copyright and Artificial Intelligence Reference Group. This body was formed to consult with stakeholders on the intersection of copyright and AI and to inform the development of future policy in this evolving area (Attorney-General's Department, 2024).

AI-generated Works

A work is protected by copyright in Australia when there is a human creator who has contributed 'independent intellectual effort' to the output, as found in the High Court decision of IceTV Pty Limited v Nine Network Australia Pty Limited (2009). In that case, the court found that IceTV had not infringed Nine's copyright by using Nine's time and title information from TV guides in IceTV's own schedules. This was partly because creating the time and title information involved minimal skill and labour. The legal view seems to be that if there is significant human intervention or contribution to an AI-generated work, that it will also be protected (Thambaiya et al., 2025). What the contribution looks like, and how much of it is required, is not currently clear.

This appears to be reflected in the United States. The U.S. Copyright Office (USCO) has published three major reports examining copyright and policy issues related to AI. In its January 2025 report, Part 2: Copyrightability, the Office considered that works generated entirely by AI are not eligible for copyright protection unless they involve a sufficient level of human authorship (USCO, 2025). This interpretation was also upheld in Thaler v. Perlmutter, a case concerning the copyright status of AI-generated artwork.

With lawsuits underway and regulatory frameworks still forthcoming, it may be some time before key legal questions surrounding AI and copyright are clarified. In the interim, a growing number of news organisations are adopting technical and contractual measures to prevent their content from being used without authorisation. As mentioned above, some have implemented blockers, such as robots.txt files, to block AI-specific web crawlers or 'spiders' that scrape data to send back to LLMs, while others have erected paywalls or revised their terms of service to restrict automated access.

However, the effectiveness of these measures is questionable. In June 2025, the BBC announced it was considering legal action against Perplexity AI for 'reproducing BBC content "verbatim" without its permission' (Mahon, 2025). In its letter of claim, the BBC asserted that Perplexity AI had disregarded the organisation's robots.txt protocol, which expressly prohibited access by two of the developer's crawlers.

Deals

'2024 has been deal-making time for AI companies and news publishers,' said Dr Felix M. Simon, a University of Oxford researcher and Tow Center fellow (Simon, 2024). According to data compiled by the Tow Center, nearly 70 licensing deals were struck that year involving major AI developers such as OpenAI, Google, Meta, Microsoft, Perplexity, and ProRata (Pete Brown, 2025). These agreements involved larger media companies like Condé Nast, News Corp, Axel Springer, and the Financial Times, some of which had simultaneously filed lawsuits against other AI developers.

The deals appear to be mutually beneficial. For the news organisations, they gain access to cutting-edge AI technologies while safeguarding their intellectual property and revenue streams by receiving compensation and attribution for when their works are used for training AI systems.

Additionally, allowing AI developers to draw upon up-to-date verified and high-quality journalism contributes to a higher-quality information ecosystem.

Similarly, for AI developers, licensing arrangements provide a legal and consistent supply of up-to-date, editorial news content that enhances the accuracy and relevance of model outputs (Simon, 2024). In addition to being valuable for training purposes, journalistic material helps improve user experience by meeting the high standards audiences have come to expect from professional news sources. Recognising the cultural worth and legitimacy of the news industry, companies like OpenAI have started investing in news-focused initiatives (OpenAI, 2025). OpenAI has, for example, sponsored fellowships at news outlets and funded the launch of the American Journalist's Project's Product & AI Studio, which supports AI experimentation across a portfolio of local news organisations in 35 American states.

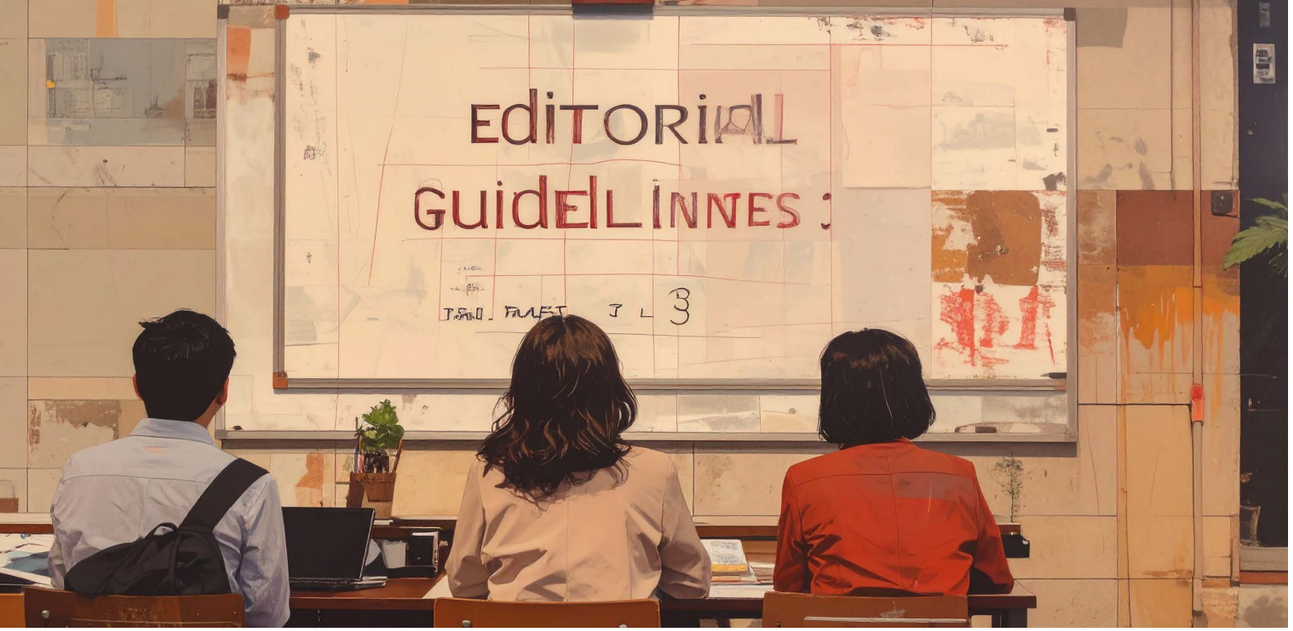
These benefits aside, formalising licensing agreements at the very least is a pragmatic step to reduce the risk of further litigation. It was also the approach preferred by most American journalism institutions, in their submissions to the U.S. Copyright Office for its examination of copyright and policy issues raised by AI (Boyles, 2023). These organisations largely opposed fair use claims against AI developers and instead advocated for licensing frameworks, an approach which Boyles notes foreshadowed a wave of licensing agreements the following year.

These deals are often promoted as a positive development for the news industry, with Pete Brown of the Tow Center noting that 'OpenAI has tended to shape its public narrative around the great benefits it claims these partnerships will bring to the public and the news industry as a whole' (Brown, 2024). As an example, Open AI CEO Sam Altman described his company's partnership with News Corp as one which emphasised the value of News Corp's journalism and OpenAI's enthusiasm to 'enhance our users' access to its high-quality reporting' (OpenAI, 2024d). Similarly, the American news organisation Axios entered a deal with OpenAI which Axios says will fund the expansion of its reporting to four new cities to provide local reporting (Smith, 2025).

Only a few Australian media outlets appear to have publicly formalised licensing agreements with AI developers. In May 2024, News Corp entered into a multi-year global partnership with OpenAI, granting it access to content from its publications including news.com.au, The Australian, Herald Sun, and The Daily Telegraph (OpenAI, 2024d). In June 2025, Man of Many announced a partnership with ProRata.AI to licence its editorial content to be used in the Gist.ai platform. The lifestyle outlet described the move as positioning it 'at the forefront of a global movement of publishers seeking to build a more viable future for digital media' (Man of Many, 2025). While a deal does not appear to have been formalised yet, Nine Entertainment has expressed openness to future collaboration with AI developers (Jolly, 2024).

However, licensing arrangements are an imperfect solution. As Brown and Simon point out, it remains unclear whether these licensing deals are equitable for news publishers, or whether they primarily benefit AI developers, which have greater financial resources (Brown, 2024). There are also questions about whether some news organisations receive more favourable terms than others, potentially creating a hierarchy of sources that shapes how content and associated source links appear in AI-generated responses. Some publishers may also feel pressured to participate in such agreements out of fear of being left behind. Furthermore, Simon cautions that these partnerships could deepen publishers' dependence on tech companies by giving them greater control over the

THERE IS CONCERN THAT GLOBAL DISPARITIES IN TECHNOLOGICAL CAPABILITY WILL BE REFLECTED IN THE RATE AND LEVEL OF AI ADOPTION, LEADING TO A GREATER IMPACT ON MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY AND REACH IN LESS WEALTHY COUNTRIES



technologies underpinning both content production and distribution (Simon, 2023).

The parties are not legally obligated to disclose their terms, but this leaves little leverage for smaller organisations looking to enter deals in order to protect their own copyrighted works. Simon notes that 'a large publishing group might be able to hire an economic consultancy which will do the maths for them...[whereas] smaller outlets might not be able to afford such a luxury. Instead, they risk being presented with a fait accompli with little room for negotiation' (Simon, 2024).

This issue may be especially relevant for news organisations in emerging economies, often referred to as the Global South. Many of the licensing deals made in 2024 and into 2025 have involved major media companies from Europe and North America – regions that share linguistic and cultural ties with the leading AI developers. This dynamic risks creating further biases and deepening the digital divide between the regions, as training data and AI-generated outputs become increasingly dominated by English and other Western European languages and perspectives. The UNDP Human Development Report 2025 on AI observes that although internet access has increased globally, 'wide disparities remain in quality, reliability and means of connecting' in lower income countries (Conceição, 2025, p. 50). This means that unequal access to tools, and in turn skillsets, can be limitations for AI use in these regions. This was observed by Radcliffe, with survey participants who reported not using AI citing several barriers to usage, including a lack of awareness or knowledge, insufficient training and support, and lack of access (Radcliffe, 2025).

Another question that has been raised about the licensing model is its sustainability, with Audrey Schomer writing that licensing demands will fluctuate as AI developers come up with new architectures and training methods (Schomer, 2025). This may mean developing methods that do not rely on expanding volumes of diverse and high-quality data to improve model performance i.e., scaled data. Schomer writes that there may eventually be less demand for English text, an increased preference for specialised data over sheer volume, and increased use of AI-generated synthetic data to train models instead of human-created works.

Licensing may not be the perfect solution, but media organisations are nevertheless eager for conversation and collaboration. In May 2025, public and private news organisations from around the world joined an initiative spearheaded by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) called 'News Integrity in the Age of AI' (EBU, 2025). It calls on 'AI developers to help ensure that [AI] is safe, reliable and beneficial for the news ecosystem and the public,' and proposes a code of practice underpinned by five principles around generative AI usage authorisation, fair value, accuracy and attribution, news media plurality, and dialogue with technology companies. The initiative has gained support from other media bodies around the world, including the North American Broadcasters Association (NABA), Alianza Informativa Latinoamericana (AIL), Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) and the media association FIPP. According to a November 2024 article in Capital Brief, a coalition of Australian media organisations, including Seven Media, SBS, ABC, and Australian Community Media, came together to collectively negotiate with AI developers such as OpenAI and Google (Buckley, 2024). The move appears aimed at building momentum and presenting a united front to strengthen their bargaining power in discussions over the use and licensing of their content.

The growing number of deals and this call for collaboration from the initiative, reflects growing momentum toward the development of clearer AI guidelines and regulatory frameworks. While guidelines and regulations haven't moved as fast as the spread of generative AI, important steps have been taken over the past 18 months.

GUIDELINE AND REGULATORY DEVELOPMENTS

Since our 2023 report, a growing number of newsrooms have begun publishing internal guidelines on the use of generative AI. Recent studies analysing these documents show that many originate from large news organisations in Europe and North America, with a rising number also emerging from Australia. These guidelines are primarily designed to manage the risks associated with generative AI, including misinformation, bias, and potential erosion of audience trust. At the end of this chapter, we provide examples of principles taken from guidelines published by news organisations and industry bodies.

Some studies have observed a distinction between public and commercial media, which lies in the legal obligations of the former to uphold public accountability and community trust, though both sectors tend to prioritise similar concerns (De Lima Santos et al., 2024; Parratt-Fernández et al., 2024). Some frameworks introduce AI-specific principles governing appropriate use and experimentation, but all to varying degrees adapt traditional journalistic values to shape responsible practices. A common feature across all guidelines is the requirement for human oversight of AI-generated material and applications, reflecting the view that journalism remains a human-driven endeavour with rigorous checks and balances, in which generative AI supports, rather than replaces, editorial judgement.

Internationally, some common guiding documents have also appeared at the industry level. These include the Paris Charter on AI and Journalism and the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Principles for the Future of Responsible Media in the Era of AI. Some national industry bodies have also issued guiding principles. Many of these engage with labour issues as well as journalistic practice.

So far, the most significant advancement has been the European Union's (EU) Artificial Intelligence Act (AIA), which came into force in August 2024. Elsewhere, countries are adopting national AI strategies focused on balancing responsible AI usage with innovation. Some jurisdictions are in the process of drafting legislative reforms aimed at enhancing safety, as well as providing greater clarity on copyright and intellectual property issues. The impacts of AI on news and journalism are often not considered in these regulatory developments, which have so far focused on regulating high-risk applications of the technology.

Guidelines

Across published guidelines, newsrooms have outlined a general commitment to upholding journalistic principles and values when using generative AI technology, generally aligning with the Paris Charter on AI and Journalism and the WEF Principles for the Future of Responsible Media in the Era of AI. WEF highlights values of truth, accuracy, transparency, and accountability, and urges media organisations to ensure that reporting remains objective and bias free, with clear disclosure of sources, corrections, and AI usage to audiences. The Paris Charter incorporates these same principles across ten

journalism-specific commitments, which include maintaining human agency in editorial decision-making, ensuring transparency in AI use, tracing the origin of content, and distinguishing between authentic and synthetic material.

International newsrooms

A 2023 WAN-IFRA survey found that although nearly half of international journalists were already using generative AI tools, only around 20% had formal policies in place (Roper et al., 2023). In Radcliffe, 80 per cent of survey participants reported using AI tools in journalistic work, but only 13 per cent reported having an official AI policy. The lack of clear policies, the author suggests, may stem from a 'wait and see' approach, with outlets still assessing how to appropriately use the tools (p. 27).

Recent academic studies, which includes another practitioner survey by Diakopoulos et al. (2024) and guideline analyses by Becker et al. (2025), Parratt-Fernández et al. (2024), and de Lima Santos et al. (2024), provide valuable insights into emerging trends in generative AI policies across newsrooms.

These studies do not cover guidelines released in late 2024 and 2025, so the following discussion should not be considered a comprehensive overview of all existing frameworks.

Risk Mitigation, Human Oversight and Journalistic Values

The studies show key principles emerging around risk mitigation, human oversight, and the reaffirmation of core journalistic standards. Oversight, commonly referred to as 'human in the loop,' is crucial for maintaining editorial standards and avoiding errors, bias, or 'hallucinations' from AI systems. Parratt-Fernández et al. note that some practitioners viewed oversight as a safeguard against AI overshadowing journalists, with de Lima Santos et al. reiterating that preventing bias and errors is another motivating concern.

The notion of human-centred journalism also appears in more recent newsroom policies. For example, the Washington Post reaffirms that 'our people are our strength … journalists and technologists are essential to the work we do …' (The Washington Post, 2025). Brazil's Globo incorporates a section into its wider editorial policy that AI should not be used to write opinion pieces, and Channel 4's standalone policy, released in May 2025, states that AI 'enhances and supports – it doesn't replace human judgement' (Globo; Channel 4, 2025).

Becker et al. observe that commercial media often provided more detailed rules around transparency and oversight, while public broadcasters focused more on human control over algorithms. Parratt-Fernández et al., similarly note that 'ethical commitment to audiences is particularly relevant' to public media like the BBC and Bayerischer Rundfunk (p. 10).

However, in both survey studies, participants felt that guidelines tended to be high-level or aspirational (de Lima Santos et al., 2024). Diakopoulos et al. found that 42.3 per cent of respondents described AI guidelines as vague and called for more practical direction on permitted and banned AI uses. Similarly, Radcliffe notes that nearly 80 per cent of respondents believed guidelines were needed, but were often unavailable.

The studies also commented on limitations. This included that many of the guidelines lacked clear enforcement and accountability mechanisms, had limited practical detail on data protection and AI sustainability, and otherwise avoided talking about the potential risks with algorithmic dependency.

While guidelines generally include requirements for transparency, recent research suggests that the relationship between transparency practices and audience trust is complex. A study by Toff & Simon (2024) shows that audiences tend to be less trusting of content that is labelled as AI-produced. At the same time, transparency about the sources used to generate the content mitigates this effect. The upshot is that while high-level guidelines or principles may be useful as a signal of intent, the crucial question for newsrooms seeking to preserve the integrity of their news is how these principles are to be realised in practice (Amigo & Porlezza, 2025). While many newsrooms have or are developing practical guidelines for their journalists, these are often not made public.

Regional Variation

Many of the guidelines analysed were published by media organisations from Europe and North America, with only a few outside this region. Becker et al. and de Lima Santos et al. observed that despite some organisational and cultural differences, newsrooms tended to produce similar guidelines in response to the rapid growth of AI.

De Lima Santos et al. write that the 'paucity of guidelines from Global South media organisations, with some exceptions … reflects an increasing gap in addressing the realities and challenges of AI adoption in these regions' (p. 2600). This may contribute to widening the digital divide between the regions, with resource constraints impacting pathways to improved AI literacy and access. The authors call for more inclusive and context-sensitive guideline development, otherwise the conversation around AI and newsroom ethics could become dominated by perspectives from Europe and North America.

Nevertheless, newsrooms from emerging economies recognise the need for clear ethical frameworks around generative AI. For instance, a 2024 white paper by communications firm Vero ASEAN found that while surveyed journalists across Southeast Asia were highly familiar with generative AI technologies, they also expressed a pressing need for guiding principles underpinned by continuous education, transparency, and responsible use (Lachkar & Siswoyo, 2024). In May 2025 the Federation of African Journalists urged the African Union, national governments, and relevant stakeholders to implement enforceable safeguards around protecting journalistic freedoms and data privacy (International

ACROSS PUBLISHED GUIDELINES, NEWSROOMS HAVE OUTLINED A GENERAL COMMITMENT TO UPHOLDING JOURNALISTIC PRINCIPLES AND VALUES WHEN USING GENERATIVE AI TECHNOLOGY…

Federation of Journalists, 2025). Furthermore, in a study of 12 newsrooms across Latin America and Spain, García de Torres et al. reported widespread support among journalists for regulatory oversight and the adoption of robust ethical codes (García et al., 2025).

However, there is a sense of openness and willingness across the news industry to share organisational experience and knowledge. Poynter and Thomson Reuters have both published starter kits for other newsrooms to draw upon to create their own policies (Orsi, 2025; Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2025). The Paris Charter on AI and Journalism was developed by Reporters Without Borders and 16 partner organisations; and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has released a set of recommendations on AI use (IFJ, 2025). In May 2025, press councils from South-East Europe and Türkiye adopted a 'Regional Declaration on the Ethical and Transparent Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Media' (UNESCO, 2025).

Australian newsrooms

Newsroom guidelines available in Australia reflect many of the international features, particularly around risk mitigation and journalistic values. They generally prohibit the publishing of AI-generated output without approval and emphasise keeping humans in the loop at key news production stages. However, Australian outlets appear to express a slightly more cautious approach to generative AI integration, with distinct top-down editorial approval chains.

As we noted in our first report, the Guardian was the first Australian news outlet to release AI-specific guidelines through its UK parent group in June 2023. Since then, at least nine more organisations have published AI guidelines or policies including ABC, SBS, Crikey, Nine Entertainment, Man of Many, News Corp Australia, Mamamia, Southern Cross Austereo (SCA) and Time Out magazine. These have varying levels of detail. Several organisations have established both a set of high-level principles and more detailed guidance for newsrooms. Some, such as the ABC, have published both principles and guidelines, while others, including SBS and News Corp Australia, have published high-level principles but not detailed guidance. Nine Publishing has published AI guidelines but not its high-level principles, though these have been reported on in the media (Jolly, 2024). Other news organisations have reportedly developed internal AI guidelines but have not released them publicly.

At the industry level, the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance released a draft position statement on AI in 2023.

Principles: Journalistic Values

The high-level principles in Australian guidelines are sensitive to the challenges posed by generative AI to common journalistic values and standards, though with varying degrees of attention. Accuracy, transparency, authenticity and audience trust are among the most frequently cited values.

Given the well-documented tendency of generative AI to produce inaccurate output, accuracy is emphasised as a fundamental responsibility that must not be compromised by the use of generative AI or automation more broadly. Most guidelines seek to mitigate the risks to these values through a requirement for human oversight, while some rule out using AI for particular applications.

The first of SBS's guiding principles states that AI is an assistant in which humans retain control and oversight, and the third that AI use must fit within SBS's overall purpose, staff and audiences. Similarly, the ABC AI Principles emphasise that AI tools should be used to strengthen the services they provide to audiences. The ABC also explicitly acknowledges the rights of creators and rights-holders when using AI. Man of Many acknowledges that 'accurate, realistic and human-led reporting is critical to the ongoing success of the wider publishing industry and a vital resource in the fight against misinformation.'

Nine Publishing's AI principles reportedly include 'We start and end with humans' – placing the onus on journalists to 'critically examine AI-generated output and automated decision-making for accuracy and fairness' (Jolly, 2024).

The MEAA's position statement covers the importance of journalistic work, consultation and moral rights as well as reference to journalistic values including accuracy, transparency and avoiding bias (Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance,2023).

Privacy and other legal issues

While not all of the policies explicitly address privacy or data protection within their AI-specific guidelines, these concerns are generally covered by broader organisational privacy policies. Some guidelines refer to these policies rather than provide specific provisions on AI. News Corp's Code of Conduct requires employees to be aware of applicable laws on defamation, discrimination, contempt, copyright and privacy when seeking to generate or use content from AI systems. The ABC's AI Principles state that they will work to ensure that their use of AI protects both the ABC's data and the personal information the public entrusts to them. Southern Cross Austereo's editorial policy states generally that any use of AI technology must be compliant with Australian laws, codes and standards.

Nine Publications acknowledge legal compliance obligations and outline standards for handling personal data. These include restrictions on inputting sensitive or confidential information into third-party AI platforms. Unpublished stories may be fed into internal, closed environments.

Risk Mitigation and Human Oversight

Across the board, Australian guidelines emphasise human oversight, especially over public-facing content and with continual monitoring over generative AI when used in backend tasks, such as automation or summarisation. As such, most permit use of the technology for transcription, research, and data analysis, but insist that final editorial output be either authored or approved by humans.

The public broadcasters, ABC and SBS, have both released a framework on their websites. The ABC's policies are more detailed and include a set of AI Principles and a detailed guidance note covering the appropriate use of AI across production, commissioning and acquisitions, with a focus on generative AI (ABC, 2024a; ABC, 2024b). Any use must comply with the ABC's broader editorial standards. However, the framework is also sensitive to risk, distinguishing between 'significant' and 'incidental' use, in which the former encompasses elements that would be relevant or essential to the audience's understanding of the content. Incidental use is that which may have little effect on the audience's understanding, such as production tools. Incidental use is not always subject to senior approval or disclosure to audiences, while senior editorial approval is required for significant use. Critically, in news and factual content, 'where audiences expect depictions of real people, places, sounds or objects,' significant use is unlikely to be appropriate. More explicitly, the guidance rules out the use of generative AI tools 'for the wholesale creation of content – that is, the inclusion of synthetic images, sounds or text generated by AI, without justification or disclosure.' Voice cloning would be inappropriate in news but may be appropriate in documentary content if appropriate permissions have been obtained.

The commercial organisations echo similar sentiments but vary slightly in scope and tone. Nine Publishing's January 2025 guidelines cover generative and assistive AI for its mastheads, The Australian Financial Review, The Sydney Morning Herald, The Age, Brisbane Times and WAtoday (Sydney Morning Herald, 2025). It mirrors ABC's approach with clear editorial oversight and approval for any AI-generated content, in which 'as a general principle, there must always be a human between any AI tool and our audience.' Nine also rules out using AI to 'generate photo-realistic images or illustrations for publication, except in cases where the AI-generated nature of the image is the point of the story. With editor approval, AI may be used in the creation of certain graphics.'

News Corp's AI policy, folded into its broader Code of Conduct Policy – Editorial, is compliance-driven, focusing on legal obligations and internal approvals (The Daily Telegraph, 2024). News and lifestyle-focused outlets like Mamamia and Man of Many also stress human oversight, though Mamamia's statement is brief. Man of Many's editorial policy is more detailed and clearly prohibits AI from conducting original reporting (Mamamia, 2024; Man of Many n.d). SCA's paragraph-long AI Policy refers to human connection being at the core of its audio offerings but does not elaborate on oversight (SCA). Its editorial policy also does not mention human oversight but requires that 'AI technology output that is inaccurate, misleading or biased is not used.'

Crikey, on the other hand, stands alone and has banned the use of AI to create content entirely, calling it a threat to journalistic integrity and their voice (Wilson, 2024). Others ban audience-facing content, but not its internal use. Man of Many, for example, states that no written AI will be published on their site, with all journalists required to produce original reporting for every piece.

Two international outlets with local Australian operations, The Guardian and Time Out, also require human approval and oversight over AI-generated content (The Guardian, 2024; Time Out).

Transparency

The ABC AI principles commit the organisation to inform their audiences about how they are using AI technologies. This includes explaining how the AI works and how it will affect their audiences. The overriding principle is that the ABC will not use AI in ways that could mislead. The AI guidance note provides more detailed advice, again referring to the distinction between significant and incidental use. Significant use requires disclosure, and ABC workers should err on the side of caution in determining what constitutes significant use in content or production. Disclosure should be made in a manner appropriate to the format, with end credits or web pages used where disclosure within the content is impractical.

DEVELOPING ETHICAL GUIDELINES AND RESPONSIBLE PRACTICES IS SEEN BY MANY AS ONE OF THE MOST CHALLENGING AREAS IN COMPLEXITY AND DEMAND ON RESOURCES. FOR EXAMPLE, WHILE BIAS IS A WELL-KNOWN SHORTCOMING OF AI, KNOWING HOW TO ADDRESS IT IS ANOTHER MATTER

Nine Publishing takes a more black-and-white approach, requiring transparency in the 'rare cases where AI-generated material is published' but not for assistive uses. SBS's AI Principles state that they will be transparent about how they use AI, especially for news and factual content. News Corp Australia's Code of Conduct Policy – Editorial does not mention transparency.

Dynamic Guidelines and Experimentation with AI

Some guidelines acknowledge the evolving nature of generative AI and have included their intent to update their policies as needed. Both ABC and Nine describe their frameworks as dynamic, with Nine formalising this approach through the establishment of an AI oversight committee. SBS has hinted at internal review teams exploring optimal uses of AI, while Mamamia commits to conducting periodic audits.

Most support cautious experimentation, particularly in backend operations such as transcription, translation, research and editorial assistance. Time Out's policy is transparent about trialling AI to determine its usefulness in editorial processes, while Mamamia allows AI in brand-related advertising, and SCA for consensual voice-cloning for content creation and on-air service delivery.

Crikey is, as mentioned, unique in its approach, and though it has admitted to having 'fiddled with AI image generation and the occasional block of text as a proof of concept,' it does not encourage experimentation or any AI use in its reporting (Wilson, 2024).

Regulation

With AI technologies advancing at an unprecedented pace, regulatory efforts, including the development of clear copyright laws, have lagged. This has been compounded by varying views on how to proceed, with some jurisdictions favouring strict risk mitigation while others place greater emphasis on AI innovation. The following is an overview of some of these developments.

AI Safety and Ethics

Safety and ethics are two interrelated concepts that underpin AI regulation efforts. Safety broadly means making sure AI systems perform as intended and in a way that benefits humans while minimising dangerous or harmful outcomes (McGrath, 2024). This includes subjecting a system to robust testing to reduce risks such as bias, privacy breaches and malicious misuse (IBM, 2024). Ethics concerns establishing a framework of moral principles and values to manage the creation and deployment of AI systems. For example, transparency, sustainability and accountability.

The EU's AI Act (AIA) is being rolled out over several years and is the world's first comprehensive framework on AI regulation. It incorporates a risk-based approach by classifying AI systems according to the level of risk posed to users (unacceptable, high, limited and minimal), each with corresponding obligations and penalties for providers, distributors and importers, and to some extent, users. Unacceptable-risk systems, such as those used for social scoring or deploying manipulative tactics that exploit human behaviour, are banned. High-risk systems, such as those in areas like critical infrastructure controls, healthcare, and education, must meet stringent requirements around transparency, risk management, and conformity assessments. Limited risk systems, such as chatbots, are subject to disclosure obligations in which users must be informed they are interacting with an AI system. The AIA also introduces obligations like data disclosure for providers of general-purpose AI models, which includes large generative-AI models (GPAI) like GPT-4, that are trained on large datasets and capable of performing a wide range of tasks.

The reception to the AIA has been mixed. The EBU, for example, has welcomed the regulation, particularly for the AIA's transparency requirements about how AI systems use media content for training (EBU, 2024). Others, including Meta and Google, have criticised it for regulatory overreach (Browne, 2025). So, too, has the United States. At the Paris AI Action Summit in February 2025, Vice President J.D. Vance said that Europe's 'excessive regulation' of AI 'could kill transformative industry' (Tobey et al., 2025).

The United States has mostly taken a pro-acceleration, less-regulation approach to AI. In January 2025, President Donald Trump signed an Executive Order 'Removing barriers to American leadership in AI' to revoke or revise Biden-era directives deemed inconsistent with 'sustain[ing] and enhanc[ing America's global AI dominance' (The White House, 2025). This included repealing Biden's October 2023 Executive Order on 'Safe, secure and trustworthy artificial intelligence.' The Republican Party had even sought to introduce a ten-year moratorium on new state laws regulating AI via the One big beautiful bill Act, which would have stopped more than 1,000 regulatory bills making their way through state legislatures (Tene et al., 2025). Due to bipartisan criticism that a moratorium would undermine protections related to children's online safety, deceptive trade practices and copyright, it was eventually removed from the final bill, which was passed into law in July 2025.

While this debate highlights the tension between encouraging innovation and ensuring effective oversight, the United States has positioned itself as a global leader in AI, driven in large part by its homegrown tech giants. Another part is fuelled by its fears over China's own rapidly developing AI sector, illustrating what Meta chief technology officer Andrew Bosworth has called 'our space race' (Hoffman, 2025, 0:41:32).

China has articulated its own ambition to become a global leader in AI by 2030, while taking a more proactive approach to regulation (Tobey et al., 2025). It has developed a patchwork of regulatory instruments that build on existing legislation addressing data governance, algorithmic accountability, cybersecurity, and ethical use. Notably, the 2023 Interim Measures for the Management of Generative AI Services introduced baseline obligations for developers and providers. Further, in September 2024, China's National Technical Committee 260 released an AI Safety Governance Framework outlining principles for responsible AI (Tobey et al., 2025). The framework promotes a 'people-centred approach' that aims to integrate technological innovation with ethical risk management.

The UK also does not yet have standalone legislation, but its organisations are also still required to abide by existing laws around data protection, IP, employment and other related rules (HSFK, 2025). The UK's 'pro-innovation approach to AI

regulation', outlined in its 2023 White Paper, reaffirmed its January 2025 AI Opportunities Action Plan, designed around boosting the country's AI infrastructure, to be 'an AI maker, not an AI taker' (Clifford, 2025, p.5). In March 2025, a private members' bill on AI was reintroduced to the House of Lords to enshrine principles of safe and ethical AI as outlined in the white paper, and to establish an AI Authority (AI Bill [HL], 2025).

In Australia, following the adoption of voluntary AI Ethics Principles in 2019, the government has recognised shortcomings in existing legislation and proposed regulation. In September 2024, it released a proposal paper titled 'Introducing Mandatory Requirements for AI in High-Risk Settings', inviting public consultation on potential legislative approaches (Department of Industry, Science and Resources, 2024a). Alongside this, it published the Voluntary AI Safety Standard (VAISS), outlining ten guardrails intended to help organisations harness the benefits of AI with a 'human-centred', risk mitigation approach (Department of Industry, Science and Resources, 2024b). As of mid-2025, the government is consulting on an expanded version of VAISS, and the Productivity Commission is reviewing whether existing regulations adequately address AI's risks and benefits.

In Africa, several countries, including Egypt, Morocco and Rwanda have adopted AI strategies or policies that address a range of matters around ethical and security issues, accountability and improving research and development of AI. The African Union also endorsed a Continental AI Strategy in July 2024 that focuses on the need to build infrastructure and governance frameworks around AI, while promoting ethical and responsible AI practices (White & Case LLP).

While this overview is not intended to be a comprehensive exploration of all AI regulation, given the field is changing so quickly, it does reveal a common tension: how to maintain powerful AI systems that are trustworthy and controllable, without compromising the benefits they bring. While the EU's regulation stands out for ambition and scope, how effective its enforcement will be remains to be seen.

Copyright Considerations

In December 2023, the Attorney-General established an active Copyright and Artificial Intelligence Reference Group in Australia to engage with stakeholders on copyright and AI and contribute to future policies on the topic (Attorney-General's Department, 2024). While policy direction remains forthcoming, relevant developments in the UK and US over the past 18 months, alongside the aforementioned court cases, are gradually addressing ambiguity around copyright and generative AI.

As previously noted, the U.S. Copyright Office (USCO) has released a three-part report on generative AI, addressing digital replicas, the copyrightability of AI outputs, and the use of copyrighted materials in training AI systems. Part 2 of the report, published in January 2025, affirms the position that content generated without substantial human input would generally not be copyright protected. Part 3 (albeit a pre-publication version released in May 2025) further states that fair use determinations will generally depend on the circumstances (USCO, 2025b). For example, some uses may be considered transformative, while others might not, writing that, 'making commercial use of vast troves of copyrighted works to produce expressive content that competes with them in existing markets ... [went] beyond established fair use boundaries' (p. 107). The report also commented on retrieval-augmented generation (RAG), noting that when such systems reproduce abridged content without introducing meaningful new expression, the output is unlikely to be considered transformative.

In the UK, the government opened a public consultation on copyright and AI in December 2024 and proposed expanding the text and data mining (TDM) exception under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (Intellectual Property Office, 2024). TDM, which covers automated data analysis, is currently permitted for non-commercial uses where there is lawful access through subscription or licences. The amendment favoured by the government would permit TDM for commercial uses including training generative AI models, unless the rights holders expressly opt out.

The proposal has sparked backlash from British creatives, including news outlets the Daily Mail and the Guardian. They argue that the opt out clause puts an unnecessary burden on creatives, while giving 'big tech' free access to creators' content to power their models (The Guardian, 2025). This pushback fuelled the 'Make it Fair' campaign made up of creatives urging the government to reconsider the proposal and guarantee increased protection for creative industries. One of these protections included the request for an amendment to the draft Data (Use and Access) Bill that would require tech companies to disclose what copyright works they used to train their AI models (Kleinman, 2025). Creatives have warned that without disclosure, AI developers will continue scraping and reproducing copyrighted materials unchecked, undermining the financial value of the creative industry. The bill eventually passed in June 2025 without the amendment.

In short, how copyright intersects with generative AI is an evolving area. Until clearer rules emerge, a mix of licensing, lawsuits and policy debates will continue to define how creators and AI companies navigate their rights and responsibilities.

The rapid evolution of generative AI is introducing innovative work flows into newsrooms, but also introduces risks to journalistic standards. As tools become more multimodal, accessible, and integrated into everyday applications, journalists face the dual challenge of harnessing generative AI while ensuring audience trust is not displaced. Many are already using AI to streamline backend workflows and to personalise news delivery, yet concerns ranging from misinformation and copyright infringement to editorial integrity continue to prompt caution. With observers heralding the next stage of AI to be agentic, with more automation and less control, newsrooms' priority will be in striking that sustainable balance, while also being able to clarify ongoing legal uncertainty around how AI developers use their content.

OVERVIEW OF AI
PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

This document summarises some key principles from select international and Australian codes of conduct and editorial guidelines.

Journalistic and ethical principles

Paris Charter on AI and Journalism 2023

The use and development of AI systems in journalism must uphold the core values of journalistic ethics, including truthfulness and accuracy, fairness, impartiality, independence, non-harm, non-discrimination, accountability, respect for privacy and for the confidentiality of sources.

Thomson Reuters

Thomson Reuters' use of data and AI is informed by its Trust Principles (independence, integrity, reliability, disinterestedness).

Thomson Reuters aims to use data and to design, develop and deploy AI products and services that are reliable, consistent and empower socially responsible decisions.

Thomson Reuters will strive to maintain meaningful human involvement, and design, develop and deploy AI products and services and use data in a manner that treats people fairly.

The Guardian

AI will be used for the benefit of readers, for the benefit of its mission, its staff and the wider organisation, and with respect for those who create and own content.

News Corp

Commits to applying the same editorial rigour and standards to how it uses all information (including images, video and graphic) sourced from AI technology.

Southern Cross Media

Ensure any use of AI technology is compliant with Australian laws, codes and standards and that AI technology output that is inaccurate, misleading or biased is not used.

Mediahuis AI Framework

Ensures a balance of journalistic, commercial, and audience value objectives in the application of AI.

Bavarian Broadcasting

Demands proven benefits for its users and workflows when using AI systems.

Transparency

Transparency is a key principle in nearly all guidelines.

World Economic Forum Principles for Future of Responsible Media in the Era of AI

Tools and processes should clearly communicate relevant information regarding the source of and process for content generation ... while also acknowledging and respecting the intellectual property (IP) of content creators." (Principle 3)

Audiences should be able to verify the authenticity of the content they consume easily and intuitively. Content-labelling solutions such as watermarking, or provenance authentication processes, should be adopted and implemented to empower consumers. (Principle 3)

Paris Charter on AI and Journalism

Media outlets should maintain a public record of the AI systems they use and have used, detailing their purposes, scopes, and conditions of use. (Principle 5)

ABC AI Principles

Pledges to inform audiences about how it is using AI technologies and explain how the AI works and how it will affect audiences. The principles commit the ABC to not use AI in ways that could mislead audiences.

Editorial Policies Guidance note ABC workers should err on the side of caution in determining what constitutes 'significant use' of AI tools in content, in line with the organisation's commitments to transparency and maintaining audience trust. Disclosure should be made in a manner appropriate to the format.

Nine Media

"In the rare cases where AI-generated material is published (text or imagery), with the approval of the editor, it will be clearly labelled as such for the benefit of readers. The use of assistive AI does not require declaration."

Human oversight and accountability

Most guidelines recognise the need for human oversight to mitigate risks of inaccuracy, bias and unreliability. Some expressly place accountability with the users of AI tools. Some specify approval and accountability chains. Some are categorical statements while others are higher-level principles.

Paris Charter on AI and Journalism

Human decision-making must remain central to both long-term strategies and daily editorial choices. The use of AI systems should be a deliberate and well-informed decision made by humans. Editorial teams must clearly define the goals, scope, and usage conditions for each AI system.

Verdensgang

All use of generative AI must be manually approved before publication.

The Guardian

If significant elements generated by AI are included in a piece of work, it will only do so with clear evidence of a specific benefit, human oversight, and the explicit permission of a senior editor.

Nine Publishing

Where AI tools are used for a task, the results must be critically scrutinised, verified and checked by a human before being used in any way towards the creation of content. Nine Publishing pledges to use multiple, reputable sources to confirm facts and never rely solely on AI.

BBC

Use must always be transparent and accountable with effective and informed human oversight.

News Corp

Content from AI technology cannot be published on any platform including social media without being first reviewed and approved by an editor or relevant editorial manager who has been given authorisation to approve publication of content.

Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau (ANP)

Its production chain is human >> machine >> human. It does not use any computer (or AI) generated content, not even as source material, without a human checking this information. Each employee remains responsible for ANP's reliability.

Thomson Reuters

Thomson Reuters will strive to maintain meaningful human involvement, and design, develop and deploy AI products and services and use data in a manner that treats people fairly.

ABC Guidance Note

In the News division, all uses of AI tools should be referred to an editorial manager, who must consider whether further upward referral is required. The publication or broadcast of content created using AI requires approval of the Director, News. In the Content division, all significant uses of AI tools should be referred to an editorial manager, who must consider whether further upward referral is required.

BBC Guidance Note

In all cases, there must be a senior editorial figure who is responsible and accountable for overseeing the deployment and continuing use of AI. Editorial line managers must also make sure they are aware of and effectively managing any use of AI by their teams.

Restricting use

To mitigate risk and protect news brands and journalists, many organisations restrict the use of AI to backend tasks, banning the use of AI in published content. Some also refer specifically to image generation. Principles-based documents tend instead to rely on human oversight and other editorial controls.

BBC

Generative AI should not be used to directly create news content published or broadcast by BBC News/Nations, current affairs or factual journalism unless it is the subject of the content and its use is illustrative. Exemptions to restrictions on use include the creation of graphics, which previously would have been created using conventional digital techniques and may be subject to a piloting process.

Nine Publishing

Our Employees are encouraged to be curious about AI. Accordingly, journalists and editorial employees are allowed to use AI tools where there is a genuine benefit in doing so. This may include using assistive AI to do initial research, prompt ideas, analyse data or suggest headlines.

AI will not be used to write stories for publication.

ABC

Significant use of AI tools in news, factual and information content where audiences expect depictions of real people, places, sounds or objects is unlikely to be appropriate.

Evaluation and Testing

Some guidelines include principles on system evaluation and testing, often focused on data privacy, security and bias mitigation.

Paris Charter on AI and Journalism

AI systems used by the media and journalists should undergo an independent, comprehensive and thorough evaluation involving journalism support groups. This evaluation must robustly demonstrate adherence to the core value of journalistic ethics.

Thomson Reuters

Thomson Reuters will prioritise security and privacy in their use of data and throughout the design, development and deployment of our data and AI products and services.

MediaHuis AI Framework

Commits to regular checks of data for accuracy and biases, and to securely store and delete data when required. By complying with relevant laws and regulations, it protects personal data from unauthorised access and has a process in place to address any data breaches or security incidents.

It acknowledges that current AI tools may be prone to error and bias and commits to considering this when it seeks to develop proprietary AI models and tools.

The Guardian

Commits to guarding against the dangers of bias embedded within generative tools and their underlying training sets.

ABC Australia

Will continue to assess and experiment with AI technologies as they evolve to identify opportunities for innovation and mitigate potential risks for our audiences and organisation.

Traceability and verification

Paris Charter on AI and Journalism

Media outlets should, wherever possible, use state-of-the-art tools that guarantee the authenticity and provenance of published content, providing reliable details about its origin and any subsequent changes it may have undergone.

Tech solutions and media–tech relations

Principles developed by industry groups and unions focus on protecting news companies and journalists.

Trust

Thomson Reuters

Thomson Reuters commits to partnering with individuals and organizations who share similar ethical approaches to its own regarding the use of data, content, and AI.

BBC

Use of AI must never undermine the trust of audiences.

News Corp

Commits to the highest standards of accuracy and to ensure to take all reasonable steps to avoid publishing information that is misleading or containing discriminatory bias.

Commits to not use AI systems to generate or distribute content which it does not have permission to use, particularly if the content infringes upon the rights of content creators.

Privacy, security

News Media Alliance AI Principles

Generative AI systems should be safe and avoid privacy risks. Generative AI systems, including Generative AI models, should be designed to respect the privacy of users who interact with them.

News Corp

Seek advice in advance of uploading personal or private data and any News Corp content to AI systems to ensure compliance with company policies and laws.

Accountability

News Media Alliance AI Principles

Deployers of generative AI systems should be held accountable for system outputs and should not be shielded from liability for their outputs—this would provide them with an unfair advantage against which traditional publishers cannot compete, and increase the danger to the public and institutions from the unchecked power of this technology.

Licensing & Copyright

News Media Alliance AI Principles

Developers and deployers of GAI must respect creators' rights to their content.

Use of publisher content by GAI systems for training, surfacing and synthesising is not authorised by most publishers' terms and conditions, and authorisation for search should not be construed as an authorization for uses such as training GAI systems or displaying more content than contemplated for or as used in traditional search.

GAI systems should be transparent to publishers. Use of publishers' IP requires explicit permission. Compensation agreements must account for harms GAI systems may cause publishers and the public. Copyright laws must protect, not harm, content creators.

Systems should also be designed in a way that means paywalled and otherwise protected content cannot be exposed.

03

THE VIEW FROM AUSTRALIAN NEWSROOMS

This chapter presents the views of participants in our research interviews with 13 news editors and six product leads from 14 news organisations conducted between August and November 2024, and in a day-long workshop conducted in collaboration with RMIT and the ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision Making and Society. Many, but not all of those we interviewed individually also attended the workshop, conducted under the Chatham House rule. Some workshop participants have chosen to remain anonymous, whilst others have waived that anonymity.

Increasing experimentation

In our 2023 report, most newsrooms we spoke to had formed interdisciplinary working groups, comprising editorial, legal and product development staff to manage the experimentation and implementation of generative AI and set the editorial and legal parameters of use. Eighteen months on, most of these groups have developed formal internal guidelines and editorial principles and set management and accountability structures to control use by editorial and content staff. These represent a new development, given the clear break with the past when editorial worked separately from the commercial considerations taken into account by product developers. One way of thinking about these working groups is as informal, experimental sandpits.

In Australia, the sandpit works in a more cautious way to those operating in newsrooms in the United States and the UK. Experimentation here has been both cautious and limited, although innovative. Public-facing innovation has been limited to service reportage, such as for weather and fuel pricing. Even low-risk experimentation such as using AI to generate podcast titles comes with debate over news integrity and transparency. Across the board, the striking difference between this and our first year of research into the use of generative AI in Australian newsrooms is increasing open-mindedness as to its utility, as articulated by Rashell Habib, Head of Digital News and Strategy at the TEN Network.

"I found there's a lot more utility in AI than I had initially thought there could be at such a fast pace. So, in its ability to take out the grunt work of the day to day of journalism, I found that it's probably not as terrifying and won't impact newsrooms as much from a content perspective … as much as I thought it would. … Most legacy larger organisations have put a living, breathing document together about the ethos of

news and that [AI] doesn't touch the content, and the need for humans to be involved. I guess what I'm trying to say is my fear around it has probably lessened to a degree."

As we found in our first report, most newsrooms have been focused on deploying AI to relieve the workflow burdens of journalism production and to increase productivity. Many were of the view that this would free up journalists to work on original reporting. Since 2023, many newsrooms have progressed further in experimentation and implementation, particularly in back-end tasks. As Erin Reimer, Managing Editor Digital News and Current Affairs at SBS told us:

"It's not just genAI that we're looking at, but also at how we might use different forms of AI to help reduce the workload of journalists so we can invest more time in original journalism. Because I think what we've seen is like an exponential amount of work, particularly when it comes to digital journalism and coordinating work across our newsrooms for digital output, for example, that just means that the production scale of that just keeps increasing."

Emerging Uses of Generative AI and Future Plans

Synthetic Voice

Synthetic voice has emerged as a significant opportunity for broadcasters, with many actively experimenting with a variety of lower-risk use cases.

The main national broadcaster, the ABC, has been experimenting in a non-audience facing, proof of concept mode, as noted by Arul Baskaran, the corporation's main innovation lead.

"We created a Chinese language audio bulletin that we didn't have before, using AI to do the first pass and also using AI synthetic voice to deliver it, text to speech."

The ABC has also piloted an AI generated hyper-local weather bulletin:

"So you can create a hyperlocal weather bulletin, based on a data feed, use AI to turn that into a script, then have it voiced using a synthetic voice, and then you can drop it into a specific player or deliver by IP address. So, it's sort of a low-risk way to explore or creating new content that might be useful, because journalists don't necessarily want to be recording this stuff like eight times a day." (Baskaran)

There is experimentation by commercial operators too, particularly where they are obliged under the Broadcasting Services Act to broadcast a certain amount of local content, and in some situations local news and weather. In our 2023 report on generative AI and journalism, the former head of news and information at Southern Cross Austereo (SCA), Melanie Withnall said that SCA was in the early stages of testing the deployment of synthetic voice for simple information services such as weather reports, which otherwise take a human being a significant amount of time to produce. She said then:

"If you think about a weather report, which literally goes for less than 10 seconds on air – and we're mandated to do it – we're just saying its 26 degrees and sunny, and it will be 26 degrees and sunny for the entire week....but it takes someone's time....if you could automate that process, and you've got 99 radio stations, you could be saving a good couple of hours of someone's time."

In 2025, CEO John Kelly told RadioInfo that SCA was using AI in its AdTech Hub which allows brands to connect with audiences and indicated the test and learn stage had been extended to providing fuel reports.

"Say for Fuel Watch – which highlights individual locations which have cheaper fuel – or Weather Watch ... we use it more in that field at the moment."

The sandpit is also a busy place at Australian Radio Network (ARN), a network of 58 radio stations spanning 33 markets across the country, boasting over 8 million listeners. ARN is considering text to voice for hourly news bulletins, using cloning technology. Fayad Tohme, ARN's former Chief Digital and Technology Officer:

"We have 58 radio stations. While the news content is often the same, each station needs its own tone of voice. We haven't fully tested this yet, but there's potential for a journalist to write the bulletin, then use AI to adapt it into different styles and voices for each station. This would help us personalise content and increase the frequency of updates."

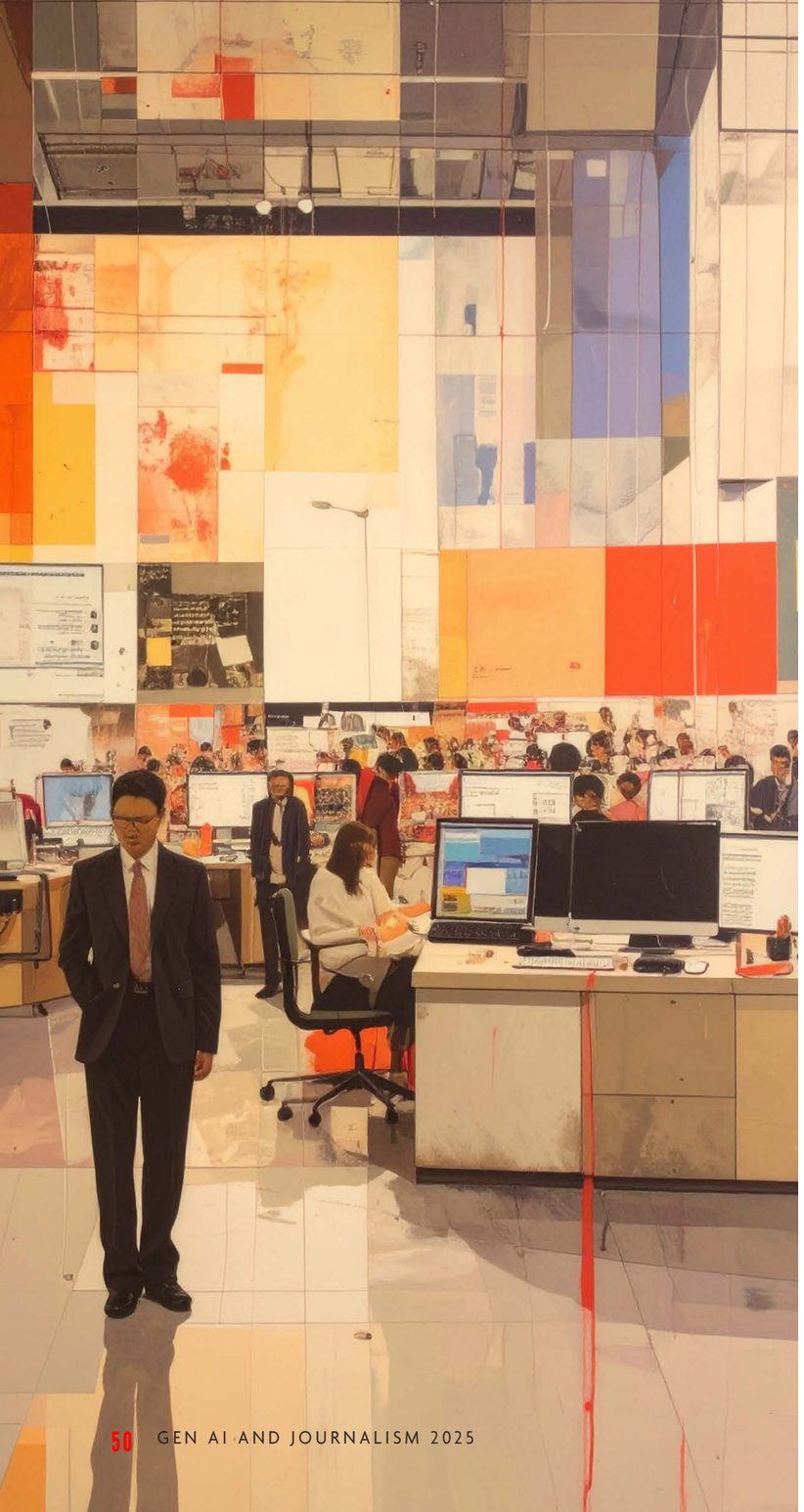
Tohme went on to say that whilst the network was still in the very early stages of experimentation, the results have been promising in relation to quality of voice and quality of content from prompts to ChatGPT. Indeed, rather than using three separate AI systems – ChatGPT for information, voice technology plugins and music bed files – ARN has tested a process using a single system.

"We've also tested that you could potentially build one single bot that does the whole thing."

Outside of news, ARN garnered attention when it announced that for six months it had been putting to air an AI-created DJ, called Thy, using the cloned voice of an employee for a daily hip hop show. ARN said it was an experiment, part of a broader strategy to explore new forms of creative expression and not designed to replace human beings. The company noted (Lee, 2025b):

"Thy offers a fully automated listening experience, powered by our Text to Speech voice cloning tools. She is part of how we are making radio more personal, without losing what makes it compelling."

"IT'S NOT JUST GEN AI THAT WE'RE LOOKING AT, BUT ALSO AT HOW WE MIGHT USE DIFFERENT FORMS OF AI TO HELP REDUCE THE WORKLOAD OF JOURNALISTS SO WE CAN INVEST MORE TIME IN ORIGINAL JOURNALISM" – ERIC REIMER,SBS



Custom AI models

An area where significant progress has been made, largely in response to concerns about the ability of commercial manufacturers to resolve known challenges around bias and verification, is the development of custom LLMs.

The ABC has created what it describes as a 'knowledge navigator' aimed at mining its own archives to assist users and staff with responses to particular questions. The technology has been trialled on limited and closed internal groups as Arul Baskaran, the ABC's Innovation Lab lead notes.

"There's also an engineering team that sits in product and technology. And ... they are working on a system ... which is essentially like a chatbot that could be applied to different use cases. ... they started this as a bit of an in-house tool built for the strategy team who are often going to Canberra Senate estimates and carrying a briefcase full of papers. And they said, what if we took that briefcase and used that as training data? So you can ask it anything about a particular person's position on something, how they wrote [about] it before, or what the ABC said about different things."

The ABC has noted of the 'knowledge navigator' that it is "a system that combines a large language model (LLM), the generative technology behind ChatGPT, with retrieval augmented generation (RAG). The RAG approach involves storing the corpus of documents in a vector database, retrieving the appropriate sources depending on the user query, and then injecting this authoritative data into the generated answer. It helps to remove the mystery of AI models, which are usually black boxes, by allowing users to see the underlying queries and references which have helped to generate a response" (Hystek-Dunk, 2024). The system is still in development.

As Arul Baskaran notes, from this experimentation, there is consideration being given to extending use of the LLM to help editorial staff research content.

"Since then, they've expanded it to look at how this could help content makers with researching or writing articles; we've plugged it into our content management system, and it'll ingest the last five years of everything that we've published, all the transcripts from the podcast, so that content makers can use it as even basic research about what have we published about this topic before, and possibly build some connections there."

In March 2025, News Corp announced the launch of NewsGPT. As noted, NewsGPT is a bespoke generative AI tool designed to trawl News Corp archives for information, much like an internal search system. Julian Delany, News Corp's chief technology officer said at the time the product was launched that the tool was designed "to support the creative process" and streamline daily tasks, though recent events indicate the company's journalists are concerned it will do more than augment news production (Saeed, 2025; Buckley, 2025). Journalists at three News Corp mastheads – The Australian, Courier Mail and The Daily Telegraph – have voiced concerns that NewsGPT enables them to adopt a certain style, and can generate a custom article (Meade, 2025). Delaney said NewsGPT would bring the power of leading AI models such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini and Anthropic Claude, together.

Most are wary of generating audience-facing content

Despite all of this sandpit activity, most continue to rule out the use of Generative AI in story output. As Nine Media's Senior Audience Editor, Growth, Sophia Phan noted:

"It's still like a learning curve as to how we use AI, especially in the world of news. And I mean, the first thought is productivity measures like SEO, headlines, key points, headline writing, for me, inputting data sets and getting it turned into different charts and graphs and summary points and going through reports and pulling out information, I feel like, in terms of like it generating content, and especially content that we would use, we're so far away from that just because we are the experts in that field. So, I don't see a world whereby we would need to use it anytime soon."

Man of Many is an online men's lifestyle magazine, and a relatively new player in the online magazine space. Founded in 2012, it boasts over 2 million monthly readers and appears to steer deliberately away from hard news content. Its co-founder, Scott Purcell is optimistic about AI implementation, though the magazine, like much of Australian legacy media, is not using generative AI for output purposes, outside of social media content creation.

"I encourage my team to experiment with it [AI] as much as possible in a private and privacy-safe way because that is where our great ideas come from. Say, crafting a tweet, for instance. You need to know whether you are doing it properly, finding the social tags, looking up the brand tag and crafting something engaging. There is obviously a great deal of skill and effort involved in getting the tone and messaging right. So, there is a large balancing act between automating the process to save time and ensuring everything is 100% correct or accurate. As I said, most of these tools are already about 80 to 90% of the way there."

The Newcastle Herald, owned by Australian Community Media, is equally curious though the masthead has maintained a position of exercising caution in implementation whilst still experimenting.

"... our headlines. That's the main thing we're using it for, is our headline generation, but only SEO, not forward facing."

"I think that we would always need human oversight, but we also have no plans to use AI. The way we see it is as a tool for our reporters to make their work easier. We don't intend to use it for content creation."

The ABC has experimented with using generative AI to produce headlines as well as to produce audio stories from text content. But, as its Product Strategy Manager Craig McCosker points out, the result was flawed:

"They look like news headlines, but it's in the detail where they're missing stuff or they're not as good as a professional writer. We did a trial, ... on rewriting content – turning our digital articles into short radio scripts. Ideas for these

trials come from bottom up, they are based on journalists wondering – "Oh, I'd like to be able to get this done quicker or easier. Can we use AI to do that?" So I wrote AI prompts to do that transformation and again, we had journalists testing the AI output as part of their work, seeing what the AI results were compared to what they would have written. The journalists found the AI wasn't reliable enough and the idea was shelved."

There are also legal issues with using generative AI for audience-facing uses, including privacy, information security and copyright, which is why having lawyers working with editorial in the sandpit is necessary, according to McCosker:

"Our lawyers review the risks around trials, making sure it's basically public information that that goes in–even with something like Microsoft Copilot, which we have a licence to and they claim the data is protected, and there's terms and conditions that seem okay–they're still concerned about what goes in. … And if you're publishing AI-generated content there are lots of open questions about copyright. What if it's partially AI? How much human input does it need to be protected? So you take a lot of those questions off the table by just not going public and focusing on whether the use of AI provides real value to the editorial teams in the first place."

The online publication The Daily Mail's Executive Editor Barclay Crawford said his organisation is actively testing and refining proprietary tools to streamline editorial workflows, automate routine backend processes and build new features to engage readers and free journalists to produce high quality, original journalism:

"The Daily Mail recognises that AI is reshaping journalism and the way audiences consume news - from Google AI Overviews surfacing news in a new format, to increased use of chatbots like ChatGPT. In response, we have established a dedicated innovation unit to explore, develop, and implement AI solutions that enhance both newsroom operations and the work of our journalists."

Image generation

Image generation has emerged as a low-risk area of experimentation for internal use, which has in some organisations successfully transferred to implementation with a relatively low incidence of attached scandal or concern. Indeed, many media organisations are experimenting with image generation for internal uses or for data visualisations, even if they remain cautious about full-scale generation.

"We've done some internal experiments with illustration for articles, seeing that as low risk. We haven't put that in front of audiences."

As ABC News Standards Editor, Matt Brown says the organisation's experimentation with image generation is tempered by concern that trust could be diminished if audiences see the generated images as 'fake':

"We tested a still photo of a race car going around a racetrack, and what would happen if you used generative fill to fill out the edges there. So … where the advertising is around the track. .. that gets filled out. And of course, it doesn't know brand names, so it does these tortured, horrible kind of images and pictures. People see that it's made up, it's fake. And so you really need to think, what's the value for the audience there, and what does that do to their trust in the photograph? And I think there's a lot there about when and why would you do it, just because you can? And in a lot of those cases like that you might say, no, that's not a horrific distortion of the truth that there's just some miserable graphic on the side of a race track that wasn't there, but it is an untrustworthy image."

However, the usually extremely cautious public broadcaster has experimented with image generation and image modification in non-news settings.

"We also did animation … so commissioning an illustrator to do a series of sketches, but then subtly animating them [to] create more engagement." (Arul Baskaran, ABC)

Focus on back-end productivity

By far the most prolific use of AI remains in back-end processes, where increased efficiency contributes to news producers winning more time for output production and where AI can even produce better output than humans in particular tasks. As Man of Many founder Scott Purcell noted:

"It is much faster at carrying out repetitive tasks than any human could ever be, and in many cases, the output is even better because you can give it very clear rules. You can ask it to act like an expert consultant, and it will return highly descriptive language. One thing we stress to our team, however, is to treat AI like an assistant rather than an instructor. You should have a clear idea of the output or the format of the output you want first before prompting it and taking things as gospel or not checking its work."

Similarly, at Channel TEN, Rashell Habib, Head of Digital News and Strategy said:

"That's just the evolution of being a journalist now to what it was, because it's so low resourced globally … the fact that AI could alleviate some of these in a few months, if we were to put something in place, then journalists are listening to that a lot more, because it means that they get to focus more on their craft."

Habib regards tagging, metadata, alt text, and captioning to be 'grunt work' which AI can do without consequence:

"The optimisation of our content is optimisation that doesn't change the context of our journalism."

And Fayad Tohme, former Chief Digital and Technology Officer at ARN emphasises the benefits of automated back-end processes to the increasingly digitised processes

"IT IS MUCH FASTER AT CARRYING OUT REPETITIVE TASKS THAN ANY HUMAN COULD EVER BE, AND IN MANY CASES, THE OUTPUT IS EVEN BETTER BECAUSE YOU CAN GIVE IT VERY CLEAR RULES"
– SCOTT PURCELL, MAN OF MANY FOUNDER

associated with journalism production, but adds that this can be extended to processes closer to output:

"At the moment, even when a person is doing the work, it feels very repetitive. If AI can take over those parts, our journalists could spend more time chasing real stories — conducting interviews or investigating local stories — instead of just scanning news websites, summarising, recording and publishing."

All in all, the use of AI for back-end processes is seen more as "letting the computer do the grunt work". As we noted in our first report (2023), there was a degree of confusion within the journalism community over whether the automated processes they had been using for nearly a decade were older forms of AI or newer iterations of generative AI. Whilst that confusion has abated, there remains a tendency to see revised, or advanced AI tools as new.

Summarisation, transcription and translation

One particularly prominent area of experimentation with generative AI in back-end tasks is content summarisation and summarisation of media releases which regularly flood newsrooms. Said one news manager at a commercial media organisation:

"There have been times when I have skimmed a press release and then copied it into Copilot to get a summary. It actually pulled out something that I didn't pick up when I first read it. And I'll go back and check and go, Oh, you actually found a detail in there. But my human brain skimming through this article in the pace that we have to work at missed the detail two thirds of the way down. But the large language model pulled that out in the summary. So I've grown to trust it more and more over probably the last 18 months that I've been using these types of tools."

Whilst none of our research participants are using content summarisation for audience-facing purposes, verification and transparency remain a key concern, as noted by McKenzie Sadeghi, AI and Foreign Influence Editor at NewsGuard, a global organisation providing data-based journalism to combat misinformation:

"It depends on if a human is reviewing that summary and editing it before it's published, and whether there's any concerns about data or privacy, or feeding these articles into chatbots to have them generate summaries and how they could be used. But I think a lot of it comes down to the amount of human oversight and also the disclosure and transparency about it ... whether the newsroom is disclosing and being clear and upfront to its readers that the summary or a portion of this article was produced by AI."

Mahendra Singh of the Newcastle Herald says that whilst his masthead is not using these summarisations, they are becoming a generally acceptable use of generative AI:

"I feel like summarisation has become so normalised now, every tool, application that we're working with by default, they're providing summarisation – like even if you go and search for Washington Post even, and you're searching something, it summarises, you know, using AI, and then it provides you the articles."

Many news organisations have implemented AI transcription tools, mostly in internal use, for transcription and translation and have reported real efficiency gains. The public broadcasters and other organisations which produce content across different media and in different languages see strong value in automated transcription. Sneha Rathod of SBS notes:

"We create a lot of audio content and video content that, as a first step, we just need transcriptions for, which is a long process."

The ABC has created its own LLM for transcriptions, as off-the-shelf tools were inadequate. Angela Stengel of the ABC Innovation Lab noted:

"The in-house one was ... trained on our own content, and it performed a lot better when it came to nouns, Australian place names, indigenous language, etc.; whereas, you know, an off-the-shelf [tool] that's built on a global language just doesn't perform quite as well."

Use of generative AI for translation was partly dependent on market and audience. Whilst the national broadcasters have experimented with translation and synthetic voice in languages other than English, some commercial media see translation and synthetic voice as future opportunities.

"We don't have a massive audience for non-English news in our organisation, but the potential is there."

Mitigating risk – training and humans

Generative AI has pushed the boundaries of possible content generation, as well as the boundaries of risk and challenge – including but not limited to bias, verification, copyright and inaccuracy and hallucination. Large Language Models which are trained by scraping publicly available data, then probabilistically reproduce patterns of words to respond to a requested output, are not inherently designed to produce truth. The output can be plausible, but it is not necessarily correct and can also reproduce biases in the underlying training data. Mitigating these risks has been tempered by perceptions about the utility of the technology; if a human can do the research without using generative AI, then the utility of the technology diminishes. Further, if the oversight necessary to ensure information integrity outweighs efficiency gains, utility diminishes. This, according to all of our interviewees, preserved the integrity of their output. In Australia, with limited diversity of news organisations and the dramatic rise in alternative news sources including influencer podcasts, extreme caution is being exercised to protect what audience trust remains in news output.

SBS's Sneha Rathod, Head of AI Capabilities & Solutions, noted:

"The biggest takeaway for me is how audience trust is embedded in everything we do at SBS. People see the availability of AI tools that will build efficiencies in their workflow, but we also need to consider if this would have an impact on audiences. Ultimately, we want to use AI in a way that enhances our services and maintains editorial standards so audiences know they can trust all our content."

Similarly at the ABC, trust remains the driver of mitigation strategies, as Angela Stengel of the Innovations Hub notes:

"What we try and do is shift the responsibility back to the individual, that people need to be accountable for their work. They need to check their work. They need to consider the impact of their work. And it really comes down to audience; not misleading audience and being transparent with audience. At the heart of all of it is really trust, trust of our audience."

Working groups

How to translate the concerns around trust and utility into reliable outcome appears to be the remit of the working groups formed in most legacy organisations to experiment, research and understand the scope and outward parameters of generative AI use in all stages of news production. These are seen as innovation incubators as much as brain trusts to devise ways and means of protecting the integrity of news output and the back-end processes supporting that output. They are also critical to the formation of editorial policy, integrated into existing policies or stand-alone, which guides journalists and editors in output.

For the ABC, the AI working group marks a departure from the normal editorially focused and walled-off thinking. The working groups bring together data scientists, legal experts and editorial leaders to find solutions to the known risks and to anticipate unforeseen risk. Matt Brown noted AI had of necessity taken editorial management into uncharted waters given the imperative to create guidance notes for reporters.

"I had to think about all of the other stakeholders on the table, on the steering committee, or in our case, the working group. It was getting into the data science, privacy, all of those other areas, which I haven't really had to worry about much before, it had to be much more integrated into the editorial thinking. So, when it came time to write the guidance note, it is written with that in mind. It's impossible to have those distinctions that we used to engage in, that a journalist writing a story didn't have to worry specifically about the data privacy of the people reading the web page, whereas in the future, we might need to.

As Brown points out, the role of the working group is to target not only known problems, but unknown challenges:

"We do have an evaluation structure and a process for that that matches the approval process. So what did you expect? What risks did you see in advance? How were you going to mitigate those? And then, really, how did it turn out against all of those different things that you articulated and what emerged?"

Brown added:

"We have in more recent times had very encouraging success, testing AI to interrogate large datasets and that's very exciting work, an efficient use of the technology that enhances our ability to carry out public interest investigations."

As Mahendra Singh, Director of Content, Growth and Technology at the Newcastle Herald sees it:

"It should be a dedicated team that's thinking ahead of time, not catching up. And this is where the principles will actually take shape, where we start thinking ahead of time in terms of looking at the trends and working together as a group. ... So they will probably look at the opportunity cost of the current model we have in terms of the end-to-end news cycle versus an optimised news cycle, and then create a business case based on that."

The Newcastle Herald sees the breakdown of the firewall between product development and editorial as one of necessity.

"Responding to AI has necessitated a lot more engagement between product engineering or technical and newsrooms. We certainly are engaging. We're trying lots of different things and working with product more closely."

At ARN, where experimentation is more advanced than elsewhere, former Chief Digital and Technology Officer Fayad Tohme notes of the company's product developers:

"We tested a range of AI tools, selected the most promising ones, and showcased them in our internal forum. That includes input from legal, HR, comms, editorial and tech."

At AAP, the working groups have been instrumental in shaping AI policy:

"Accountability, transparency, fairness and creativity (are) our kind of guiding principles. And then the policy itself—it started off with a kind of do's and don'ts and purposes of a policy, and that's the way it was submitted. After the working group finished a policy, it was submitted to the executive. The executive looked at the policy and then took the policy to the another committee, I think it's risk committee at AAP, which is a committee above the executive, and then they assessed it and sent it back to the executive, and then the executive sent it back to us, and then we gave it our approval, and then the executive gave it their approval, and then it was released to staff."

As working groups consider the opportunities and challenges of generative AI in journalistic production and output, what is factored into their considerations are questions around the utility of the technology and the cost–benefit ratio to the organisations. This is set against a background of deep consideration of the integrity of news output.

Lack of utility and value

Whilst there is experimentation and increased service journalism output, most Australian newsrooms consider there is limited value in using generative AI to produce content, with the need for human oversight by far outweighing any efficiency gains.

"We need to consider where we're going to put our time into using those tools ... if it's basically going to mean somebody's got to go back into it, check another source, make it two times the length of time that you're looking at that?"

Another participant observed a lack of value due to the limitations of consumer level AI.

"We've come off the hype, and we're in the doldrums right now where people are getting access to Copilot, for example, and they're going, it's not very good."

In particular, many found inaccuracies, hallucinations or bias difficult to circumvent in any audience-facing uses, such

... MOST AUSTRALIAN NEWSROOMS CONSIDER THERE IS LIMITED VALUE IN USING GENERATIVE AI TO PRODUCE CONTENT, WITH THE NEED FOR HUMAN OVERSIGHT FAR OUTWEIGHING ANY EFFECIENCY GAINS.

as generating article summaries for readers, as noted by Erin Reimer, SBS's Managing Editor Digital News and Current Affairs:

Accuracy is the key point there, and I think ... in fast-moving newsrooms or small teams where you're really conscious you don't have a lot of .. resources to go back and check things beyond the rigorous fact checks you're already doing on stories, ... then that starts to impact trust for all of us.

Similarly at the ABC, experimentation often hit the limitations of the technology before yielding any productivity gains as Sashka Koloff, Managing Editor, Standards and Compliance, Content noted:

"We did a trial ... to see if Copilot could write better podcast descriptions and headlines than humans – to make them more uniform, so that essentially, they'll be discoverable. But what it found was that no, the tool, the prompt, was really hard to write, to make the tool do it better than people on the team ... the tool helped with ideas generation, but it didn't replace the human effort."

The cost of developing internal tools remains prohibitive, particularly for smaller organisations. However, even for larger organisations, cost is a major consideration, particularly when offset against utility, as Matt Brown at the ABC noted:

"We don't have $100 million spare ... to run around just trying all this stuff out. It takes heaps of time to do it properly and to have some faith in the integrity of the process."

Head of News and Strategy at the TEN Network, Rashell Habib said the ability to train their own LLMs was limited by cost:

"Not right now no. That would be a resourcing and a monetary reason 100%."

Regional mastheads, even larger city-based publications like the Newcastle Herald, are similarly constrained in the experimentation phase by cost:

"It's sort of a double-edged sword, because obviously there's a lot that AI can help with. I'd personally love to be using it more in administrative tasks than we currently are, but I am very passionate about maintaining our integrity in the product that we're producing for our audience. So yeah, I think we probably don't have the resources to experiment as much as we'd love."

One masthead noted that smaller organisations are disadvantaged in the experimentation phase because of cost, which would rule out the development of custom LLMs that would otherwise help overcome some of the limitations of consumer tools:

"You try some of the publicly available, the off-the-shelf stuff, and you go, well, shit, you know, those really basic things, like you asked to write a headline. It all comes back in US style. Just really simple things like that are just big barriers to making a tool useful."

News integrity and trust

Concerns about news integrity and trust have limited the use of generative AI and mediated how participant organisations think about potential uses and the safeguards needed to govern implementation. The greatest perceived opportunity is seen in repurposing existing content, as noted by one large newspaper organisation:

"I think that's why so many news organisations have jumped on the ... 'How could we repurpose content with Gen AI?' So, we're not using it to create the original content, which still needs to be robust, and a human journalist needs to be involved."

Others noted, experimentation with the generation of newsletters continues and is seen as a viable way to reach bigger audiences, though concerns for news integrity and audience trust are deeply rooted in organisational culture and are reflected in the observations of both product leads and editors. Fayad Tohme, ARN's former Chief Digital and Technology Officer noted that:

"A core part of our identity is being live and local. We have journalists right across the country and take pride in that. As we bring AI into the mix, we're thinking carefully about how it affects our culture."

Different journalist demographics will also influence both the rate and level of experimentation and the ways generative AI is ultimately used for output:

"We have a lot of conversations at a local level about AI, and share a lot of information about what other places are doing and all of that sort of stuff. But I do think that you've got people who are really interested in technology and people who are really not interested in technology, and then just trying to get everybody just on the same level around this, given it is one of the biggest things that is going on in our sector right now, I think is a good thing."

Integrity-based constraints, however, may hit a point in the future where they are no longer viewed as prohibitive as they are currently, as noted by a commercial television organisation:

"...for example, right now, we're saying we won't use it to create images, right? But maybe at one point, due to a resourcing issue, in like 10 years' time, when there's absolutely no money in media, but we still need to report the news, we'll need AI to create a rendering of a true event."

Authenticity and transparency

Another area serving to mitigate the risks associated with generative AI is concern over authenticity, such as where the boundaries between reality and representation become blurred. As one editor noted,this could jeopardise audience trust.

This was a concern even in non-news content. One participant noted that even using AI to expand an image had limitations. If a photograph is documentary in nature, expanding it through AI would blur the boundary between what is real and what is AI generated, making the image untrustworthy. One newspaper organisation observed that because of unreliability concerns, generative AI was of limited

value where audience trust depends on perceptions of integrity.

"The fundamental issue with all of these genAI tools is that ... their primary purpose is to sound like us, not to be factually correct."

The newspaper emphasised the importance of transparency in maintaining trust.

"I think it's inevitable that more AI tools are going to be adopted in journalism, but it's absolutely essential that we are upfront about our use of that, and that we communicate with our audiences about that. And because of the importance of trust in news organisations, ... the audience has to know. They have to have evidence and faith that if a news organisation is using Gen AI, ... they will tell you the ways in which they are using it and still guarantee the quality of the journalism. So I think, you know, slipping it in under the radar is not where the news industry should be going."

Being able to be transparent in the use of generative AI was for many dependent on their own understanding of how the technology works. For Matt Brown, being able to honestly communicate this to audiences was integral to maintaining trust in the integrity of ABC news:

"I can't tell you how those tools are actually working. So the explainability thing to me is a really big one, if or when we go down that path of audiences interacting with AI products, being able to explain it to them really in ways that they would understand..."

Erin Reimer, SBS Managing Editor Digital News and Current Affairs says transparency will be key:

"I think it's incredibly important to communicate how we do our news gathering, who's involved in it. And I think that that's a big, big, big part of making sure that people know what we do. And that's a big part of our trust factor."

Guidelines and editorial policies

Most editors felt that, while risks need to be considered, fundamental journalistic standards – accuracy, impartiality, fairness and independence – remain unchanged. Rather, what is needed is guidance on how they apply to AI. The ABC has not changed its editorial policies but continually updates guidance notes, as Matt Brown noted:

"I think at the moment, guidance is where it's at, as opposed to policy. Our policy is to be accurate, impartial, etc. Tell me what about a content creation process or tool changes those things?"

Similarly, at SBS, rather than changes to editorial policies, its Code of Practice sets out the editorial standards SBS audiences can expect and applies to all content broadcast or published by SBS on every platform. The Code addresses accuracy, balance and impartiality, as well as ensuring content is free from prejudice, racism and discrimination. If audiences are concerned that any content they see or hear does not meet these standards, they can complain to SBS's independent Ombudsman who will investigate. Sneha Rathod, SBS's Head of AI Capabilities & Solutions said that when the organisation developed its framework around the ethical use of AI, the starting point was balance, objectivity, impartiality and accuracy.

"We have communicated our AI value system and ethical framework widely to all staff across the organisation. Staff can easily access our AI guidance material whenever needed and they understand it's a living document. As this sector continues to evolve rapidly, we are updating our guidelines to reflect the expanding capabilities of AI, while addressing the new risks and challenges that accompany this progress."

While guidelines help in making decisions about use, what emerged as most important was clarity about deeper principles and purposes.

External information pollution

As we found in our 2023 report, newsroom editorial leaders remain focused on and concerned about the effects of AI on the integrity of the broader information ecosystem which lies outside newsroom control. The way that AI generated "pink slime" or deep fakes might generate a liar's dividend was as much of a concern in this phase of our research as the first. As one journalist at one large newspaper organisation put it:

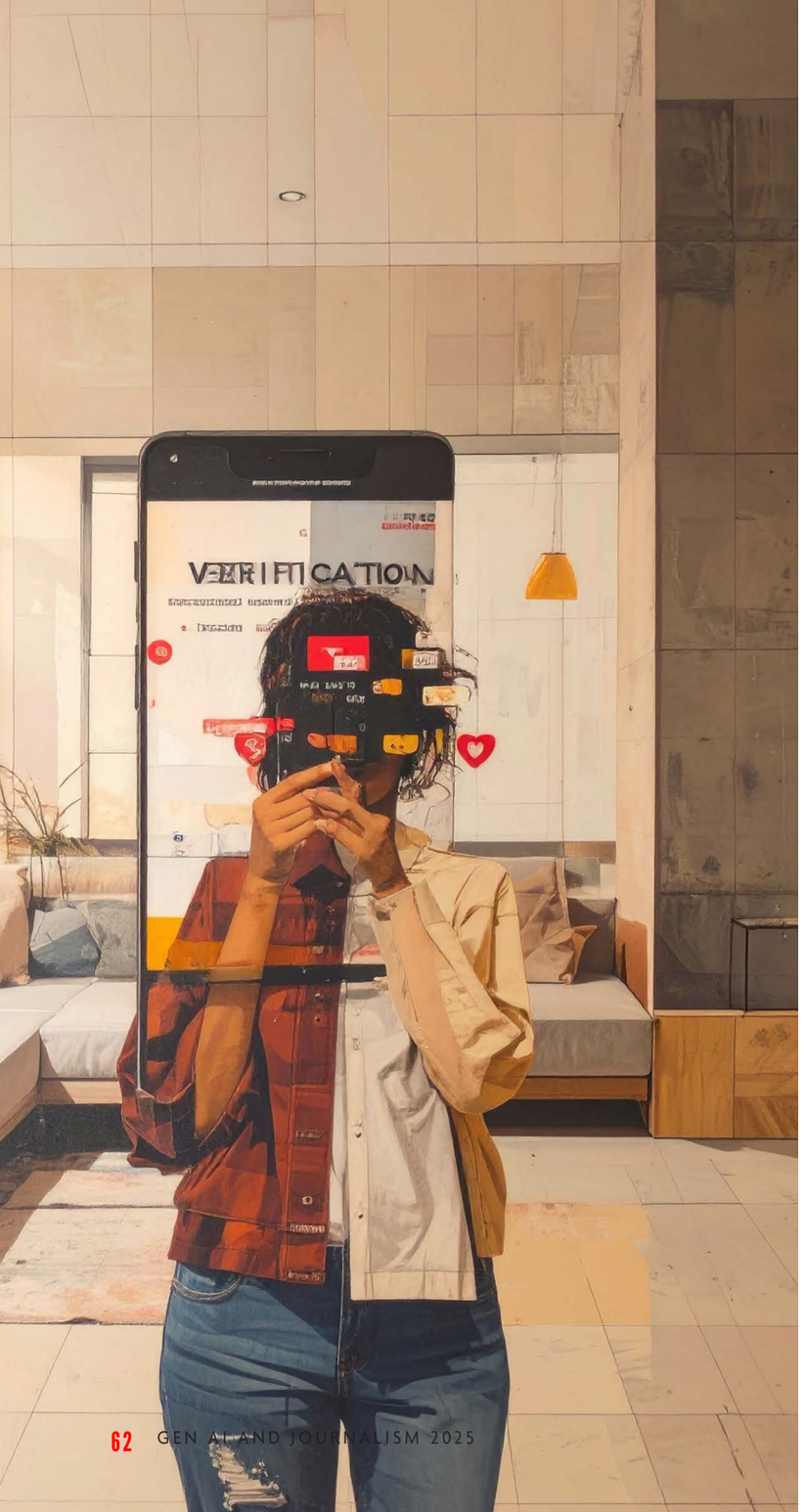
"If there's a whole lot of bullshit out there generated by AI, then that shifts the entire landscape into bullshit."

The upside to the 'pink slime' conundrum is that news media organisations across the board are seeing the opportunity of offering audience quality news, produced and verified by humans to stand as a premium market product. Some are, however, concerned that tech manufacturers are not sufficiently responsible for the risks their products are creating.

Newsguard's McKenzie Sadeghi notes that in addition to the state-based bad actors, such as Russia, China and Iran, there are problems closer to home that news organisations need to take into account:

"I think one big thing we're seeing are news aggregators. So these are places like NewsBreak, MSN, and a lot of these news aggregators that were once reliable, they basically laid off their entire content moderation team of humans and editors and curators and replaced them with AI, and essentially, anyone can go and sign up to be a publisher on NewsBreak or wherever to post things."

"...THE AUDIENCE HAS TO KNOW. THEY HAVE TO HAVE EVIDENCE AND FAITH THAT IF A NEWS ORGANISATION IS USING GEN AI, ...THEY WILL TELL YOU THE WAYS IN WHICH THEY ARE USING IT AND STILL GUARANTEE THE QUALITY OF THE JOURNALISM"



Verification

Concerns we noted in our first report about verification have remained. Nearly all news editorial managers agreed that the need for vigilance remains high but also noted that competitive pressures in the news ecosystem were taking a toll. One participant noted that when all or many news media organisations are chasing the same story, verification can fall victim to time pressure and competition.

Many were concerned that verification processes, no matter how rigorously applied, are not always effective, while others are using AI to check on AI. Amongst them is Scott Purcell of Man of Many:

"We use a tool called Originality.ai, which checks the likelihood that a piece of content has been written by AI whenever we receive work from a freelancer. We pay freelancers for their expertise, not for feeding prompts into a bot. Heavy reliance on AI can also risk damaging journalists' roles because it devalues the importance they play in the media in producing original content and what Google refers to as 'Knowledge Gain'."

Similarly, AAP is looking to AI to help with verification:

"So, there's experimenting at that end, and then with programs like Logically Facts and Full Fact AI. They're programs that help us essentially scrape the internet and scrape social media platforms to find mis- and disinformation."

The Newcastle Herald worried that time-poor journalists might seek shortcuts:

"One of my bigger concerns in a time-poor newsroom, is us being had by AI, because people are so busy and so stretched and under such pressure ... and we do discuss it from time to time, but again, not every day, but our approach is just, it's kind of as it's always been, which is just ensuring multiple reliable sources for any information."

We found that the sociopolitical functions of journalism was paramount for many, with the general view summed up by one large newspaper organisation:

"If we're going to sort of get through this journey with genAI and still continue to provide what I think is an essential service to democracy ... then ... [audiences] need to be able to distinguish between professional news outlets providing independent, reliable information that's been fact checked ... and a bot spitting something out based on an algorithm."

Detection of fake images can be difficult, even with the use of reverse image tools. Mackenzie Sadeghi of NewsGuard said her organisations commonly used multiple AI tools to detect fake imagery:

"In terms of video and audio and images, those are a little bit more tricky. We use AI detector tools. So we try and use more than one just to really have that confirmation and compare the results between different detectors. So we have, if we have three different detectors all saying they're fake, that makes us more confident. But if a deep fake looks or sounds really convincing we usually reach out to a digital forensics expert ... so it's a combination of detectors reaching out to experts and then also just our own observation."

Even so, the so-called liar's dividend may win out, as Sadeghi notes:

"...there will eventually be a time where it's going to be that liar's dividend, or, you know, real content is going to be accused of being AI when it's actually real, which is going to make it really difficult."

Industry standards and collaboration

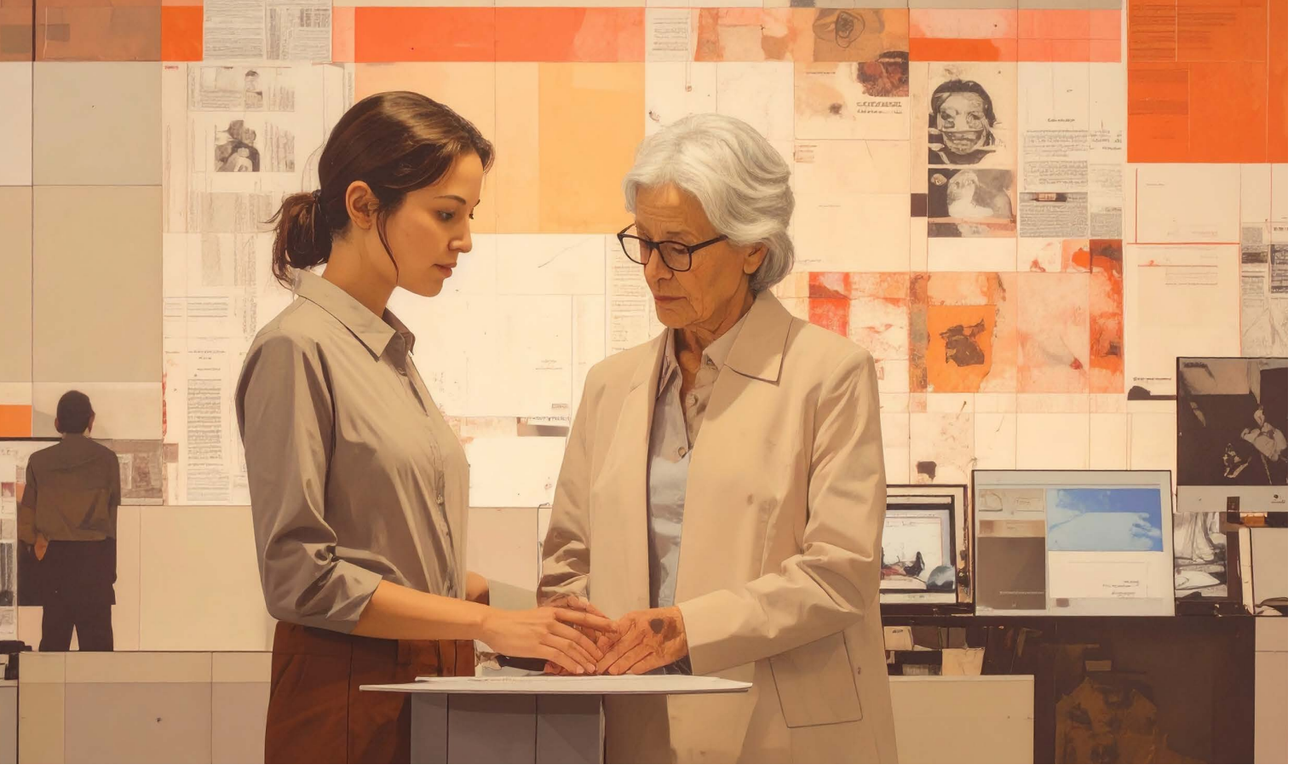
Collaboration between news media organisations has historically been difficult, given the low levels of plurality and the commercial sensitivities this creates. The ACMA 2025 report on news media in Australia determined that the Australian news market is highly networked, with almost 70 per cent of the more than 1,800 news brands identified belonging to one of only 106 networks (ACMA, 2025). Indeed, the ten biggest networks account for 43 per cent of all news brands and garner a large share of audience attention. Such statistics indicate tight competition and mitigate against free and open conversation and collaboration.

Regardless, the advent of generative AI has given many news media organisations pause to re-assess their previous tendency to isolationism. A combination of confusion regarding the scope and utility of generative AI to both news production processes and journalism output, combined with a deep desire not to be left behind and suffer the consequences in audience loss has created an existential level of curiosity and subsequent need to at least sit at the same table to discuss. Standardising principles to apply across the board is another matter. There are feasibly two levels to such a model of standardisation: high level standardised principles which scope out common terms of usage (public good, underpinned by human oversight) and granular principles which articulate the levels of risk a media organisation is willing to assume in the use of AI for direct output. This approach is reflected in comments from the ABC's Matt Brown.

"Our principles are very broad and then we've got an editorial guidance note, which refers much more to the editorial policies, so underlying it all is accuracy and impartiality, that kind of thing.... Our general principles may seem overly broad to some, but they are a statement of our positive intent and how we intend to approach the use of a new technology. The guidance tries to make that a little more real, especially for content makers who need to apply them. So I have had conversations where I've been able to say. 'Let's look back at the principles and at the guidance', and say, 'Should we do that? Is that really consistent with our purpose?' But for the public, it's still our overarching commitment to the fundamentals, like accuracy and impartiality, that matters most."

He added:

"When you parse the various principles and guidance that're being published by others, I think when you are deep into them and you can see the code that people are speaking,



what sort of external references they're acknowledging, what kind of imperatives they're acknowledging, it's more useful."

In an age where jurisdictional barriers for media have been broken down by the internet, the standardisation of high-level principles takes on importance. However, as Matt Brown points out, a global, standardised approach also has logical limitations:

"I approached it with the view that everything that we do is globally available, and therefore, much like the data protection rules in the EU set something of a standard, considered, what's going to be the global best practice benchmark. However, because they're not regulation, they're policies we can change after a one month process, I didn't get too bogged down in it. In contrast, I think that if you're talking about industry-wide agreed practices and standards, then I think making sure that we don't see ourselves existing only in one jurisdiction is important."

Greg Robinson, AAP's Chief Technology Officer says standardised principles can only be meaningful in the context of a media organisation's bespoke editorial policy and guidelines:

"You stick to those guidelines when you're using AI tools or any tool, right? You shouldn't have to make a big deal out of an AI policy, provided that you've got all of those other guidelines and policies in place, that underpin the AI policy. So, you don't have to start from scratch. Other organisations, other industries may be different, but journalism, it's very well defined. So to me, that's a head start when it comes to AI policy."

High-level principles can activate more granular editorial policies aimed at defining the scope of the methodology of journalism according to the ABC's Craig McCosker:

"BBC has got good guidelines. High-level principles can be hard to apply, as there's not enough detail. But when you get down to guidelines, then they become more useful. I don't believe that we should be risking putting AI content to the audience. Some people say it doesn't hallucinate anymore because of new techniques. It still does. There is still risk."

The advent of generative AI has spurred conversation, if not direct collaboration between media organisations, but most – amongst them The Newcastle Herald – appeared to welcome closer collaboration with other media organisations confronting similar challenges in moving from experimentation to implementation:

"I think it definitely would be worthwhile, because we're all learning, we're all trying different things in the background, right? And obviously some of the bigger organisations more than ours. And I think sharing that knowledge and those learnings, that would be very beneficial and just as a protection for the industry itself to come together and clearly state where you stand, I guess would be probably beneficial for integrity. It would probably do a lot for everyone in terms of trust in the public's eyes, but I don't know. Yeah, it's a bit Hunger Games."

The enduring challenges of plurality in the Australian market and the commercial sensitivities that come with it, could become problematic as news media navigates generative AI in the future, though for the publicly funded ABC, collaboration between newsrooms, particularly between larger and smaller newsrooms, could be a public service that assists both sectors, as Matt Brown notes:

"There could be an industry agreement where all of us share what we learn about off-the-shelf tools, for example as a sort of 'public good'... Organisations that have a relative amount of money compared to others, or little ones that don't, could be providing what they've learned about those tools ... and in that spirit, there might be people with not very much money, but with the right approach to a tool and the right initiative who found the more productive way. There could be a virtuous sort of feedback on that."

Collaboration with AI companies

If collaboration between media organisations is challenging, collaboration between media organisations and technology companies is more so. If news media organisations can come together as a group, the chance of being able to bargain more effectively with LLM manufacturers increases, according to Craig McCosker of the ABC:

"Now is the potential time for publishers to be less passive and stand up for a fair deal with AI companies. But doing that as an industry seems hard. It requires publishers to come together and bargain as a united block, but the industry is diverse, with lots of different interests."

As McKenzie Sadeghi of NewsGuard noted, as well as the upside of helping to iron out some of the technical issues, there is a funding opportunity that presents from closer collaboration with LLM manufacturers.

"I think we're increasingly starting to see at least OpenAI in some of this work and, you know, establish partnerships with these trusted newsrooms, which I think is really good and will help hopefully make these platforms and tools more reliable, and hopefully bring back funding to journalism, especially local journalism that's been taking a hit due to the advertising revenue that they've lost over the years. So, you know, it could help bring back money to this field."

As noted in Chapter 2, Axios in the United States has just signed a deal with OpenAI which will allow it to open four new regional bureaus.

One of the issues that bedevils discussion within news media organisations when they consider collaboration with each

"NOW IS THE POTENTIAL TIME FOR PUBLISHERS TO BE LESS PASSIVE AND STAND UP FOR A FAIR DEAL WITH AI COMPANIES ...IT REQUIRES PUBLISHERS TO COME TOGETHER AND BARGAIN AS A UNITED BLOCK BUT THE INDUSTRY IS DIVERSE, WITH LOTS OF DIFFERENT INTERESTS" - CRAIG McCOSKER, ABC

other and with technology companies is their relative lack of control over the tools. For many, the response to this has been to advance internal efforts to train models on their own data. As noted above, at least two have made strides in this direction – News Corp with its NewsGPT and the ABC. This may yet serve as an incentive for technology companies to work more collaboratively with media organisations. One major technology company noted to CMT in this research that it wanted to be known for its willingness to collaborate with information providers and that its door was open to media companies.

For Man of Many's Scott Purcell, collaboration with AI manufacturers would assist in reducing risk and setting better standards. Indeed, since CMT interviewed Scott Purcell, his company has become the first independent Australian lifestyle publisher to formally license its premium content to an AI platform. Whilst many publications have moved to block AI crawlers, this appears to be a precursive move towards a deal with technology companies. Still for Purcell the motive behind collaboration and even a deal remains audience focused:

"There is still some manual clean-up on the back end, and there is always the risk of AI getting things wrong or hallucinating. That is why clear disclosures are always important for any AI-generated content. It is first entered into a spreadsheet, reviewed by a human and only then uploaded to our CRM. It's important to have fail-safe measures in place and that the AI output does not go straight into your systems or database without due diligence."

Distributing accountability

A constant theme in discussions with news editors and news product developers was the need for AI companies to assume a greater degree of accountability for the flaws in their products that have the capacity to produce distortions in news output. As with the Australian news media's fight with digital platforms over the transfer of advertising revenue from their organisations to the platforms, which culminated in the News Media Bargaining Code of 2023, again news media organisations are feeling their relative lack of muscle against global tech organisations moving rapidly towards an AI future. As Matt Brown noted, accountability is key:

"I think their licence to operate should be rooted in those sorts of principles that inform what we're all on about: transparency, accountability. [But] we're not worth enough to them. ... I really think if we want these sorts of values and principles, even codes of practice, built in, it may require regulation. I do think you should be able to say to an LLM vendor, how's it made? What's it from? What have you done with all the data soup that you poured into it?"

Similarly, Anna Draffin, the former CEO of the Public Interest Journalism Initiative, also sees a role for co-operation between media and manufacturers, but believes the greater contribution to standardised approaches should be driven by regulation:

"There's a role here for government to help with some of that verification and appropriate use of technology and to do some of the due diligence."

The large technology company which took part in this research noted that AI had created an explosion in data points and this would slow down or complicate the development of principles that can be applied across various industries. This is particularly the case in journalism, where AI principles would need to safely intersect with editorial principles.

The technology company also noted that media organisations are best advised to move away from consumer-level tools to enterprise level, which are more reliable. As the technology company saw the challenge to media organisations grappling with the known flaws of AI, enterprise tools would give them complete control over who accesses the system and its outputs. Not all AI is the same, the technology company said.

Another participant noted that without close collaboration with the tech companies producing AI machinery, high-level principles are a fool's errand. This participant said media could organise as an industry group and together with tech companies come up with high level principles to cover the use of generative AI in news output. However, there is concern about traffic to news websites dropping due to audience receiving information from AI search. This has led to many newsrooms blocking AI scrapers, although there is an overwhelming sense that as one participant noted "the horse has bolted." Our participants recognised that they need to act responsibly in their implementation of AI but many wanted a broader discussion about the corresponding responsibilities of the tech sector, so as not to undermine the sustainability of news or the integrity of the information ecosystem:

"I think, our industry needs to behave responsibly with respect to AI, but it's also a challenge across the tech titan ecosystem, and I think we're a ways away from that."

04

ASSESSING THE STATE OF PLAY

In 2023, as we noted in Chapter 1, none of the newsrooms we spoke with had moved beyond the test-and-learn phase, and experimentation was clearly constrained by an overriding commitment to editorial integrity. The clearest opportunities were seen to be in lower-risk use cases where generative AI was limited to an assistive role and the default policy was to rule out the use of generative AI in audience-facing content. Experimentation, where it had started, was largely confined to the back end of the production process and focused particularly on accelerating time-consuming tasks.

Despite the strong concern over editorial integrity, few newsrooms had yet finalised formal guidelines or an AI policy. In part, this was due to a lack of certainty over the nature of the technology, especially the risks it presented, and a perceived need to maintain flexibility in a very dynamic environment. It also reflected the varying stages of implementation. All newsrooms emphasised the critical importance of upholding editorial principles and ensuring that no content – whether externally sourced or internally generated – was published without verification or other editorial oversight. The other key principle was transparency, with all newsrooms saying they were committed to being open with audiences about genAI, particularly where it is involved in generating content.

Despite this commitment, there have been several notable cases where genAI use was not made fully transparent. These include the inaccurate extension of a cropped photograph, using an AI tool in Adobe Photoshop, of Victorian MP Georgie Purcell that was broadcast on a Melbourne TV news bulletin (Dunstan & Ortolan, 2024), and ARN's revelation that one of its music DJs, Thy, who had been on air for around 6 months, was in fact an AI-generated synthetic voice (Lee, 2025). Although the latter case was in entertainment rather than news, there was some public kickback due to the lack of transparency and questions about whether the staff member whose voice had been cloned was being paid. Both cases generated discussion about bias and representation.

Newsrooms are taking a strategic approach

As we noted in Chapter 1, industry surveys suggest that AI uptake amongst Australian journalists is relatively low. This was confirmed by our research, which shows continuing caution about the technical limitations and resource demands of generative AI, as well as its potential to undermine news integrity. Despite the relatively low uptake, amongst senior editors there has been some moderation of concern as low-risk opportunities have emerged through strategic experimentation.

Nearly all participating organisations have established working groups to oversee implementation and establish governance mechanisms and guidelines, as noted in Chapter 3. Many have held hackathons or brainstorming sessions to find opportunities for automation of existing workflows. From there, a business case may be developed to assess benefits, costs, and risks, including to editorial integrity. This process has enabled newsrooms to see where there is immediate opportunity for low-risk applications, and also to understand what use cases hold the most potential further down the track.

This echoes a shift seen in overseas newsrooms towards a more strategic implementation of AI, though one that is more accelerated than in Australia. As Olle Zachrison, AI Director at Sweden's public broadcaster Sveriges Radio, observes in the European Broadcasting Union's 2025 News Report, "More organizations have explicit strategies of what they want to achieve and not just guidelines saying what not to do. It has shifted from a more careful and in a way negative stance to a more proactive and forward-looking stance" (Borchardt et al., 2025, p. 58).

While there is still an overriding caution in Australian newsrooms about using generative AI in audience-facing areas, there is wide experimentation underway in the back end. This reflects the strengths and weaknesses of generative AI technology, which make it best suited to an assistive role rather than wholesale automation, especially in journalism, where the reliability of the news is paramount. This reflects the approach of mainstream media, particularly public-service media, overseas, according to Charlie Beckett, professor at the London School of Economics (Borchardt et al., 2025, p. 52):

The mainstream media follows more what I would call the "cautious but comprehensive approach". They aren't rushing into publishing stuff with this technology. But they are looking across the whole range of opportunities to say what tools are going to be useful. My general sense is that things are going slower and having a less profound impact than some people expected. But people are being careful for a reason. If you're a public service broadcaster like the BBC, you can't just say, "Right, let's dump everything we did before and switch to this stuff."

Resource constraints

The limited, strategic approach to adoption is in part necessitated by the limited resources many organisations have available to devote to product and process development and to staff training. When newsrooms are already running on fumes and journalists are under significant time pressures, it can be difficult to find the funds or staff hours even for limited experimentation.

This problem is most acute amongst small and regional players, but it is still a factor in the public broadcasters and larger commercial networks. As the ABC's Matt Brown observed, AI implementation is expensive to do in a way that the organisation can be satisfied that they are preserving the integrity of the journalistic process, and they "don't have $100 million spare ... to run around just trying all this stuff out."

Again, this reflects the experience of many organisations overseas. Kasper Lindskow, head of AI at JP/Politikens Media Group, one of Denmark's major newspaper publishers, echoes Brown's sentiments: "This is costly. It does take time and effort, in particular if you want high quality and you want to ensure everything aligns with the journalism" (Borchardt et al., 2025, p. 55).

Costs can outweigh benefits

Even where experimentation is occurring, such as in back-end productivity tools, newsrooms are running up against the limitations of AI technologies. These reduce the potential benefits of the tools, and, given the expense of development and training, often push the cost–benefit calculus into the red. For those who are making substantial investments, the payoff will only come further down the track. As Anne Lagercrantz of Swedish public broadcaster Sveriges Television, says, "I hear this a lot from the industry, we're increasing individual efficiency and creativity, but we're not saving any money. Right now, everything is more expensive" (Borchardt et al., 2025, p. 49).

Many of our participants observed a particular lack of value in consumer-level AI due to its limitations. While accuracy and bias are of particular concern, another downside of generative AI is its tendency to produce homogeneous content, potentially leading to what we called in our 2023 report the "beigification of news". AI output is often jargon-ridden and can lack sensitivity to local context, including to the nuances of Australian English. This is naturally of most concern in audience-facing content, where many organisations – and individual journalists – are worried about the potential to lose their distinctive voice. JP/Politikens' Kasper Lindskow says that it is taking considerable work to strategically align AI systems with the news organisation's objectives (Borchardt et al., 2025, p. 56):

"Generative AI has a well-known tendency to gravitate towards the median in its output. Meaning that if you have that fast prototype with a small prompt and roll it out then your articles tend to become dull, ordinary, and average. It's not necessarily a tool for excellence. It can be, but you really need to do it right. You need to align it with the news brand and its particular tone of voice, for example. That requires extensive work, user testing and fine-tuning of the systems underneath."

While human oversight is critical to all AI use, the limitations of AI require more than is suggested by this passive term. Editorial staff often find that they need to do as much work, or more, with AI tools as they would without them – cross-checking output against reliable sources, correcting errors, and editing to match authorial or editorial voice. Thus, even approaching AI as an assistive tool is in many cases not yielding the productivity benefits that are being seen in other industries where reliability is not as critical, or even those which were projected for the news industry when generative

... WE'RE INCREASING INDIVIDUAL EFFICIENCY AND CREATIVITY, BUT WE'RE NOT SAVING ANY MONEY. RIGHT NOW, EVERYTHING IS MORE EXPENSIVE.

AI first came on the scene. Granted, potential benefits depend to a large extent on the nature of the task. Time-consuming tasks such as summarising large sets of data, searching through an entire news archive or meta-tagging images are more amenable to AI automation.

Medianet's 2025 Australian Media Landscape Report confirms these views. Half of the respondents said the integration of generative AI had not influenced the speed and efficiency of their news gathering process, while only 5% reported a significant improvement and 17% reported a slight improvement (Medianet, 2025, p. 51).

Custom tools, particularly LLMs that are trained on or query only a newsroom's own archive, can overcome some of the limitations of consumer-level AI. Custom LLMs can produce content that is more reliable in the local context and consistent with an outlet's style though there are concerns that a closed-loop system might reproduce biases in archival coverage. Further, developing internal tools is expensive and slow, and out of reach for many smaller organisations. In addition to having bigger budgets, large national media outlets typically have extensive product teams, vast archives of content, and operate across multiple platforms. These advantages encourage and enable them to commit more resources to testing and adopting AI technologies. But even larger organisations are finding that this takes significant investment.

Integrity, authenticity and trust

The limitations of generative AI are more critical for journalism than other media industries, as audience trust is tied to expectations of accuracy, impartiality and other journalistic standards. Newsrooms' reticence and concern about AI adoption should be understood in the context of low and declining levels of trust in news, as well as ongoing shifts in the broader information ecosystem.

Amongst all our participant organisations, there is greater willingness to experiment and adopt where trust is not threatened, as in low-risk, back-end applications. The caution of most Australian newsrooms with respect to audience-facing uses of AI reflects that of the BBC and other European public broadcasters, and the use cases are also broadly the same. As Peter Archer, director of the BBC's AI program states:

"We're being conservative about the use of generative AI tools in the newsroom and our internal guidance is that generative AI should not be used directly for creating content for news, current affairs or factual content. But we have identified specific use cases like summaries and reformatting that we think can bring real value" (Borchardt et al., 2025, p. 67).

Synthetic voice is seen as a low-risk opportunity for radio because editorial oversight can be applied to the text before it is synthesised, and the quality of synthetic voice is much higher with the latest generative AI tools than with earlier iterations of text-to-voice technology. This allows the voice to be tailored to the style of the station or network, helping to maintain audience connection. Radio's embrace of synthetic voice reflects trends seen overseas, though Australia is still lagging somewhat behind: public-service broadcaster Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg has used synthetic voice for local weather updates since 2021 (Borchardt et al., 2024, p. 59) and the BBC since July 2023 (BBC, 2023).

While none of our participating newsrooms are producing audience-facing content without oversight, many overseas newsrooms are doing so, if in limited areas. Even still, the risks to trust are clear. Take, for example, the Los Angeles Times' automated "Insights" tool, which, in an apparent effort to balance the perceived liberal bias of the paper, provides a political bias rating on online opinion pieces and synthesises short contrary perspectives that are published without undergoing editorial checks. Infamously, this tool produced a contrary perspective that many interpreted as promoting the Ku Klux Klan, though the author of the original opinion piece suggested this was a misinterpretation (Arellano, 2025). The paper removed the tool from that piece, though it is still running on others. It still reportedly lost subscribers as a result: audience trust is precarious. This is also true outside the realm of political news and opinion, as shown by the reaction to Nine's augmentation of Georgie Purcell's photograph.

While accuracy, bias and reasoned judgement are weaknesses of generative AI – and clear threats to audience trust – editors are confident that robust journalistic processes are able to mitigate these risks. What is more difficult to maintain is the perception of authenticity, which is also a critical element of audience trust, one that for many people is tied to an understanding that the news has been produced by human journalists rather than machines (Hayst et al., 2025, p. 52; Jones et al., 2023, p. 4). Moreover, as Nine's Sophia Phan put it, journalists are the experts in news production, and there is no benefit in supplanting this expertise by handing editorial control to AI.

As this year's Digital News Report found, Australians are much more comfortable with AI playing an assistive role in news production, rather than being used to produce news, even with human oversight (Park et al., 2025). As the case of Thy, the AI DJ, shows, audiences value authenticity even outside the news context. But inside that context, trust and authenticity are even more important. Charlie Beckett notes that there are very few newsrooms using AI newsreaders, because "there's not much point. You are just devaluing your product. In that information environment, what is going to stand out will be the human stuff" (Borchardt et al., 2025, p. 53). This is true at least in the western world. Newsrooms in Asia – and their audiences – are more accepting of these kinds of use. Technology theorist Luciano Floridi asks, "Will this be the end of journalism? Well, the frozen pizza has not been the end of the pizzeria. But if my pizzeria produces rubbish, too bad, I have a frozen pizza in my fridge at home which is a third of the price and takes a fraction of the time. ... If ChatGPT is going to provide the frozen pizza, the mass media better provide the experience, the quality, the added value" (Borchardt et al., 2024, p. 157). Still, given their concern about audience trust, it is surprising that very few of our participant organisations have engaged in audience testing themselves.

As in our 2023 report, most editors we spoke to continue to see the fear of many journalists that AI will automate them out of a job as unlikely. But it certainly seems likely that some tasks that have required dedicated staff members will be automated. There have been publicly aired concerns over some newsroom initiatives. News Corp journalists have expressed concern about a still-in-development tool known as 'Story Cutter' which will edit and produce copy, effectively removing or reducing the need for subeditors. And in 2024, Australian science magazine Cosmos used AI to generate a series of short explainers, synthesised from articles in its own archives. Due to public backlash driven by protests from the magazine's stable of freelancers, the magazine has paused the initiative. But our interviews have made clear that newsrooms are overwhelmingly focused on assistive AI and that original reporting, which requires human judgement, cannot be automated.

The link between authenticity and trust is also potentially problematic in the use of AI for content repurposing and personalisation, particularly if this is pursued with inadequate attention to audience connection or if organisational expertise is allowed to wither. Laura Ellis, head of technology forecasting of the BBC, says:

"Let's say we let an LLM rewrite stories for six different outlets, one for younger audiences, one for those who like text, one with pictures for those who don't. There's a slight danger that in automating you lose touch with those audiences, and you don't have anyone in your organization who can speak in that voice" (Hayst et al., 2025, p. 21).

These questions of integrity and authenticity also point to the role that news plays in democratic society. Many of the newsrooms we spoke to explained their concerns about AI in these broader sociopolitical terms. One aspect of this is the need for reliable news, but another is the need for a shared record, which personalisation may undermine if pushed too far. Newsrooms are grappling with how to balance the need to attract and engage people with personalised content and delivery while also keeping them informed on what they need to know as citizens (Borchardt et al., 2024, p. 140). Anne Lagercrantz of Sveriges Television states, "if there is so much personalization and everyone has their own version of reality, what will we put in the archives? We need a shared record" (Borchardt et al., 2025, p. 51).

News integrity beyond the newsroom

In our 2023 report, most newsrooms were profoundly concerned about the potential for generative AI to degrade the broader information ecosystem through a proliferation of deepfakes and other misinformation, potentially producing a liar's dividend that would undermine trust in news. Some recognised an opportunity for quality news to stand out from the pink slime and AI slop but were worried about their ability to attract and retain audiences in an ecosystem over which they have little control. Like the concern about the impact of AI on the integrity of journalistic processes, some of these fears have also moderated as the heralded barrage of deepfakes has not had the overwhelming impact that was initially feared (Simon & Altay, 2025). While verification of externally sourced content is still of major concern, for many organisations we spoke to, the bigger fear is over industry sustainability and the loss of editorial control as audiences increasingly access information through chatbots and other AI systems.

Partly, this is a concern about the integrity of the news as it leaves the newsroom and enters the digital information ecosystem. Having experienced a gradual undermining of editorial control as digital platforms have assumed much of the news distribution function, newsrooms are now fearful that AI chatbots and AI search pose an even greater threat. These fears are by no means confined to Australia. As we noted in Chapter 2, the BBC recently conducted a systematic study of how accurately consumer AI tools represent its news content. They found that 51% of prompts across the four main consumer tools produced significant inaccuracies and distorted content. Peter Archer, director of the BBC's AI program, observed, "We expected to see a degree of inaccuracy, but perhaps not as high as we found. We were also interested in the range of different errors where AI assistants struggle including factual errors, but also lack of context, and the conflation of opinion and fact" (Borchardt et al., 2025, p. 67). He also linked the misrepresentation of their content to the decision not to allow AI scraping of the BBC website.

An even greater concern, especially for commercial media, is the potential for AI search and chatbots to reduce traffic to their website and other channels. With users able to get the information they need directly in the chatbot or search environment, there is less need to click through to the sources used to synthesis the information. A reduction in traffic entails a reduction in advertising revenue and may also dampen subscriptions for those operating behind paywalls. Indeed, news companies are attributing recent losses in web traffic to AI tools, particularly Google's AI Overviews, which appear at the top of many Google searches. The Wall Street Journal reported in June 2025 that traffic from organic search to the New York Times's desktop and mobile sites fell to 36.5% in April 2025, down from 44% three years earlier. Google counters that according to their internal research, links in AI Overviews get more clicks than those outside it (Patel, 2024). This may be, but several recent studies support publishers' concerns that overall click through will drop. Two from web analytics firms GrowthSRC Media and AHRefs (Law & Guan, 2025) show clear drops in click-through rates. Another from the Pew Research Center studying user behaviour found that users are about half as likely to click on a link provided in an AI summary than one provided by ordinary search (8% v. 16%). They are also more likely to end their browser session after receiving an AI summary than they do after receiving ordinary search results (26% v. 16%).

HAVING EXPERIENCED A GRADUAL UNDERMINING OF EDITORIAL CONTROL AS DIGITAL PLATFORMS HAVE ASSUMED MUCH OF THE NEWS DISTRIBUTION FUNCTION, NEWSROOMS ARE NOW FEARFUL THAT AI CHATBOTS AND AI SEARCH POSE EVEN A GREATER THREAT.

This threat to web traffic goes beyond the still largely unresolved question of whether AI companies can or should be able to scrape news sites to train their systems. It is not possible to opt out of Google's AI Overviews without opting out of Google search entirely. AI Overviews is embedded in Google search. Publishers argue they are essentially compelled into participating in a system that makes them worse off. Echoing the thoughts of many of our participants, Danielle Coffey, president of North American industry group News/Media Alliance, states, "The AI answers are a substitute for the original product. They're making money on our content and we get nothing in return. ... I don't see that being a business proposition that we would ever willingly opt into" (Germain, 2025).

News publishers see this threat as further undermining editorial control and, indeed, the integrity of the broader news and information ecosystem. While they understand the need for AI use inside the newsroom to conform to high journalistic standards, once the news is published its integrity may be put at risk due to the inherent flaws of generative AI systems. Further, AI companies are essentially freeriding on public-interest news, relying on its accuracy and newsworthiness while undermining those very qualities of the news and the economics of the business that produces it.

The need for collaboration

The fact that AI relies on quality news and information is a bargaining chip for the news industry, and some publishers have been able to enter deals with AI companies. But many smaller publishers, and those outside the large European and North American markets, fear that they do not have the power to bring these companies to the negotiating table.

Charlie Beckett argues that the business model challenge "is going to be the fundamental one since people can get their information without journalism. Yes, the AI companies may give media companies some money so that they can use their data to train or update their models. But it's never going to be sufficient" (Borchardt et al., 2025, p. 54). Even if publishers move further towards subscription models, as he suggests, or focus on direct traffic as urged by News Australia's Pippa Leary (Leary, 2025), the freeriding problem remains unresolved. But the balance of power seemingly remains with tech companies. Some argue that deals will ultimately undermine the news, and the public interest, unless publishers can come together to achieve an outcome that benefits the industry as a whole. According to the BBC's director of AI, Peter Archer, "the media industry should develop an industry position – what it thinks on key issues. ... We need a constructive conversation on how we collectively make sure that our information ecosystem is robust and trusted" (Borchardt et al., 2025, p. 68)

This is the course of action being pushed by the European Broadcasting Union and international industry group WAN-IFRA, who have collaborated on the "News Integrity in the Age of AI" initiative (European Broadcasting Union, 2025). It proposes five principles to underpin a joint code of practice between publishers and AI companies:

1. News content must only be used in Generative AI models and tools with the authorization of the originator.
2. The value of up-to-date, high-quality news content must be fairly recognized when it's used to benefit third parties.
3. Accuracy and attribution matter. The original news source underlying AI-generated material must be apparent and accessible to citizens.
4. Harnessing the plurality of the news media will deliver significant benefits for AI-driven tools.
5. We invite technology companies to enter a formal dialogue with news organizations to develop standards of safety, accuracy and transparency.

In North America, the News/Media Alliance has published a similar set of principles, and in Australia the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance published a position statement on AI and has argued for a comprehensive AI Act in submissions to the government's ongoing AI policy deliberations. A working group is examining copyright, and there have been calls to expand the News Media Bargaining Code to AI companies, but there are fears that any proposals issuing from those processes may fall victim to US political and economic power as it seeks to curb moves by other jurisdictions to regulate AI and digital platforms.

Towards standardised practices?

Some have argued that another area for industry collaboration is on journalistic practices relating to the use of AI. But while existing standards of accuracy, impartiality, privacy and so on can act as a "compass" for newsrooms in using AI, developing internal guidelines, and establishing approval processes (Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024), it is how these principles are translated into practice at the coalface that is critical. The dynamic and unpredictable nature of AI sees journalists looking for clear guidance and rules on appropriate use.

But these can difficult for organisations to map out in advance. As the ABC's detailed editorial guidelines show ("Significant use of AI tools in news, factual and information content where audiences expect depictions of real people, places, sounds or objects is unlikely to be appropriate") unless organisations are opting for a strict prohibition on public-facing AI use, guidance necessarily remains at some level of generality. Even with such a prohibition, the use of AI in back-end tasks means there is likely to be some leakage of AI output into published content, and to ban journalists from using AI altogether would seem to be a lost cause.

Newsroom practice will of course differ in response to an organisation's market, medium and model, and will likely solidify over time. To this extent, there may be some value in a collaborative approach amongst outlets of a similar nature. There is also a need for practice to respond to audience expectations, which may benefit from a sandbox approach to testing rather than a public one. With respect to transparency, for example, Amy Mitchell, director of the

Center for News, Technology & Innovation (CNTI), states, "The research shows the public has expressed again and again a desire for transparency. At the same time, research experiments have found that certain kinds of labels can backfire, they can create distrust, mostly when they were just standard labels stating that AI was used or not. We need to do more experimentation and research to get a sense of what would be most meaningful. The media can also look to other industries and study which kinds of labels have built trust" (Borchardt et al., 2025, p. 66).

Is Australia behind the game?

The relatively constrained experimentation and implementation in Australia raises the question whether Australian newsrooms are perhaps too cautious, and foregoing opportunities as a result. This question becomes particularly pertinent when we consider promising ideas in personalisation and content repurposing being pursued elsewhere. In our first report, many participants saw the potential of genAI for personalisation and content delivery. Yet very little experimentation has been undertaken in this area since then. Even the biggest Australian news organisations still trail their counterparts in Europe and the US when it comes to experimenting with using AI to directly engage audiences. While news integrity is as much a concern elsewhere as it is in Australia, many overseas newsrooms are taking advantage of low-risk and innovative opportunities that deliver audience engagement without undermining integrity.

One opportunity embraced by many overseas publications is to provide audio versions of news articles using synthetic voice, helping to reach audiences on the move, those who prefer audio – including many younger people – or the vision-impaired. For example, Aftenposten uses a cloned synthetic voice to provide audio versions of text articles, increasing accessibility and reach (Pedersen, 2024), with as many readers using the feature as listen to the paper's podcasts. They also foresee it being an advantage during breaking news events where it would be impossible to record voice segments as each update rolls in. Aftenposten's parent company, Schibsted, argues that audio will play a critical role for print publications as they compete for attention with other forms of digital content (Telen, 2022). A raft of prominent US publications, including the Atlantic, the Washington Post, the New York Times, and Time, have also implemented text-to-voice features on their online articles. News Corp's The Australian newspaper has started doing the same in Australia, but other publications are still to take up this opportunity.

Bayrische Rundfunk, the Bavarian public broadcaster, is working on an AI tool that digests user comments, similar to that used by some social-media platforms such as Facebook (Borchardt et al., 2025, pp. 61–62). The tool will allow visitors to quickly see what users are currently debating without having to read through the entire comment thread. They are also implementing an interactive local news podcast that can be customised by location and timeframe in response to a user prompt. Chief AI officer Uli Köppen states that they have received very good feedback on the product "because people are really interested in regional news, and they also want to customize and personalize the news for their needs." The organisation balances this personalisation with their public-service remit. Köppen states, "We're not after clickbait. We want to fulfill our mission and not narrow the focus of our users. That's why we don't have a topic filter in our product, just a location filter."

The BBC recently announced it was moving ahead with audience-facing article summaries, though these will be edited by journalists before publication (Davies, 2025). It has also prototyped an AI tool called "Tell me more", which creates explainers at the top of articles explaining key terms, ideas or events not made explicit in the article itself, again subject to editorial oversight, and has implemented an internal machine-translation tool to translate content from the BBC World Service into English, providing a common resource for the broader organisation. Translators check the output and corrections are stored in the system. The content can then be repurposed or reformatted to engage audiences beyond those it was originally intended for. As we found in our interviews, Australian public broadcasters can see the value in AI translation and synthetic voice to reach the country's linguistically diverse population, but concerns about integrity mean these tools are still in the testing phase. Commercial radio, on the other hand, is pushing forward in other areas of audience-facing content where the public broadcasters may not be willing to go.

Our research indicates that whilst media companies are increasingly experimenting with AI tools to improve internal processes (with custom built GPTs and other features built into the CMS's), there is also interest in using AI to better personalise output, if little experimentation so far. The use of AI generated chatbots is more prolific in the United States than Australia, though early versions of it are being refined here. There is also greater willingness in 2025 to experiment with synthetic voice, particularly when it allows news to reach diverse communities in languages other than English.

Whilst there is a mismatch between the rate of technological development and the ability of newsrooms to test for usefulness and most importantly, risk, there is also a realisation that public uptake of AI is accelerating with the accompanying need for journalism to provide more secure and trustworthy information to stem the known problems of bias and verification of information generated by AI tools.

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ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR MEDIA TRANSITION

The Centre for Media Transition (CMT) is an applied research unit based at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS).

Launched in 2017, the CMT is an interdisciplinary initiative of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Law. It sits at the intersection of media, journalism, technology, ethics, regulation and business. Working with industry, academia, government and others, the CMT aims to:

- Understand media transition and digital disruption, with a view to recommending legal reform and other measures that promote the public interest;
- Assist news media to adapt for a digital environment, including by identifying potentially sustainable business models;
- Develop suitable ethical and regulatory frameworks for a fast-changing digital ecosystem;
- Foster quality journalism, thereby enhancing democracy in Australia and the region;
- Develop a diverse media environment that embraces local/regional, international and transnational issues and debate;
- Combat misinformation and protect digital privacy; and
- Articulate contemporary formulations of the public interest informed by established and enduring principles such as accountability and the public's right to know.

The CMT's published works include reports on digital defamation, trust in news media, the state of regional news and news media innovation. Current projects include work on industry self-regulation, privacy, news verification, foreign reporting and press freedom.

The Centre regularly hosts public events, conferences and forums. You can sign up to our regular newsletter at **go.uts.edu.au/CMT-eNews-Signup**. Details of events and the CMT's work can be found on our website at **cmt.uts.edu.au**