



**House of Representatives Standing Committee on  
Communications and the Arts inquiry into Australia's regional  
newspapers - 28 January 2022**

**Google Response**

## **Introduction**

Google welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts inquiry into Australia's regional newspapers.

### *Our commitment to news*

Since 1998, Google's mission has been to make the world's information universally accessible and useful. Tools such as Google Search enable people to find diverse sources of news and information from a range of sources on the web. That is why we have a strong interest in supporting a diverse and sustainable ecosystem of quality news providers.

We understand that the news industry is rapidly evolving with significant technological changes resulting in news publishers changing their business models. Publishers are having to determine in which publications, locales and formats to invest and this is increasingly in the digital environment. Google is uniquely positioned to help the sector in making this digital transformation. This is particularly vital for Australia's regional publishers who play such an important role in providing quality news content for their local communities.

Our support comes in the form of the products and services we provide, a range of digital training initiatives and direct funding of news organisations through licensing programs like Google News Showcase. This [blog post](#) provides a summary of the full range of global support and initiatives we provide for digital journalism.

## **Delivering value to news businesses**

Search engines are of great importance to users, enabling them to navigate the trillions of pages of information that make up the web. Australians actively use our various platforms including Google Search, Google News and YouTube each month to find relevant information<sup>1</sup>.

For example, when a user with a news-related query comes to Google Search they will be presented with search results from a global corpus of information. These results include links with other information such as the publisher's name, article headline, publication date and depending on the publisher's settings may also include a thumbnail and/or snippet. Google Search directs users to click through directly to news sites to find the information they seek.

Our huge investment in these platforms allows us to provide the most relevant news content for users based on their query and opens up a diverse range of news sources from across the globe. This helps to connect Australian news publishers - large, small, regional and specialised - to a wider audience based on the quality and relevance of their content. We see the benefits of a platform such as Google Search being particularly relevant to small and regional publishers as it allows them to be discovered by a wider group of readers.

This significant traffic also delivers financial benefits to publishers through increased revenue as people click through from Google Search and Google News results to publishers' websites. In 2019, Google sent more than 3 billion clicks to Australian news publishers - at no

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<sup>1</sup> Calculated based on the lower end of the estimated value range for a click in Deloitte, "The impact of web traffic on revenues of traditional newspaper publishers," September 2019, available at: <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/es/Documents/financial-advisory/The-impact-of-web-traffic-on-revenues-of-traditional-newspaper-publishers.pdf>

charge. In turn, those publishers make money by showing their own ads, showing other articles or converting these users into new paying subscribers. This is particularly important for small and regional publishers that often have limited resources to market their publications and generate their own reader traffic.

We also enable publishers to generate revenue by providing the technology that helps them sell advertising on their websites and apps. Businesses that advertise with Google can choose to have their ads appear on news publishers' sites with a few clicks. This gives these publishers access to new advertisers - often overseas - who work with Google. The vast majority of the revenue these advertisers pay is then passed on directly to publishers.

### **Digital training and education for news publishers**

One of the ways that we have supported the Australian media industry is through digital training and education for news publishers and journalists. Over the last few years we have trained more than 4,000 journalists in digital tools and more than 200 publications in new methods of engaging audiences and generating revenue. In 2020 alone, we trained more than 1,500 people working in small and regional newsrooms, provided advertising support to more than 100 publications and spent significant time in direct 1:1 consultations.

### **Google News Initiative**

A key plank of our commitment is the Google News Initiative (GNI), which we launched in 2018 and builds on nearly two decades of work and partnering with the news industry. To date, the Google News Initiative has supported 7000+ news partners in more than 120 countries and territories through more than \$300 million in global funding.

Our [2021 GNI impact report](#) provides an overview of the GNI programs that we have rolled out across the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region, including in Australia. We have worked with smaller publishers on digital transformation, built data maturity programs for larger news organisations, and partnered with journalists to fight the spread of misinformation across the region, with a special focus on first-time, mobile-first users. These programs were built from the ground-up in partnership with journalists, news organisations and industry associations - those who best understand the challenges and opportunities for news in APAC.

### **Australian initiatives**

Google has rolled out a number of GNI programs in Australia that we have developed in partnership with a range of credible and respected organisations. We provide a snapshot of some of these initiatives below.

#### **Project Kookaburra**

In November 2020, Google launched a new business model research project called 'Project Kookaburra' in partnership with the Walkley Foundation. It is aimed at helping a group of regional publishers to build their digital presence and online audience.

To date, Project Kookaburra has supported five small regional publishers and their journalists through a series of workshops and masterclasses, helping them to build strategic plans for their digital future and to boost their online profile. The project collaborated with the Sunraysia Daily, Fassifern Guardian, Narrandera Argus, Forty South Tasmania and the Yorke Peninsula

Country Times. These types of small publishers often do not have the in-house capability or experience to enable this type of transformation.

This [case study](#) outlines the achievements of the project so far. Google and the Walkley Foundation are now launching the next phase of Project Kookaburra with a focus on financial sustainability for a further group of regional publishers. The outcomes of both projects will be used to offer insights to a wider group of publishers across the country.

### **Project Wedgetail**

Project Wedgetail is an Australian program launched by Google to accelerate the digital transformation of existing regional news publishers and create a foundation for new all-digital journalism.

We supported early adopter regional partners in achieving digital publishing best practice and deploying world-class technology to drive revenue and growth through advertising and reader subscriptions. The project provided participating publishers with training and leadership development to kickstart their digital transformation. Lessons learned from these interactions will benefit future initiatives that we offer for other publishers.

### **Google News Initiative Digital Growth Program**

Our GNI Digital Growth Program has trained more than 400 regional news leaders in areas such as audience measurement and reader revenue. This enables these news professionals the opportunity to build their newsroom leadership skills and expand their expertise in digital journalism, with a particular focus on applied technology, audience insights, design thinking, data applications, emerging business models and editorial innovation.

The aim of the program is to provide tomorrow's editors with skills and knowledge to guide their newsrooms through the transition to digital and to reach and engage audiences in new ways.

### **Digital News Academy - a partnership between Google Australia and News Corp Australia**

Google Australia and News Corp Australia have launched a Digital News Academy to establish a new education program dedicated to digital journalism. The Academy's mandate is to equip news professionals with leading edge publishing, newsgathering and storytelling skills grounded in the commercial realities of today's digital media industry.

Beginning in the first quarter of 2022, 250 news professionals will benefit from the available training opportunities ranging from online tutorials to a formal education curriculum. The Academy will also include a major annual conference as well as a US study tour for a group of trainees.

In addition to enabling crucial digital capabilities, the Academy will also create opportunities for young journalists, funding 60 new 12-month journalism traineeships in regional Australia over the next three years. In total, the initial roll out will see 750 local and regional news professionals take part over the next three years. The trainees will be drawn from News Corp Australia and a range of small and regional publishers, including Australian Community Media and National Indigenous Times. Smaller publishers from across Australia will be invited to participate. Google has made it a priority to ensure that the Academy will include smaller local and regional organisations.

## **Google News Showcase**

With Google News Showcase, Google pays publishers to produce editorially curated content experiences and for limited free user access to paywalled content.

News Showcase is made up of panels that give news organisations the ability to package the most important stories of the day for readers, providing deeper storytelling and more context through features like timelines, bullets, related stories and a list of important articles. This content currently appears in Google News and Discover, bringing trusted news to readers all over the world. The Google News Showcase product launched in Australia in February 2021.

We have reached partnership agreements with publishers representing more than 165 Australian publications, including over 100 small and regional publishers. These partners are now paid by Google for publishing News Showcase panels.

This approach is in line with the commitment we made during the development of the News Media Bargaining Code to engage in commercial negotiations in good faith with a diverse range of Australian news media publishers to create partnerships that meet the objective of supporting public interest journalism.

### **Smaller and regional publishers**

From our initial launch of News Showcase, Google has focused on partnering with a diverse range of regional and smaller publishers. This provides direct financial support for some of Australia's most respected independent, local and regional publications.

Some of our partnerships have been developed directly with regional publishers, including the deal we struck with the Times News Group that involved seven of its small regional newspapers in Victoria coming into News Showcase. We also negotiated an in-principle agreement with Country Press Australia enabling us to collectively bargain with their regional publisher members.

#### **Our partnership with Country Press Australia**

In September 2021, Google reached an in-principle agreement with Country Press Australia (CPA) to significantly expand the number of regional outlets on News Showcase.

CPA represents almost 180 independently owned regional and local newspapers and online platforms across the country. In August 2021, CPA was granted authorisation by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to be able to collectively negotiate with Google and Facebook over payments for their news content.

Since September, we have signed agreements with over 60 regional CPA member publications joining News Showcase. As a result Google is supporting these publications, many of which have operated in their local communities for decades, providing vital news and information to their regions.

As part of our agreement with CPA, we are also working in partnership to support the ongoing digital transformation of their members and helping with the sustainability of these important news businesses.

A full list of the regional publications engaged with News Showcase is included at Appendix A. We are committed to negotiating with further regional news titles that meet our product eligibility criteria. For those that do not, such as smaller publishers that produce very limited online content, we seek other ways to provide support. For regional newspapers this could include providing funding for their digital transformation, and building their online capability. Other publishers that do not meet our News Showcase eligibility criteria, for example those that do not focus on public interest journalism, may benefit from the range of free programs, tools and training opportunities that we invite them to participate in through the Google News Initiative.

Our News Showcase partnerships with larger publishers have also delivered benefits to regional news businesses. The ABC announced in December 2021 that it would hire more than 50 journalists from over 20 regional locations as a result of the deals it concluded with Google and Facebook.<sup>2</sup> It has stated that the new jobs will be spread across all states and the Northern Territory with a focus on areas that had previously been “news deserts” and “underserved by the media”.

In addition to our News Showcase agreements, we also support many of these regional publishers by providing direct digital transformation funding, dedicated training and education, as well as offering analytics on their digital presence and guidance on best practices.

Enabling diverse sources of impactful journalism is critical for a healthy democratic society and core to Google's mission. Our initiatives are directed towards supporting news businesses at a local and national level and to enhance their business models and digital capabilities. We seek to provide journalists with the tools, training and resources to help them find, verify, and tell engaging stories across the web. We are committed to a long and productive relationship with the Australian news community, particularly those in our regional areas, as we work together to create sustainable journalism for the digital future.

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-12-03/abc-to-add-more-than-50-journalists-in-regional-australia/100673862#:~:text=The%20ABC%20has%20announced%20plans,struck%20with%20Facebook%20and%20Google.>

**Appendix A - Google News Showcase - regional publishers**

Central Western Daily	Dubbo Daily Liberal	Illawarra Mercury	Newcastle Herald
Wagga Daily Advertiser	Northern Daily Leader	The Advocate (Burnie)	Bendigo Advertiser
The Border Mail	The Courier (Ballarat)	The Examiner (Launceston)	The Standard (Warrnambool)
Western Advocate	North West Telegraph	Bunbury Herald	Narrogin Observer
Geraldton Guardian	SW Times	Albany Advertiser	Country Man
Sound Telegraph	Kalgoorlie Miner	Kimberley Echo	Broome Advertiser
Pilbara News	Midwest Times	Harvey Reporter	Busselton-Dunsborough Times
Augusta-Margaret River Times	Manjimup Bridgetown Times	Great Southern Herald	Cairns Post
Coffs Coast Advocate	Daily Examiner	Daily Mercury	Geelong Advertiser
Gladstone Observer	Gympie Times	Noosa News	Northern Star
Rockhampton Bulletin	Sunshine Coast Daily	Toowoomba Daily Chronicle	Townsville Bulletin
Warwick Daily News	Weekly Times	Mackay Daily Mercury	Centralian Advocate
The Daily Examiner	Fraser Coast Chronicle	Whitsunday Times	Byron Shire News
Newcastle News	Surf Coast Times	Bellarine Times	Armstrong Creek Times
Ballarat Times	Golden Plains Times	Geelong Times	Shepparton News
The Corowa Free Press	Deniliquin Pastoral Times	The Seymour Telegraph	Yarrawonga Chronicle
Southern Riverina News	Campaspe News	Benalla Ensign	Cobram Courier
Kyabram Free Press	Finley Southern Riverina News	Geelong Independent	Brimbank North West
Maribyrnong & Hobsons Bay Star Weekly	Melton & Moorabool Star Weekly	Northern Star Weekly	Wyndham Star Weekly
Berwick News	Dandenong Journal	Noosa Today	Officer News
Pakenham Berwick Gazette	Ferntree Gully Belgrave Star Mail	Mount Evelyn Star Mail	Mountain View Star News
Upper Yarra	Lilydale Star Mail	Bundaberg Today	CQ Today
Gympie Today	Ipswich News Today	Cairns Local News	The Guardian (Vic)
Gannawarra Times	Sunraysia Daily	Midland Express	Latrobe Valley Express

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Submission 20

The Gilgandra Weekly	Hamilton Spectator	Casterton News	Portland Observer
Yorke Peninsula Country Times	The Coonamble Times	Newcastle Weekly	Alpine Observer
Euroa Gazette	Mansfield Courier	Wangaratta Chronicle	The Phillip Island and San Remo Advertiser
Mareeba Express	The Shepparton Adviser	South Gippsland Sentinel-Times	Border Watch
Murray Pioneer	North Central Review	Narrabri Courier	Western District Newspaper
Wimmera Mallee News			