

Hi there

## The journalists and the politicians



It's been a wild week in journalism. Covid-19 and the vaccination debacle has been knocked off the front pages with the re-election of Barnaby Joyce as leader of the National Party. The politician whose relationship with a staffer ushered in the infamous 'bonk ban' and who was once accused of sexual harassment (an allegation he denies and which a party review deemed undetermined for insufficient evidence), Joyce is, in the words of *Guardian Australia*'s astute political observer [Katherine Murphy](#), a man ruled by

his impulses, by disposition a solo act and a minor cult of personality. But there's opinion and there's fake, and below UTS's [First Draft](#) APAC bureau editor Esther Chan takes a look at a Barnaby Joyce 'shallow fake' that popped up on Twitter this week.

In other Nationals news ... [Kristo Langker was arrested](#) for allegedly stalking NSW Deputy Premier John Barilaro. Langker is a producer for Friendly Jordie, the YouTube reporter/commentator/troublemaker also known as Jordan Shanks-Markovina, who is currently being [sued by Barilaro for defamation](#). It's a weird world, as Sacha Molitorisz confirms below when he describes what's thought to be Australia's first defamation judgment for an Instagram story and an attempt by the infamous, anonymous Banksy to protect his artwork using trademark law. Also in today's newsletter, Dr Chrisanthi Giotis looks the University of Canberra's [Australian Digital News Report for 2021](#), which has just been

released.

Finally, sad news this week that US writer and journalist [Janet Malcolm has died](#). The take-no-prisoners *New Yorker* regular was no stranger to controversy, having been sued for libel by a psychoanalyst. In *The Journalist* and *The Murderer*, she gave us surely the most striking opening lines of any book ever written on the process of journalism:

*'Every journalist who is not too stupid or full of himself to notice what is going on knows that what he does is morally indefensible. He is a kind of confidence man, preying on people's vanity, ignorance, or loneliness, gaining their trust and betraying them without remorse.'*



**Monica Attard**  
CMT Co-Director

## The Barnaby Joyce 'shallowfake' and the power of satire

Just hours after a leadership spill saw Barnaby Joyce voted in as the new leader of the National Party on Monday, an [old video](#) in which he appeared drunk was gaining traction on social media. The video has since been [debunked](#), but not before being viewed more than 2000 times. In the disinformation field, a video that has had its speed or volume altered to paint someone in a bad light is considered a 'shallowfake'.



The 39-second video purported to show Joyce's slurred rant against big government. Extracting key frames via the video analysis tool [InVID](#) and running them through Google image search, we found the [original video](#), posted to Joyce's verified Twitter account in December 2019 and viewed more than 800,000 times since. This week's post deliberately slowed down the video to make him sound drunk.

First Draft contacted the uploader of the doctored video, who said the clip was meant to be a work of satire. Having noticed people's confusion, they removed it from Twitter.

As First Draft co-founder Claire Wardle says, 'Satire is used strategically to bypass fact-

checkers and to distribute rumours and conspiracies, knowing that any push back can be dismissed by stating that it was never meant to be taken seriously.' Even when purely a work of art, satire has [potential to do harm](#) because not everyone may realise it's meant as a joke. The more it's re-shared, the more people lose the connection to the original post and an understanding of it as satire.

Shallowfakes are easy to produce, often by tampering with the audio track or cutting out several frames. They often have malicious intent, as Sam Gregory, program director of human rights non-profit WITNESS, [has noted](#). While deepfakes (such as the [fabricated 'Obama video'](#)) attract a lot of attention, shallowfakes (such as distorted videos of [US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi](#)) can be more destructive precisely because they are easy and fast to create.

In the meantime, foreign anti-vaccine narratives and conspiracy theories have become a key feature of online vaccine disinformation in West African social media, posing a serious risk to vaccination efforts in the region. [This latest long-form report](#) from First Draft investigating the spread of North American and pro-Russian anti-vaccine disinformation to West Africa may be of interest to you. We request that any journalists covering the report and wishing to re-share images and memes containing misinformation [apply an overlay](#) to the image to avoid amplification (as seen in our Barnaby Joyce example above).



**Esther Chan**  
First Draft APAC bureau Editor

## Banking on Banksy to disrupt



This week, Banksy was back in the news for invoking copyright and trademark to protect his art from commercial exploitation. Banksy being Banksy, the details are wonderfully eccentric. Following a decision by the EU Intellectual Property Office this week, [the European Union has now stripped Banksy](#) of the trademarks in six of his artworks: Bomb Hugger, Love Rat, Laugh Now, Radar Rat, Girl with an Umbrella and Flower Thrower. The judges declared he'd been acting in 'bad faith' by obtaining trademarks because he had no

intention of using these works for trade. They added that given his anonymity, he'd be

unlikely to get copyright protection. In Australia, however, [Banksy has successfully applied](#) for trademarks for two works, Love is in the Air and Girl with a Balloon. These trademarks will be registered next week.

The twist is that Banksy - [who once said 'copyright is for losers'](#) - doesn't care if people steal, copy, re-use or modify his work. He just doesn't want people to make money from them. As [his website says](#) : 'You are welcome to use Banksy's images for non-commercial, personal amusement. Print them out in a colour that matches your curtains, make a card for your gran, submit them as your own homework, whatever. But ... please do not use Banksy's images for any commercial purpose ... Saying "Banksy wrote copyright is for losers in his book" doesn't give you free rein to misrepresent the artist and commit fraud. We checked.'



And just in case you needed any more proof that the law is having to perform all sorts of twists and turns to adapt to today's fast-changing media landscape, last week an Australian court awarded more than \$80,000 in damages for what's thought to be [Australia's first case of defamation on Instagram](#).



**Sacha Molitorisz**  
UTS Lecturer in Law/FASS

## Trusting but exhausted



The [Digital News Report 2021](#) was released this week with the data on news consumption from 46 countries showing trust in news has risen across the globe.

Of course there were a few notable exceptions – such as the U.S.A – where trust is sitting at a dismal 29%.

However, in Australia the long-term decline

in trust has been arrested and we are now close to the global average. The [Digital News Report Australia 2021](#) reported that trust rose 5 percentage points this year to 43%, only one percent below the global average. The authors, from the University of Canberra [News and Media Research Centre](#) note that the improvement in trust is likely to be an effect of the pandemic.

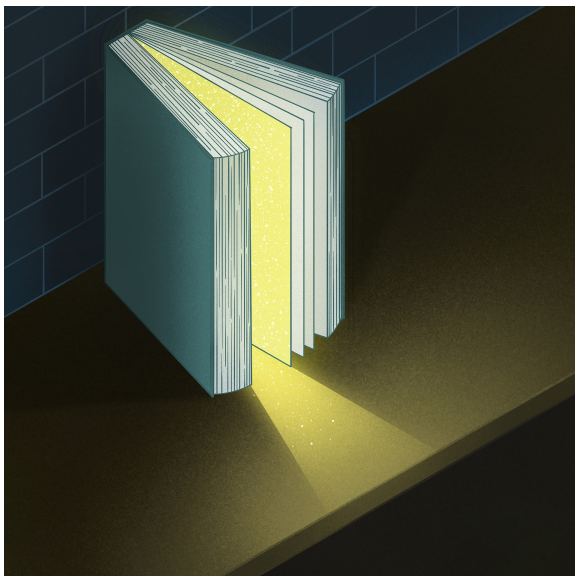
On the flip side, the initial high rates of news consumption at the beginning of the crisis, have not only disappeared they've gone backwards. In 2021 the proportion of heavy news consumers fell to 51%, which is 4 percentage points lower than pre-pandemic and part of a long term downward trend.

Other notable findings include high concerns about misinformation (64% compared to the global average of 56%) and Gen Z women, regional Australians and people on lower incomes all believing the media does not represent them accurately. The full report is [here](#).



**Chrisanthi Giotis**  
CMT Postdoctoral Fellow

## Worth a read



Here's what we've been reading:

- [Looking for Janet Malcolm](#) – by Catie McLeod, *Meanjin Quarterly*
- [A governor's role: listening and learning — and then fighting for regional Australians](#) by Madonna King, *Crikey*
- [More bad news for Big Tech: Lina Khan's a privacy hawk, too](#) by Issie Lapowsky, *Protocol*
- And as mentioned, the [Digital News Report Australia 2021](#) by the University of Canberra's News and Media Research Centre for some fascinating findings.



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