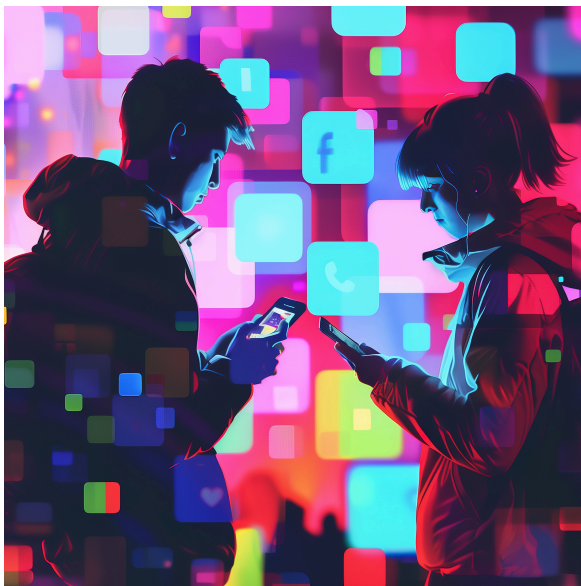


Centre for Media Transition



Hi there

Surge on socials



The [Digital News Report](#) (DNR) for 2024 landed on Monday, with some mixed results for news media in Australia. While there was a small increase in the number of people who access news everyday – it's just over half of all Australians – news avoidance remains high. And at 49% compared to 56%, it looks like social media might soon overtake TV as the most popular source of news.

The DNR is produced locally by the team at the News and Media Research Centre at the University of Canberra and is part of a series of such reports from around the world, led by the [Reuters Institute](#) for the Study of Journalism at Oxford.

Below, Chris and Gary explore some of this year's findings. Chris looks at the use of short-form and long-form video as a source of news, while Gary looks at how interest in local news is holding up, particularly in regional areas. There are more concerning results around the low levels of willingness to pay for news, which the report authors describe as a 'plateau'.

Also in this issue, Kieran reports on changes made to the [Basic Online Safety Expectations](#) that are administered by the eSafety Commissioner. There's a connection here with the current review of the Online Safety Act. The [Issues Paper](#) seeks responses

on several aspects of the current arrangements. It also asks some fundamental questions about how we regulate in this area, and whether there should be some far-reaching changes such as imposing on service providers an overall duty of care or obligation not to cause harm, similar to the approach in the UK.

CMT is currently working on a submission to the review of the Online Safety Act, and we'll have more on that in the next issue of the newsletter. We'll also have – out next week – our latest [Double Take podcast](#) in which I talk to Rita Jabri Markwell from Birchgrove Legal who has been leading the vilification action brought by the Australian Muslim Advocacy Network against X Corp (formerly Twitter). We mentioned in [our last issue](#) that AMAN had a win in the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT) when the [Tribunal agreed](#) with its claim that X Corp, a foreign corporation, could be brought before QCAT in relation to tweets posted in Queensland. AMAN says the tweets constitute hate speech and contravene the state's vilification laws. This week, X Corp lodged an appeal against the decision of QCAT on jurisdiction, so it looks like there will be another step before the substantive claim of vilification is considered. We'll post the podcast on our usual channels.

Finally, a big congratulations to Ayesha who has been selected as a Fellow at the [Weizenbaum Institute](#) under its Open Fellowship Program 2024. She'll spend a month at the Institute in Berlin later this year, where she'll conduct her research on refugee journalists in Germany and collaborate with the 'Digital News Dynamics' and 'Digitalization, Sustainability, and Participation' research groups.



Derek Wilding
CMT Co-Director

Where aussies turn for news videos

This year's [Digital News Report](#) offers some interesting insights into the consumption of online news videos. Participants were asked about their habits with both short news videos (a few minutes or less), as well as longer form videos. One thing that is evident in the report is that online video is an increasingly popular way Australians receive their news.

Each week 54% of Australians watch short online news videos at least once and 38% watch long form online news videos at least once a week. There are differences between generations with Australians under the age of 59 watching more online news videos than older generations. Around 20% of Gen X, Millennials, and Post-millennials watch short



online news videos at least once *per day*.

The DNR reveals interesting insights into where people are going for online news video content. Of the people who watch *short-form online news video* content, most people (55%) go to the websites or apps of news organisations. This is followed by YouTube (49%) and Facebook (41%). Instagram is used by 19% of Australian news video watchers. TikTok, the dedicated short-form video platform, is where only 14% of respondents say they go for online

news videos.

For those who watch *long-form online news videos*, YouTube is the platform of choice for three-fifths (59%) of Australians. This is followed by the websites or apps of news organisations (50%). Almost 40% of Australians go to Facebook for long-form news videos and 18% go to Instagram. Surprisingly, 11% of participants in the DNR survey said they go to TikTok for long-form news content. It is surprising considering the maximum video length on TikTok is only ten minutes and most videos on the platform are well under that, not exactly 'long-form'.

The popularity of YouTube as a place for long-form news could be insightful for major Australian news corporations. Most YouTube videos from major news outlets are well under five minutes long and they drastically underperform compared to the much longer videos from independent youtubers with similar subscriber counts.

On social media platforms, mainstream news organisations have a lot of competition for the attention of the online news video audience. This shows in the DNR's data on news video sources. For Australians consuming online news videos on YouTube, less than half (48%) watch mainstream journalism. On Instagram, 46% of Australians get their news from mainstream journalism sources while on TikTok, 53% of Australians get their news from 'ordinary people' and only 39% get their news from mainstream journalism sources.

The online news media environment is highly competitive and is made up of numerous digital platforms and a plethora of media creators. In this context it is important to understand what news consumers want, and where they want it.



Chris Hall
UTS HDR Student

Local news holds up, payments plateau



Regional audiences are among the most interested in local news, the Digital News Report [has found](#), in a report that has both positive and negative findings for local media.

The good: regional news consumers are increasingly engaged. Fifty per cent of regional respondents reported being 'heavy' media users, meaning they access news more than once each day. This is a four percentage point increase from 2023.

Trust remains very high for regional and local news, despite across-the-board falls. Sixty per cent reported trusting their local newspaper, down one percentage point. Only 14 per cent reported distrusting their local paper, the best recorded result.

Reported interest in local news remains very high, despite a decline: 64 per cent of respondents said they're interested in local news, a three percentage point drop from 2022, and the highest topic of interest of those canvassed.

Interest in local news is high, but so is the level of satisfaction with the amount that is available: 69 per cent of respondents currently paying for news said that they've got enough available to them, and 55 per cent of non-paying respondents said the same.

The number of paying respondents who reported subscribing to a local newspaper increased slightly to ten per cent.

Now, the bad. Only 21 per cent of all respondents reported paying for news; of those who aren't, 57 per cent said that they never will. On both measures, the situation among regional audiences is slightly bleaker: only 17 per cent are currently paying, and of those who aren't, 59 per cent can't be moved to.

The report authors suggest that these payment figures represent a 'plateau' in the public's willingness to pay for journalism through direct measures like subscriptions and donations.

Nevertheless, these results are more positive than a recent survey on indirect measures

published by the Public Interest Journalism Initiative (PIJI). In a [February 2024 survey](#), PIJI asked respondents about their willingness to pay a small monthly tax increase to fund public interest journalism. At all price points – \$1 per month, \$5 per month, \$15 per month – the survey found a sharp decline in willingness to pay of between nine and 17 percentage points compared to when the question was first asked in November 2019.

The [range of willingness to pay](#) in this manner dropped precipitously, from \$1.51 to \$2.94 five years ago to \$0.41 to \$1.99 today. This has serious implications for the legitimacy of any taxpayer-funded initiatives to support the sector.

All of this confirms the ongoing challenge faced by local and regional media: Australians love and trust the product, they just don't want to pay very much for it.



Gary Dickson
CMT Research Fellow

Enhancing online expectations



Late last month, Communications Minister Michelle Rowland announced the introduction of the [Online Safety \(Basic Online Safety Expectations\) Amendment Determination 2024](#). This Determination amends the [2022 Determination](#) (BOSE Determination) which outlines the expectations of online service providers under the [Online Safety Act 2021](#) (OSA).

The BOSE Determination provides the 'core expectations' of online service providers, as well as 'additional expectations' and 'examples of reasonable steps' providers can undertake to meet the expectations. The amendments provide several new *additional expectations* and *examples of reasonable steps*.

The first additional expectation introduced is that the 'provider of the service will take reasonable steps to ensure that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in the design and operation of any service that is likely to be accessed by children.' This has already received some criticism for attempting to baby-proof [the internet](#), and the idea

is likely to be debated further as it has been suggested as a guiding principle in the current [review of the Online Safety Act](#).

The amendment also introduces additional expectations for user controls, requiring providers to offer features that allow users to manage interactions, content, and privacy settings. It also emphasises the need for proactive measures to detect and mitigate unlawful or harmful content, including those generated by AI systems or amplified by recommender algorithms. Another additional expectation will require providers to respond to a request from the eSafety Commissioner for a report on the number of active end users in Australia, with a breakdown of users into categories of adults and children – a seemingly difficult task to do accurately without [age verification](#) mechanisms.

Several new examples of reasonable steps that online service providers can take to meet expectations are also introduced. These include publishing regular transparency reports detailing measures being taken to protect Australian users, processes to detect hate speech breaching a service's terms of use, assessing the impact of business decisions on end-user safety and having systems in place to detect unlawful or harmful content and action complaints.

With the recent eSafety versus X drama (*read about it, [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)*), the continued debate on [how Australia handles](#) misinformation and disinformation, and the [current review of the OSA](#), the amendments come at a tumultuous time as Australia navigates its approach to online harm.



Kieran Lindsay
CMT Research Officer

We hope you have enjoyed reading this edition of the *Centre for Media Transition newsletter* | *Digital News Report findings and updates on platform actions - Issue 11/2024*
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