

**Submission to Senate  
Environment and Communications  
References Committee Inquiry  
into the state of media diversity,  
independence and reliability  
in Australia**

**from Croakey Health Media**

**11 December, 2020**

**CROAKEY HEALTH MEDIA**

## Introductory statement

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This inquiry is taking place at a time when two global crises - COVID-19 and climate change - are revealing the fundamental importance of a well-informed public and an accountable, informed policy-making process.

This underscores the critical importance of public interest journalism, especially at a time of misinformation and disinformation spread by powerful digital platforms and other actors, including partisan corporate media.

These dual crises are also revealing the fragility of the public interest journalism sector, in Australia and globally. This is because of the collapsed business model for public interest journalism amid a generally unsupportive policy environment, as well as wider trends, such as increasing authoritarianism and suppression of media and whistleblowers.

Our key recommendation to this inquiry is that policies should develop, support and sustain the non-profit public interest journalism sector as a critical part of a diverse media ecosystem, for the benefit of communities. In particular, policies should support the development of innovative new models, especially in communities that are poorly served or under-served by mainstream media, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people with disabilities, and LGBTQI communities. Communities should be supported to identify and meet their needs for public interest journalism.

We urge the inquiry to take a visionary, horizon-scanning approach to your work. Do not be constrained by the limitations of the present media landscape; present us with a vision for a healthy, diverse media and information ecosystem 10 or 20 years into the future, when we might expect that the impacts of the climate crisis are being experienced more harshly. Also present us with some clear pathways for how communities might help achieve this.

Representatives of Croakey Health Media would welcome the opportunity to present to the committee, and to provide any further information.

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## 1. Background on Croakey Health Media

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Croakey Health Media is a non-profit public interest journalism organisation with a vision that: “A vigorous and sustainable public interest journalism sector contributes to the health and wellbeing of people, families, communities, policies, societies and the environment.” Our purpose is to provide a range of social journalism and professional services to help enable communities, policy-makers and practitioners to improve health and wellbeing, with a determined focus on improving health equity. We take a local, regional, national and global focus.

Our five strategic priorities are:

1. Create a sustainable environment for public interest journalism
2. Privilege Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ expertise and voices
3. Inform, engage and empower communities
4. Scrutinise and disrupt power constructively
5. Provide leadership through innovation.

(Read more here: [https://croakey.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/StrategicPlan\\_12Feb2019.pdf](https://croakey.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/StrategicPlan_12Feb2019.pdf))

We are registered as a health charity, primarily because there is no clear pathway in Australia for public interest journalism organisations to set up as a non-profit public interest journalism organisation. We have been unsuccessful in an application for Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status, although we intend to continue trying.

Members of our social journalism team provide the membership of Croakey Health Media with organisational governance provided by an elected board of directors (including non-members), chaired by Dr Janine Mohamed, a Narrunga Kurna woman who is CEO of the Lowitja Institute. The social journalism membership is responsible for editorial independence. While we are an extremely innovative, nimble and productive organisation, our business model is fragile and underpinned by a large pro bono contribution from our social journalism network, reflecting the absence of a strong business model to support public interest journalism.

### **Public interest journalism**

gives people the information they need to take part in the democratic process. It informs and contributes to policy and practice. It holds power to account, and amplifies the voices of those who are not well served by the current distribution of power.

### **Social journalism**

Social journalism is a collaborative form of public interest journalism that seeks to provide services to help meet community needs. It can encompass services beyond traditional journalistic content production, including community organising and education.

## **Activities**

**1.1.** Regular publication at Croakey.org of news and analysis articles about health matters, with a focus on health equity including Indigenous health, the social determinants of health, health promotion, disease prevention, rural and remote health, primary healthcare, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, and climate change and health. We aim to cover health matters that are under-served by the mainstream media, either because they are often poorly covered or under-covered relative to their importance. Croakey's articles are freely available online, and there is a paid subscription to a weekly compilation news bulletin. The articles are disseminated via Croakey.org, Twitter, Facebook, AppleNews, LinkedIn, and email.

**1.2.** Special series and publications, such as:

- **#JusticeCOVID** - an investigation of the health issues for prisoners and their families during the pandemic. This series of articles, podcasts and other editorial content was funded by the Judith Neilson Institute for Journalism and Ideas.
- **The Health Wrap** - a regular compilation of evidence-based health policy and research news, with a global, national and local focus. See: <https://www.croakey.org/category/croakey-projects/the-health-wrap/>
- **The Covid Wrap** - a regular update on the latest research and other evidence-based news on the COVID-19 pandemic. See: <https://www.croakey.org/category/public-health-and-population-health/covidwrap/>

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- **#JustJustice** – an extensive series of articles compiled into an e-book, investigating ways to reduce the overincarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a public health priority (#JustJustice); and
- **#WonkyHealth** – a series of articles exploring the social determinants of health.

These publications can be freely downloaded here: <https://croakey.org/croakey-publications/>

**1.3.** We are among a handful of media outlets in Australia involved in the global Covering Climate Now initiative, an unprecedented collaboration involving hundreds of media outlets around the world. It is co-founded by The Nation and the Columbia Journalism Review (CJR), in partnership with The Guardian. This has allowed us to cross-publish articles from other media organisations around the world, whilst also contributing our coverage of climate and health matters to the collaboration. A summary of our work on this project was presented virtually to the 16th World Congress on Public Health in October 2020. The poster below can be seen [here](#) in more detail.

**Covering Climate Now**

**A social journalism project profiling climate and health**

How Croakey Health Media engaged with the Covering Climate Now Collaboration  
29 August 2019 - 23 September 2020

- 43 articles including 6 cross-publications from the collaboration
- A five-hour Twitter festival with 19 guest tweeters
- A sustained Twitter presence
- Launched a fund-raising campaign specifically for health and climate journalistic investigations

**Focus on**

- Healthcare sector's responsibility to reduce emissions
- Indigenous knowledges
- Mental health and suicide prevention
- Global health
- Equity
- Climate justice for disabled people
- Public health
- Media coverage of the climate crisis
- Youth perspectives

**Other outcomes**

- Provided a platform for health professionals and organisations to contribute to climate debate
- Contributed to growth and sustainability of an independent, non-profit public interest journalism organisation
- Provided income for freelance journalists
- Developed networks across health, social, environment and media sectors
- Provided an example of the global and local importance of collaborations

**Use of Twitter**

- Shared our publications and those published by other members of the collaboration
- Applied the hashtag beyond the collaboration's work, to widen its impact. For example, using the hashtag we shared relevant articles and comments that were not produced by the collaboration but were related to the topic.
- Brought the hashtag into other Twitter streams, where it was relevant for participants. For example #AusPH2019, the stream from the Public Health Association of Australia's 50th conference, and #CREHealthEquity, the stream from a panel symposium held by the Centre for Research Excellence into the Social Determinants of Health Equity.
- Used the hashtag to engage in media critique and advocacy; for example, questioning other Australian media outlets about why they were not part of the collaboration.
- Hosted a Twitter Festival on 24 September 2019, timed to follow discussions in the New York Timeszone at the Climate Action Summit. The program privileged the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other communities experiencing climate injustice. The hashtag trended nationally in Australia on that day.
- Used the rotated, curated Twitter account @Whv-ictd to provide another platform for sharing related discussions and news.

**Profiling Torres Strait Islander solutions for environmental sustainability**

Editor: Melissa Sauer. Author: Santha Othavalli and Felicia Watkin Liu

Such is the threat of the climate crisis to Torres Strait Islanders that a group has lodged a case with the United Nations Human Rights Committee, arguing that Australia's failure to take action... [Read more](#)

**Stay in touch**

- Follow on Twitter: @CoveringClimate
- Covering Climate Now website: <https://www.coveringclimatenow.org/>
- Sign up for Covering Climate Now newsletter: <https://www.coveringclimatenow.org/newsletter>

**Top 10 by Tweets**

- @MelissaSauer 1581
- @SanthaOthavalli 972
- @WhvPublicHealth 508
- @CoveringClimate 300
- @CoveringClimate 276
- @WhvPublicHealth 262
- @santhathelias 188
- @WhvNews 176

Source: Sympplr Analytics, for 12 Sept - 4 Oct 2019

**Collaboration locally and globally can convey solutions to the climate crisis**

**Poor quality media coverage of the climate crisis has stimulated innovation**

**The overlaps between the coronavirus crisis and the climate crisis are many, and the same best practices when it comes to reporting are needed. Here, too, newrooms must set facts, especially scientific facts, be our guide. We must stand up to the powerful, remembering that journalists work for the public, not for governments. We must report with compassion, candor, and courage, not only chronicling the ongoing devastation, as important as that is, but also illuminating credible remedies and reasons for hope.**

Covering Climate Now co-founders Mark Hertsgaard and Kyle Pope

Poster Presentation to 2020 World Congress on Public Health, October 2020, #WCPH2020

Associate Professor Megan Williams, University of Sydney, Croakey Health Media  
Ms Marie Monahan, Croakey Health Media  
Dr Summer May Flitely, #WhvPublicHealth, Croakey Health Media  
Dr Melissa Sauer, Croakey Health Media, University of Sydney

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY  
PUBLIC INTEREST JOURNALISM IS A HEALTH ISSUE

We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the country where we live, work and travel upon, and to Elders, past, present and future.

**CROAKEY HEALTH MEDIA**

**1.4.** We have also developed a number of innovations in journalism, including:

**Croakey Conference News Service** provides editorially independent, multimedia news coverage from health and medical conferences likely to be of interest or use to our readers and social media followers. During COVID-19, this social journalism service adapted to provide coverage of online conferences, webinars, and events.

See examples of coverage here: <https://www.croakey.org/conference-reporting/>

**#CroakeyGO** is walking journalism, which brings communities together to share knowledge on health matters and collaboratively produce journalism. A summary of our work on this project was presented virtually to the 16th World Congress on Public Health in October 2020 as per the poster below. During COVID-19 we adapted this concept to a virtual **#CroakeyGO**. The poster below can be seen in more detail [here](#).

**Walking as an act of journalism to engage the public in health**

**Connecting with Country**  
#CroakeyGO means respecting Indigenous peoples' connection to Country on which we walk and reflecting on intergenerational inequities and solutions offered by Indigenous knowledges.

**#CroakeyGO** brings together diverse voices from communities – people who might otherwise not connect.

**Highlighting the social determinants of health.**

**Sharing community expertise**  
Narratives of community members matter.

**Beyond the usual headlines**  
Communities are often excluded from media coverage of health, despite being where the experience of health is created. Contractions in journalism mean fewer opportunities to engage with communities and public forums.

**Innovation in journalism**  
can have direct health benefits.

**Social journalism**  
A collaborative form of public interest journalism that seeks to provide services to help meet community needs. It can encompass services beyond traditional journalistic content production, including community organising and education.

**#CroakeyGO** helps to break down barriers and silos, and create connections.

**What is #CroakeyGO?**

- An innovation in social journalism that brings people together to walk in place, and discuss a particular health topic.
- It begins with a Welcome to Country or Acknowledgment of Country.
- A platform for knowledge exchange, collaborative knowledge production, and developing relationships and networks.

**Co-designed with partner organisations**

- Croakey Health Media works with partner organisations to design the itinerary.
- Using a yarning circle methodology, participants locate themselves in relation to the topic and place.
- Participants contribute to the discussions and social media coverage.
- Participation occurs at the event and online.
- Journalists produce articles, broadcast interviews and social media content.
- Adapted to the pandemic by going virtual.

**#CroakeyGO outcomes**

- Since 2017, 12 #CroakeyGO events in metropolitan, regional and remote locations.
- Topics include prevention, mental health, historical truth telling, heatwave health, and the Victorian election.
- More than 50 related articles published at [Croakey.org](#).

**Join us**

In October, follow #GamblingHarms for news from the first virtual #CroakeyGO. This event is sponsored by the Alliance for Gambling Reform.

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Dr Ruth Armstrong, Croakey Health Media  
Ms Marie McInerney, Croakey Health Media  
Mr Mitchell Ward, Croakey Health Media

Poster Presentation to 16th World Congress on Public Health, October 2020 #WCPH2020



We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the country where we live, work and travel upon, and to Elders, past, present and future.

**CROAKEY HEALTH MEDIA**

**1.5.** We report on public interest journalism as an important determinant of health, and also advocate for its development and sustainability.

We do this through:

- **Our journalism**, with an extensive archive of stories on the health implications of public interest journalism: <https://www.croakey.org/category/public-health-and-population-health/public-interest-journalism/>
- **Making submissions to relevant inquiries.** We encourage the Committee members to read these submissions as they are relevant to your inquiry: <https://www.croakey.org/about-croakey-health-media/croakey-submissions/>
  - Submission to Digital Industry Group Inc (DIGI) consultation on Disinformation Industry Code (**24 November, 2020**) - [Download](#)
  - Submission to ACCC consultation Mandatory bargaining code (**28 August, 2020**) - [Download](#)

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- ACCC consultation Mandatory bargaining code (**5 June, 2020**) - [Download](#)
- Response to ACCC Digital Platforms Inquiry (**19 February, 2019**) - [Download](#)
- Submission to Senate Select Committee inquiring into the future of public interest journalism (**15 June, 2017**) - [Download](#)
- **Advocacy.** We advocate to our networks, and meet with politicians and other stakeholders to encourage wider understanding of the role of public interest journalism for healthy populations, communities and societies.
- **Presenting to conferences etc, and publishing in journals.**
  - Sweet MA, Williams M, Armstrong R, Mohamed J, Finlay SM, Coopes A. Converging crises: public interest journalism, the pandemic and public health. Public Health Res Pract. 2020;30(4): e3042029. <https://doi.org/10.17061/phrp3042029> (Included in appendix A)
  - Sweet M, Geia L, Dudgeon P, McCallum K, Finlay SM, Williams M, et al. Outlining a model of social journalism for health. Australian Journalism Review. 2017;39(2):91- 106.
  - Williams M, Finlay SM, Sweet M, McInerney M. #JustJustice: rewriting the roles of journalism in Indigenous health. Australian Journalism Review. 2017;39(2):107-18.

The conceptualisation below of the upstream determinants of public interest journalism and public health was presented virtually to the 16th World Congress on Public Health in October 2020. The poster below can be seen [here](#) in more detail.

## Save Public Interest Journalism – for health

**Public interest journalism** is an important determinant of health, due to its roles in accountability and scrutinising power, contributing to health literacy, and empowering communities. A strong public interest journalism sector contributes to planetary health and health equity, as well as healthier people, communities, societies, and systems of governance.

**PIJ is under attack!**

- Collapse of the underpinning business model
- Market power of digital platforms
- Neoliberalism
- Rise of authoritarianism
- Attacks on press freedom and safety
- Sector's failure to innovate, adapt and represent communities.

In Australia, from 2006 to 2016 the number of people employed as journalists and writers fell by nine percent and by 26 percent for traditional print journalists.

Between 2011 and 2017, an estimated 3,000 journalists lost their jobs through redundancies alone.

This was before the COVID-19 pandemic – it is much worse now. Job losses and newsroom closures and contractions have escalated in 2020.

Public Interest Journalism Initiative and The Judith Nelson Institute for Journalism and Ideas ([link](#))

Design and concept by Dr Ruth Armstrong, Dr Megan Williams, Mitchell Ward and Dr Melissa Sweet (2020)

This ecological analysis of the upstream determinants of a healthy, sustainable public interest journalism sector is informed by Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing, and a decolonising methodology. This model draws connections between the underlying determinants of the crisis in public interest journalism and the community's health. It also suggests that public health engagement with these determinants can contribute to healthier outcomes.

Poster Presentation to 16th World Congress on Public Health, October 2020 #WCPH2020

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"The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the essential role of journalists... Readership and audiences are record high. But revenues are record low."

This is not only the pandemic's fault. It is a longer-term trend that sky-rocketed with the digitalisation and emergence of online platforms. The advertising is moving online, leaving the content creators, journalists, in a difficult situation. Almost half of EU citizens now rely on online news as their main source for information about national and European politics. This trend puts the local media, those that are the closest to citizens, at special risk.

All this has an impact on our democracies. The weaker the "fourth estate" is, the weaker its ability to watch the hands of those in power – the weaker our democracy."

**Speech** by the Vice-President of the European Commission, Věra Jourová, a Czech politician and lawyer, on 7 July 2020

**Democracy threatened**

"The emerging deficits in the quantity and quality of available local news and information threaten community cohesion and economic recovery during these uncertain times and undermine Australia's democratic systems. Many Australian communities face the real possibility that the essential service of local news will no longer be there for them."

Public Interest Journalism Initiative and The Judith Nelson Institute for Journalism and Ideas ([link](#))

**Calls to public health action**

1. Include public interest journalism in models of the social determinants of health – in practice, research, advocacy and education
2. Advocate for policy reform to support public interest journalism, including non-profit and community-based models
3. Advocate for regulation of the digital platforms

## 2. Addressing the terms of reference

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### 2.1. The current state of public interest journalism in Australia and any barriers to Australian voters' ability to access reliable, accurate and independent news

As outlined in a variety of publications cited by Sweet et al (2020) – [see pdf attachment](#) – the pandemic has exacerbated a crisis in public interest journalism in Australia and more widely. This has drastically reduced access to reliable and diverse sources of local, national and global news sources at the same time as communities are awash with information disseminated by digital platforms, much of which is unreliable and unaccountable. This has clear implications for the health of populations, as well as of democracy. The policy response has not been commensurate with the need or urgency of the problem, and has tended to be dominated by the interests of major corporates rather than the wider public interest (see our submissions to previous inquiries, as mentioned above). Innovative models like The Conversation, IndigenousX, Inside Story, Renew Economy, Pearls and Irritations, Michael West Media and other independent media outlets provide valuable and popular public service. We also note the value of non-profit models like The Conversation and Croakey Health Media in providing platforms for scientific, medical and social experts to present issues and counter misinformation in a way that is readable, understandable, thoughtful, and timely. However, far more is needed to support and sustain such outlets, as well as wider innovation.

### 2.2. The effect of media concentration on democracy in Australia

The Australian media landscape is toxic, reflecting the market and political power of News Corporation, and its partisan agendas, including a long history of actively undermining effective climate policy. During a critical time for pandemic control, News Corporation was actively undermining public health through commentary marked by racism, ridiculing of science and ideological warfare, according to a leading scholar in media ethics, Dr Denis Muller (<https://www.croakey.org/whether-a-ratings-chase-or-ideological-war-news-corps-coronavirus-coverage-is-dangerous/>). At the same time as these concerns were being raised, the Federal Government [announced](#) a \$10 million grant to New Corp's Fox Sports, for coverage of women's, niche and other under-represented sports. The Opposition [said](#) this brought taxpayer funding of Fox Sports to \$40 million over six years, and flagged concerns about transparency and process. The country's most trusted media outlet, the ABC, was meanwhile [slashing staff, services and programs](#) to offset an \$84 million budget shortfall resulting from successive cutbacks by the Coalition Government.

The concentrated nature of corporate media in Australia is not healthy for democracy. The lack of diversity in the mainstream media sector, which also refers to representation in organisational and editorial governance, is also unhealthy for democracy, and disadvantages the sector, the public and the policy process.

Clearly, this is not a media landscape conducive to healthy, accountable democracy and evidence-informed, community-centred policy making.

### **2.3. The impact of significant changes to media business models since the advent of online news and the barriers to viability and profitability of public interest news services**

Many reports and inquiries, in Australia and more widely, have documented how the migration of advertising online has devastated the business model that once supported public interest journalism in the corporate sector. The focus must move beyond this well-understood history to examine what policy responses can help develop and sustain public interest journalism going forward. We encourage the inquiry to look not only to the recommendations of organisations such as the Judith Neilson Institute for Journalism and Ideas and the Public Interest Journalism Initiative, but more widely to how the European Union and other countries are sustaining public interest journalism.

### **2.4. The impact of online global platforms such as Facebook, Google and Twitter on the media industry and sharing of news in Australia**

We urge this committee to consider not only the impact of these platforms on the media industry but also their wider impact upon the economy and public health.

For example, a recent US House of Representatives inquiry into the market power of Amazon, Apple, Facebook and Google outlined potential benefits of systemic reform and regulation of the digital platforms that are important for both public interest journalism and public health. The inquiry found companies were using their dominant market power in ways that weaken democracy; erode diversity, entrepreneurship and innovation; degrade privacy online; and undermine the vibrancy of the free and diverse press. It is important that efforts to regulate digital platform move beyond a siloed approach - to ensure that regulation drives multiple agendas, including a safe, accountable information environment as well as media reform.

We were finalising this submission before the Federal Government released the full details of its mandatory code governing relations between the digital platforms and media publishers. It is imperative that the implementation of this code be transparent and accountable through an open, public review process.

We concur with others that the code alone is not a panacea for the challenges facing public interest journalism.

*[Nadler J, Cicilline DN. Investigation of competition in digital markets. Majority staff report and recommendations. Subcommittee on Antitrust, Commercial and Administrative Law of the Committee on the Judiciary. Washington, DC: The United States House of Representatives; 2020 [cited 2020 Nov 9]. Available from: [judiciary.house.gov/uploadedfiles/competition\\_in\\_digital\\_markets.pdf](https://judiciary.house.gov/uploadedfiles/competition_in_digital_markets.pdf)]*

## **2.5. The barriers faced by small, independent and community news outlets in Australia**

Small, independent and community news outlets face many barriers to operation, including lack of funding and structural support.

The development of a healthy non-profit public interest journalism sector could help many communities have better access to the roles of public interest journalism.

Policies could:

- Enable innovation in the development of new models to better meet the needs of discrete communities, whether these be geographical communities or communities of interest
- Provide a clear, affordable pathway for the set-up of non-partisan, non-profit journalism models, including access to DGR status.
- Support and fund the development of a voice for the sector through funding for an organisation to advocate for non-profit journalism and to help educate the community, philanthropists and other funders about the sector's role.

The Aboriginal Community Controlled Health sector offers a useful example for developing new models for journalism that is accountable to communities.

## **2.6. The role that a newswire service plays in supporting diverse public interest journalism in Australia.**

A newswire such as AAP plays a critical role in covering news events that are part of a functioning democracy, such as courts, politics, finance, and other general news rounds. However, many important institutions and topics are beyond the scope of a national newswire – such as local governments. A national wire service in itself does not solve the issue of a lack of diversity in the Australian media. Nor does it address the disconnect between communities’ needs and media organisations’ imperatives. Its clients are generally media companies, rather than communities. We note that a number of Croakey journalists and editors have previously worked for AAP.

## **2.7. The state of local, regional and rural media outlets in Australia.**

Again, the ACCC and many other reports and inquiries have documented the demise of local, regional and rural media outlets. This is particularly important during times of many crisis. The bushfire season of 2019/20 and COVID-19 have shown that access to locally tailored, reliable information can be literally life-saving. The importance of public interest journalism during times of crisis will become only more important as climate change and associated events such as bushfires and heatwaves become more intense and more frequent. Public and community broadcasters have an essential role during times of crisis, in particular, and this is being undermined by funding cuts. Newspapers and other media in rural, regional communities provide employment for rural, regional communities – the loss of these outlets is devastating for communities in many respects. Limited internet access in rural areas means that some rural individuals/populations rely on local newspapers for their news. Local newspapers help rural communities feel connected and also provide local accountability roles – such as reporting on local services, council and other institutions – that otherwise would not be covered by media. We also acknowledge that many media organisations enact institutional racism and do not always represent the interests of all communities.

## **2.8. The role of government in supporting a viable and diverse public interest journalism sector in Australia**

The American economist and Nobel Laureate Professor Joseph Stiglitz told an Australia Institute webinar on 3 December 2020 (<https://youtu.be/hKLCAozlujg>), it is impossible to build a robust business model for public interest journalism in the current environment. Instead, he suggested that societies may have to face the reality that the public purse

has to pay for public interest journalism, given its importance for well-functioning democracies, just as basic research is funded. He and others have suggested taxing the digital giants like Google, Facebook and Apple as a way of funding public interest journalism and other services.

Government should provide sufficient funding to public and community broadcasters to ensure their operations can be sustained and developed. This is particularly critical in an environment where we face escalating impacts from the climate crisis. Local knowledge and context are vital in emergency and disaster preparation, planning, response and recovery efforts. For example, see: <https://www.croakey.org/landmark-report-presents-wide-ranging-calls-to-action-on-climate-and-health/>

As has been previously suggested, governments should also establish funding pools for public interest journalism, drawing on best-practice governance from other fields (for example, research funding allocation). All levels of government should contribute to this funding pool: federal, state/territory and local on the understanding that all communities would benefit from disbursements.

We suggest the following principles to underpin public investment in media organisations:

1. Investment should be driven by communities' needs with a focus on equity, meaning that those communities who are now most under-served should receive special attention. An equitable process ensures that support is commensurate with need.
2. Investment should support a diverse media landscape but this means more than supporting a variety of models of organisations and ownership. It also means ensuring there is diversity in representation, not only in editorial operations, but also in governance.
3. Institutional racism must be addressed, and an organisation's cultural safety should be considered as a criteria for funding.
4. Organisations should be non-partisan and have a clear commitment to transparency and journalistic ethics and principles.