

ANNUAL REPORT

2022-23

Mainly Observer

FREE. FRANK. FAIR

WHS 100th Anniversary

REGULAR NEWS MEETINGS IN SOCIAL & ONLINE BY REQUEST

LINA

Local & Independent News Association



Our Key Pillars

STRENGTHENING PUBLIC INTEREST JOURNALISM

LINA works to ensure that engaged local audiences are served with independent, accessible, original, high-quality public interest news reportage, covering issues and information important to communities. Actions in this area in 2022-23 included: development of a strategic partnership with the ABC to share resources and knowledge; networking sessions focused on editorial policies, advertising policies and content planning; sharing of lead generation and fact-checking resources; multimedia content production training; upskilling on media law; and mechanisms for strengthening audience trust and engagement.

BUILDING CAPACITY OF NEWSROOMS

LINA provides publishers with access to training events, resources, tip sheets, templates, guides and playbooks to support local and diverse newsrooms. LINA provides best-practice business structure advice, including templates on practical issues such as social media terms of use and relevant policies. In addition, LINA facilitates education and upskilling on key topics. Actions in this area in 2022-23 included: production of key resources and explainers; shared learnings from industry events; introduction to relevant software tools; coordination of fortnightly shop-talk sessions with expert speakers; templates for media kits and social media content; coordination of the inaugural Summit event; and early work on revenue stream development to help support members.

FACILITATING NETWORKING AND SHARED SERVICES

LINA connects members with discount suppliers, expert advice and industry networks to save news businesses money and time and generate economies of scale for small businesses. Actions this year have included: developing discount partnerships on insurance, complaints tools, newsletter production tools, media law events and subscriptions; facilitation of an engaged Slack channel for day-to-day member interaction; monthly newsletters and tip sheets; and social events.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Local voices sharing local perspectives on matters that are important to them is the backbone of community reporting across all mediums. So it made sense that the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) would want to help an association focused on local news reporting get up and running. The partnership between CBAA and LINA has laid a foundation of collaboration, efficiency and community focus as key principles that underpin our work and the relationships we're proud to have built in our first year of operation.

I was honoured to be appointed as the first Chair of LINA in February 2022 and have been pleased to lead the organisation through a year that saw us realise the ambitions publishers had expressed to us in 2021. I want to acknowledge the depth of knowledge and experience across our dedicated Board team and thank them for their hands-on commitment to getting LINA off the ground. A foundational Board is a working Board, and the LINA Board has worked hard this year, thanks to all of you.

I also want to thank the foundational members who joined LINA from the outset, both demonstrating the need for an industry body focused on digital news publishers, but also throwing your support behind an association that was finding its feet. LINA is only as strong as its members.

2022-23 was a fantastic start for LINA. We acknowledge the support of the Judith Neilson Institute for Journalism and Ideas in the first year and the Commonwealth of Australia, particularly through Minister for Communication, Michelle Rowland into 2023-24. In a news landscape that is facing challenges in many directions, I can't wait to see what hyperlocal and independent news publishers as the 'green shoots' of the news industry can do for their communities scaffolded by LINA.

Jon Bisset, Chair



LINA Board

JON BISSET, CHAIR – APPOINTED FEB 2022

Jon is the Chief Executive Officer of the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBA). He is passionate about the non-profit and charity sector having spent more than 25 years as a Chief Executive and non-executive director.

Jon is also CEO of RPH Australia, the peak body for the Radio Reading Network, community media empowering Australians with a print disability. The CBA and RPH Australia's member stations actively broadcast nationwide to an audience of over 5 million people per week.

Jon is also a Non-Executive Director of the Community Council for Australia, an independent non-political member based organisation dedicated to building flourishing communities by enhancing the extraordinary work undertaken by the charities and not-for-profit sector in Australia. He is also a Non-Executive Director of Infoxchange, a non-profit organisations using technology to improve the lives of the most vulnerable in our community and increase digital inclusion and a Non-Executive Director of Spots and Space.

NELSON YAP – APPOINTED SEPT 2022

Nelson Yap is the editor and publisher of Australian Property Journal (APJ). Founded in 2003, APJ is one of the oldest online digital-only publications in Australia. Nelson is passionate about media diversity, and supporting independent media and small publishers.

Nelson is a member of the Australian Press Council (APC) and co-chair of the Public Interest Publishers Alliance (PIPA), which was founded in 2021 and represented by the Minderoo Foundation to collectively bargain with Google and Meta under the News Media Bargaining Code.



LINA Board at the inaugural LINA Summit 2023. From left: Emma Bones, Alan Sunderland, Nelson Yap, Jon Bisset, Claire Stuchbery, Peri Strathearn, Jacky Barker

EMMA BONES – APPOINTED FEB 2022

Emma has broad ranging skills across operations, strategy, governance and finance, with a focus on charities. She is currently the General Manager of the Sydney Environment Institute. She is a registered Chartered Accountant and spent four years working as a tax accountant and adviser.

She was previously Director, Ideas at the Judith Neilson Institute for Journalism and Ideas where she led the program of work to understand the landscape of hyperlocal media in Australia and assess the need for support.

Emma has worked as a management consultant, developing strategies and designing operating models for government agencies and not-for-profits.

PERI STRATHEARN – APPOINTED NOV 2022

Peri Strathearn is the founder and managing editor of Murray Bridge News, an online news service in South Australia's Murraylands.

When he's not trying to find a sustainable future of local journalism at the bottom of a cup of tea, you'll find him playing a ukulele or adventuring with his two young daughters.

Peri has worked as a journalist since 2010, previously undertaking reporting roles for Fairfax and Australian Community Media (ACM) publications before launching an independent news service at Murray Bridge.

LINA Board

ALAN SUNDERLAND – APPOINTED FEB 2022

Alan is a journalist, author and editorial consultant with more than forty years' experience working for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS). He worked as a news and current affairs reporter for both SBS and the ABC. This included 5 years as a Political Editor in the Canberra Press Gallery. He won two Walkley Awards.

He was News Director at SBS from 1996-1999, a senior news executive at the ABC from 2005-2013, and Editorial Director of the ABC from 2013-2019.

Since 2019, he has continued to write and speak about public interest journalism. He is the Executive Director of the international Organisation of News Ombudsman (ONO) and is a member of the Walkley Public Fund Committee.

JACKY BARKER – APPOINTED FEB 2022

Jacky is the founder of In the Cove, one of the longest continuously running hyperlocals in Australia since its launch in 2012. Jacky has worked to promote hyperlocals in Australia and has met with hyperlocal publishers overseas. In 2016, she met in the UK with the Centre for Community Journalism to learn about their hyperlocal movement.

Jacky has received numerous awards recognising her work as a provider of local news and information for the community. Prior to establishing In the Cove, Jacky worked as a solicitor in government, private practices, an ASX listed multinational and a national retailer. She is also a director of Got a Pen and a founding member of The Sydney Library of Things.

CLAIRE STUCHBERY – APPOINTED MAY 2022

Claire Stuchbery joined LINA from 1 July 2022 after a 20-year career in media policy, stakeholder engagement, policy development and communications.

Previously, Claire worked in policy and stakeholder engagement for First Nations Media Australia, the peak national body for First Nations not-for-profit broadcasting, media and communications.

Claire also worked in a range of senior management roles with the Community Broadcasting Foundation (CBF), ran her own media agency, worked in street press publications and was a broadcaster and board member at a number of community radio stations, including most notably, continuing volunteer roles at PBS FM in Melbourne.

The LINA Board held ten meetings in 2022-23, including one in-person planning day in Sydney.





EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

What an exciting year 2022-23 has been! I was thrilled to join LINA as its first staff member on 1st July 2022 because I am passionate about strengthening media diversity in Australia. My life's work has been focused on amplifying perspectives not adequately represented in mainstream media – and that's absolutely what LINA is about. Our members provide essential information services to their communities, and are directly accountable to those communities by virtue of proximity and engagement. Most LINA members wouldn't be working in other areas of media given the option, rather, they would likely be working in another form of public service – these are community-minded people responding to a need for news. It has been a pleasure to get to know so many local news publishers this year, to learn the nuances of the hyperlocal news space and the value it brings to underserved communities across the country.

LINA started the year with some clear aims: a) build a membership; and b) find out what they want us to do; and c) make sure there's a second year so we can do it. With 56 members on the books, a set of policy priorities guiding our leadership actions and support from the Commonwealth to continue the important work we have commenced, it's fair to say we've put LINA on the map. Now, we grow. And more importantly, our members grow.

As many of our members will attest, launching a start-up is no small thing. LINA has been fortunate to have the guidance of a dynamic Board and I am grateful for their leadership, governance and support. I also want to thank Claire Albrecht for bringing her huge skillset to the organisation and navigating us through the logistics of set-up. While LINA may never again be just 'The Claires', our little team of 1.6FTE staff has been enough to get us moving and I'm proud of what we have achieved.

Highlights for this year have included welcoming 56 members, hosting our inaugural Summit event in Sydney, launching our impact tracking pilot group, creating some meaningful partnerships which are already bringing benefit to our members and hearing warm feedback from so many members who are relieved to have an organisation in their corner. We heard from many digital new publishers about the challenges they face. In 2023-24 we strengthen our collaboration as a group and put into action some of the plans we've been making this year. I'm here for it and I can't wait to start rolling out new member services and programs as we move forward together.

Claire Stuchbery, Executive Director

ABOUT LINA

The Local & Independent News Association (LINA) is a national industry association supporting hyperlocal and independent digital news publishers. Its job is to help news publishers increase the diversity and relevance of news services in communities across Australia. It seeks to grow existing, and encourage new, hyperlocal media entrants by providing capacity building support, expert advice and access to critical third-party services, providing a deep level of hands-on support to its members.

LINA was established in 2021 in response to industry demand for representation and coordination to assist small digital publishers to build their sustainability and provide quality, public interest news services to their communities. With guidance from an industry-based advisory group, a foundational Board was formed and hallmarks of membership, including editorial standards, established.

Our role is to help news publishers provide local, diverse and trusted news sources to Australian communities and to grow workforce participation in sustainable local journalism in the process. To do this, we focus on capacity building support and generating economies of scale across a collective of independent businesses.

LINA is an incorporated, ACNC registered, not-for-profit association with an independent Board of Directors. Its work is supported by a broad range of industry partnerships, by establishment funding from the Judith Neilson Institute for Journalism and Ideas (to June 2023), and by operational support from the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia to increase economies of scale across the media industry.



ABOUT LINA MEMBERS

LINA members are locally owned and controlled news publishers, creating high-quality news content that meets the LINA Editorial Standards, by and for a defined community. While publishers might also have a print publication and/or other distribution platforms, LINA members are digital-native and our member services focus on strengthening online news distribution and responding to audience demand in digital spaces.

LINA membership is open to all digital news publishers who meet our membership requirements, however most of our services are tailored to growing small businesses with the majority of LINA members having an annual income less than \$350k and operating with less than 5 staff.

A full list of LINA members can be viewed on our website's Member Directory.

Hallmarks of LINA membership include:

- Publishing quality news content that meets the LINA Editorial Standards;
- While news businesses might also have a print publication and/or other platforms, LINA members are digital native;
- Independently owned (whether not-for-profit, sole traders, partnerships, cooperatives or companies, you are owned and operated within the community the organisation serves);
- Engaging journalists and contributors who are based within the organisation's location/community; and
- Community focussed, delivering public interest news and information on a broad range of topics to the community and responsive to the needs and priorities of the identified community.



As at 30 June 2023 LINA had welcomed to the group:

56 Publishers

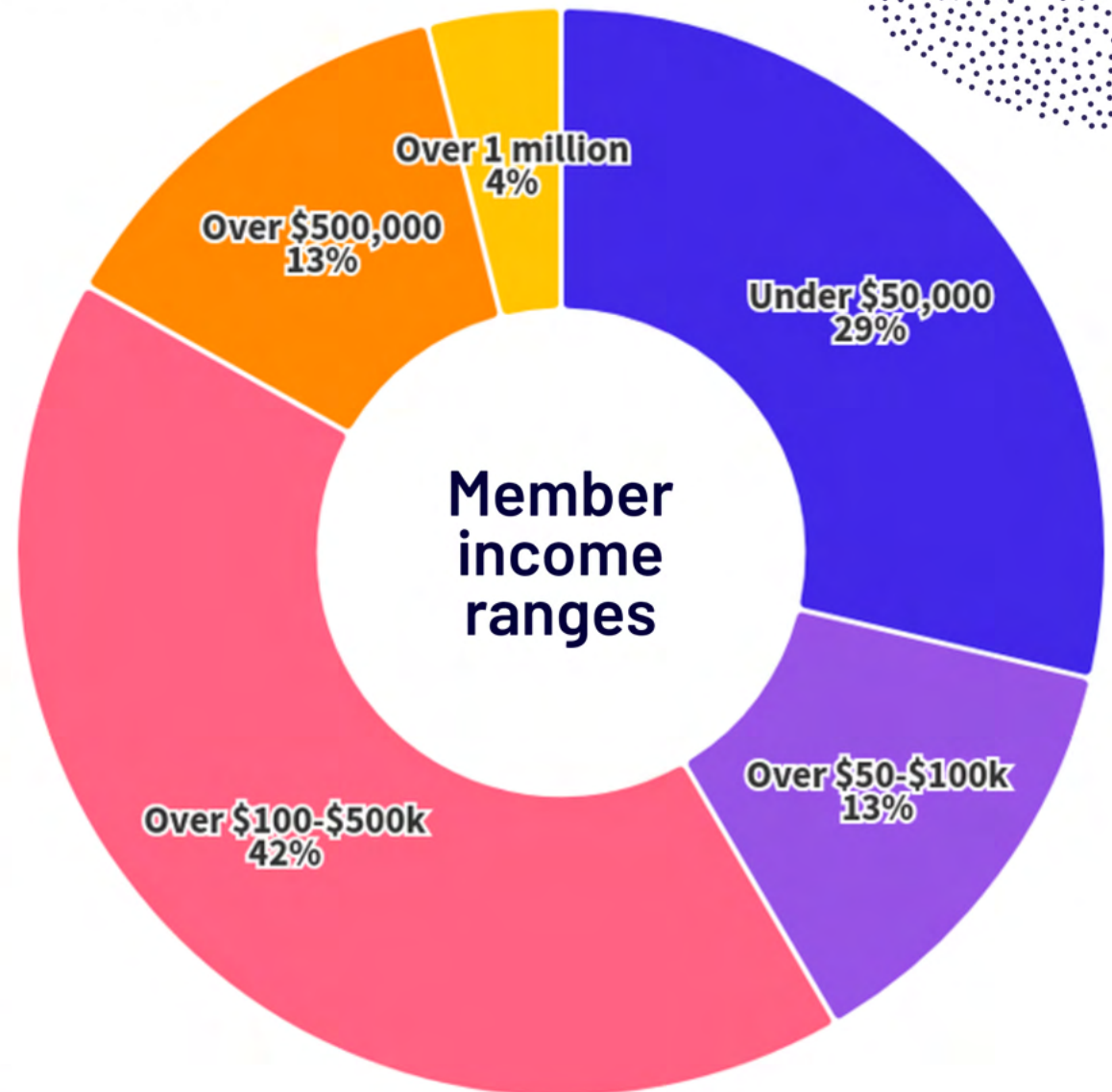
75 Mastheads

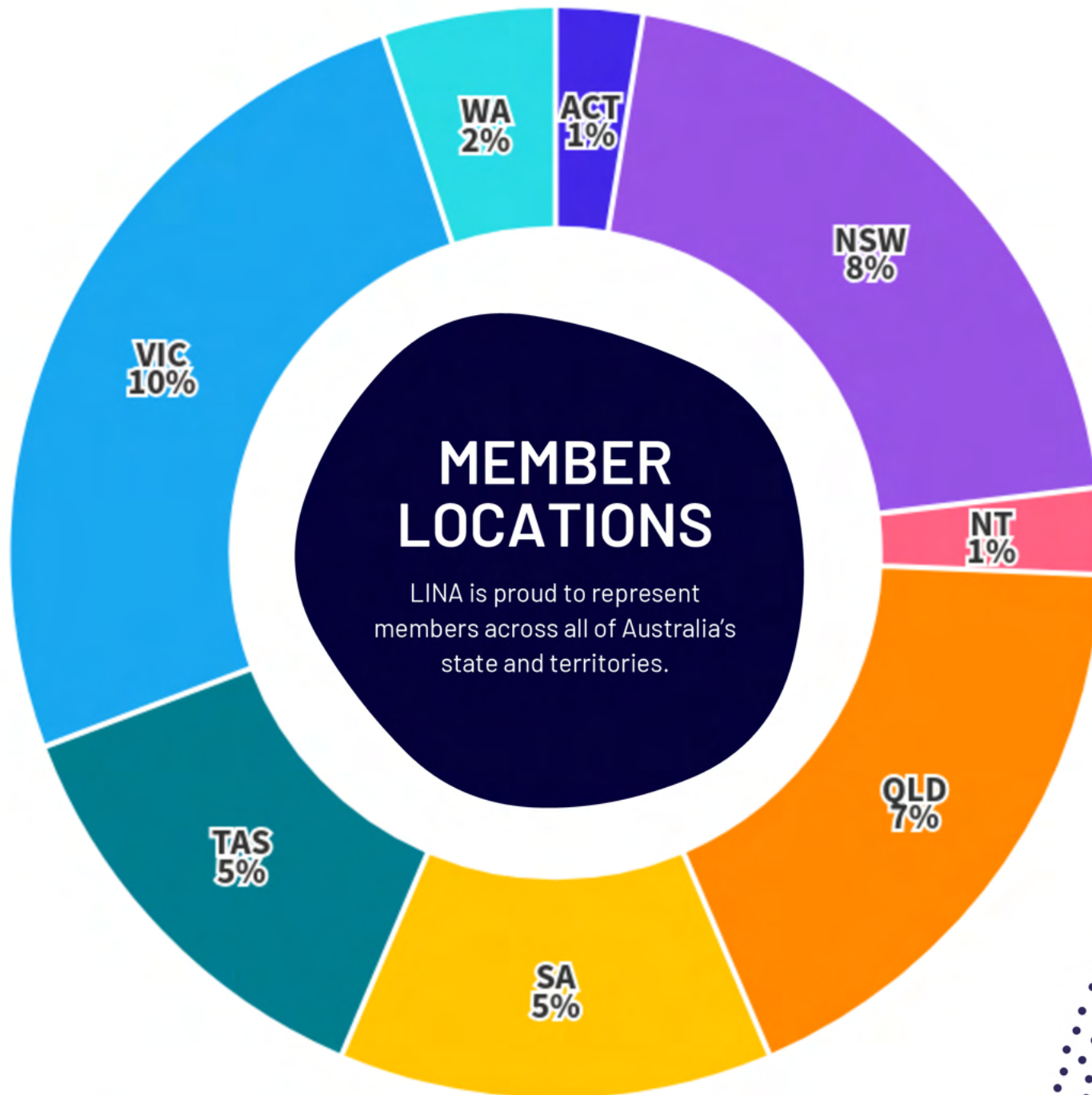
Average # of paid staff: 5

Average paid staff FTE: 3

Average income (2021-22): \$320k

Statistics as at 30 June 2023





'The availability of a wide range of high quality news and journalism provides significant benefits to Australian society and is important for the healthy functioning of democracy.'

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, 2019 Digital Platforms Inquiry Final Report, page 282

Meet some of our Members



MANLY OBSERVER

Manly Observer, founded in 2020 is a hyperlocal news organisation with a hyper-focus on the Manly electorate encompassing Balgowlah, Seaforth Freshwater, Brookvale and Curl Curl up to Dee Why.

At the helm, is Manly Observer's one-person founding editor and Manly local **Kim Smee**, supported by six employees and a pool of local journalists helping to deliver community news, public notices, feature stories, culture and sport to a growing local community readership. Their "number one aim is to keep the fourth estate alive and lower Northern Beaches residents informed and connected".

The Manly Observer team are also very active in social media, regularly engaging with their local community— July 2023 represented a milestone for their Instagram following, reaching 50,000 followers!



REGION MEDIA

Region Media Group cover seven news publications, led by Group Editor **Genevieve Jacobs**. They operate under the ethos that 'good communication is about listening to the people who live in the region, and that passionate debate and deep local knowledge create the best conversations.'

Canberra-based masthead, **Riotact**, began in 2000 as an open journalism project focused on the ACT, and was acquired by Region Media Group in 2016. Riotact is complemented by five more of their regionally-based news publications covering areas of South East NSW, South West Slopes, Riverina, Illawarra, and Far North Queensland.

687,000+ Unique monthly visitors

368,000+ Social following

69,000+ Published articles

1,477,000+ Published comments



YANCHEP NEWS

Yanchep News Online was founded by **Anita McInnes** in Western Australia with the objective of offering hyper-local public interest journalism to the community. Anita's vision was to create a platform that keeps the residents up to date about the happenings in Yanchep, Gingin, and the surrounding areas, fostering a well-informed and connected community.

Their website showcases general news, lifestyle, sports, real estate, and profiles of local businesses, reflecting the vibrancy of the communities it serves.

Yanchep News Online also maintains an active social media presence as well as a newsletter subscription for those wanting to stay updated on the go. It's not just a news portal, but a window into the life and happenings of Yanchep and its neighbouring areas.

LINA's Start-Up Journey



JULY 2022

- Employed Executive Director as first staff member
- Discussions with key stakeholders and future members to further shape LINA's role in the news landscape
- LINA Editorial Standards developed Hallmarks of membership determined

AUGUST

- LINA presents the Kennedy Award for Regional Journalism in Print and Online. LINA representatives, Alan Sunderland and Claire Stuchbery were joined by Diana Paton (Adelphi Printing), James Mullan & Chris Walsh (North Sydney Sun), James Murray (Manly Observer), Marilyn Vale (CEC Watch), Jackie Pearson (The Point), Simon Crerar (Ps Media) and Denise Shrivell (Mediascope)
- Invitation to join developed, along with sign-up processes and Code of Conduct
- Consultation on pricing and member services undertaken
- Introductory meetings with funders and government representatives
- Partnership with VettNews established
- LINA represented at Mumbrella Publish event

SEPTEMBER

- Second staff member joined the team, Program Manager (0.6)
- First member joined 5th September: In the Cove!
- First member networking session held online, 29th September, with 12 foundational members invited
- Slack Channel launched
- LINA attends South Australian Community Broadcasting Association Conference

Top: LINA group at Kennedy Awards.
Bottom: Screenshot of LINA networking session on Zoom.

LINA's Start-Up Journey

OCTOBER 2022

- LINA Board expands with Nelson Yap and Peri Strathearn joining
- Claire Albrecht works remotely from the US, attends LION News Sustainability Summit in Austin
- Partnership with KBI Group established for insurance brokerage
- Canva offers free Pro memberships to all LINA members
- Fortnightly 'Shop-Talk' sessions begin on topics including risk management, the success of Region Media and news product thinking

NOVEMBER

- Stakeholder relationships developed within Australia and internationally
- LINA is represented at Community Broadcasting Association of Australia conference in Cairns to talk about potential news partnerships
- Membership grows to 25 publishers
- LINA Board gathers in Sydney for strategy day

DECEMBER

- Media Law Conference offering discounted attendance to members
- Templates for social media, including Terms of Use wording launched
- Resources on subscription services and metadata published
- Template media kits and social media tiles designed in partnership with Canva now available to LINA members to customise and use, training session delivered online
- Ten Rules of Reporting book distributed to members
- Membership grows to 40 publishers

Top: LION Director Chris Krewson with Claire Albrecht. Bottom left: Claire Stuchbery presenting at CBAA Conference, Cairns. Bottom right: Alan Sunderland signing member copies of his book Ten Rules of Reporting.



LINA's Start-Up Journey

JANUARY 2023

- Partnership with Newsletter Glue to streamline newsletter processes
- Shop-talk sessions continue fortnightly including discussions on editorial planning and tech tools
- More resources added to new 'Members Area' on website, including tips on digital design and an overview of business structures for emerging newsrooms
- Planning underway for collective advertising representation
- Pre-Budget submission made to Commonwealth Treasury

FEBRUARY

- Claire Stuchbery and Alan Sunderland go to Canberra and hold 18 meetings over two days with MPs, advisors and Department of Communications representatives highlighting policy priorities that would support news diversity
- Inaugural Summit registration opens, program confirmed
- Op-ed on five policy interventions that could benefit local news published

MARCH

- Inaugural Summit held at Canva in Surry Hills, Sydney with 86 delegates in attendance, representing 54 organisations
- ABC/LINA Strategic Partnership launched
- Shop-talk topics included mandatory news bargaining code explainer
- Further discussions with elected representatives



From left: The Hon Andrew Leigh MP, Claire Stuchbery, Alan Sunderland at Parliament House, Canberra

LINA's Start-Up Journey



Members get together at the end of the LINA Summit for a Multimedia Journalism Intensive at CMT0 Sydney.

APRIL 2023

- Multimedia Journalism Intensive held in partnership with CMT0
- Commonwealth funding support for LINA in 2023-24 announced
- Project planning for new financial year begins, informed by discussions at Summit and Shop-Talk sessions
- Summaries of Summit sessions, presentations and next steps added to Members Area
- Membership growth exceeds 50 publishers with 52 members joined

MAY

- Partnership with Impact Architects commences, including pilot group of five members working on impact tracking
- LINA members are accessing pro bono legal support through ABC partnership and starting work on content collaborations in bespoke regions
- Ten publishers participate in an 8-week intensive with the Google News Initiative focused on News Consumer Insight tools
- Collaborations with Digital Publishers Alliance and Independent Multicultural Media Alliance forming

JUNE

- Shop-talk sessions continue: presentations on media law essentials, mental health reporting, from platforms to AI and copyright licencing
- LINA features in Digital News Report 2023 with finding presented to members via online meeting
- Recruitment of new staff underway in preparation to launch new programs and services from July

‘Public interest journalism builds communities and fosters democracy by facilitating public discussion, ensuring diversity of voice, providing open justice, holding public power to account and providing accurate and reliable information.’

Centre for Media Transition, Media Diversity in Australia submission, December 2020

From left: Jon Bisset, The Hon Michelle Rowland, Claire Stuchbery



LEADERSHIP

LINA represents its hyperlocal and independent publisher members in policy-forums to ensure policy development is fit-for-purpose to foster a healthy and diverse news media sector. Our work focuses on four policy amendments that would support newsroom sustainability:

1. Recognition of public interest journalism as a public good in the Charities Act, with an associated deductible gift recipient category for not-for-profit newsrooms
2. Redirection of existing expenditure on government campaign advertising and non-campaign public notices through a legislated ratio of spend on local/community-based news producers
3. Updated Local Government Acts to include digital news publishers as information sources
4. Eligibility for all support programs relevant to news media

In 2022-23 LINA made submissions on:

- Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) Registers Reform
- Australia's Disaster Resilience
- ACMA's consultation paper on A New Framework for Measuring Media Diversity in Australia
- Productivity Commission's Philanthropy Inquiry

We have participated in a number of roundtables and informal discussions with stakeholders such as the Public Interest Journalism Initiative and Public Interest Publishers Alliance.

Policy submissions can be viewed on our website [here](#).

Impact Framework

Our Impact: Digital news publishers are delivering high quality, accessible news services relevant to communities across Australia through an independent and sustainable publishing sector.

Key Issues

Audiences have shifted to digital news consumption over decades.

Business models sustained by advertising and user-fees have weakened globally.

- Digital newsrooms offer more flexible distribution channels and associated diversified revenue streams.
- Diverse voices & regional audiences remain underserved
- Australian newsrooms have contracted significantly expanding news deserts
- Locally owned and controlled newsrooms are emerging with nearly 1 on 5 digital services launching since 2018 as the 'green shoots' of Australian journalism.
- Mainstream media continues to consolidate, syndicate and/or remove regional services while under-representing Australia's diverse communities.

Local news & journalism

- 67% of Australians want more local news, higher than the global average (60%)

Government is focused on establishing complementary and joined up news media policy interventions.

Stakeholders

- Digital news publishers
- Other news producers
- Complementary industry bodies
- Audiences: the Australian public
- Funding bodies
- Government
- Training bodies
- Partner organisations

LINA's Strategic Response

Strengthen digital news publishers' financial sustainability

- Expanding business models and streamlining operations
- Generating economies of scale for small businesses
- Establish collective revenue generation actions

Grow capacity for quality news production and audience development

- Increase capability for public interest news reporting
- Build audience engagement with local and diverse news sources

Grow awareness

- Champion the work being done by hyperlocal and independent publishers

Our Activities

1. Introducing members to new revenue streams e.g. matched funding campaign, Mandatory Bargaining Code support and collective advertising sales representation
2. Saving members money and leveraging economies of scale through group discount and third-party service suppliers
3. Facilitating networking and peer to peer engagement
4. Audience and content development actions eg SEO support, audience engagement tools Representation and building recognition
5. Establishing best practise news business models.
6. Education and upskilling



Success Looks Like

- An increasing number of financially sustainable publishers with diverse income streams.
- LINA members are trusted sources of news for their communities.
- More news consumers have access to diverse media sources relevant to their community.
- Audience engagement is growing for LINA members. There is growth in workforce participation in the hyperlocal and independent news sector.
- Stronger pathways into sustainable journalism careers. Hyperlocal and independent publishers are benefitting from sharing resources and collaborating.

Data Indicators

Sector Indicators

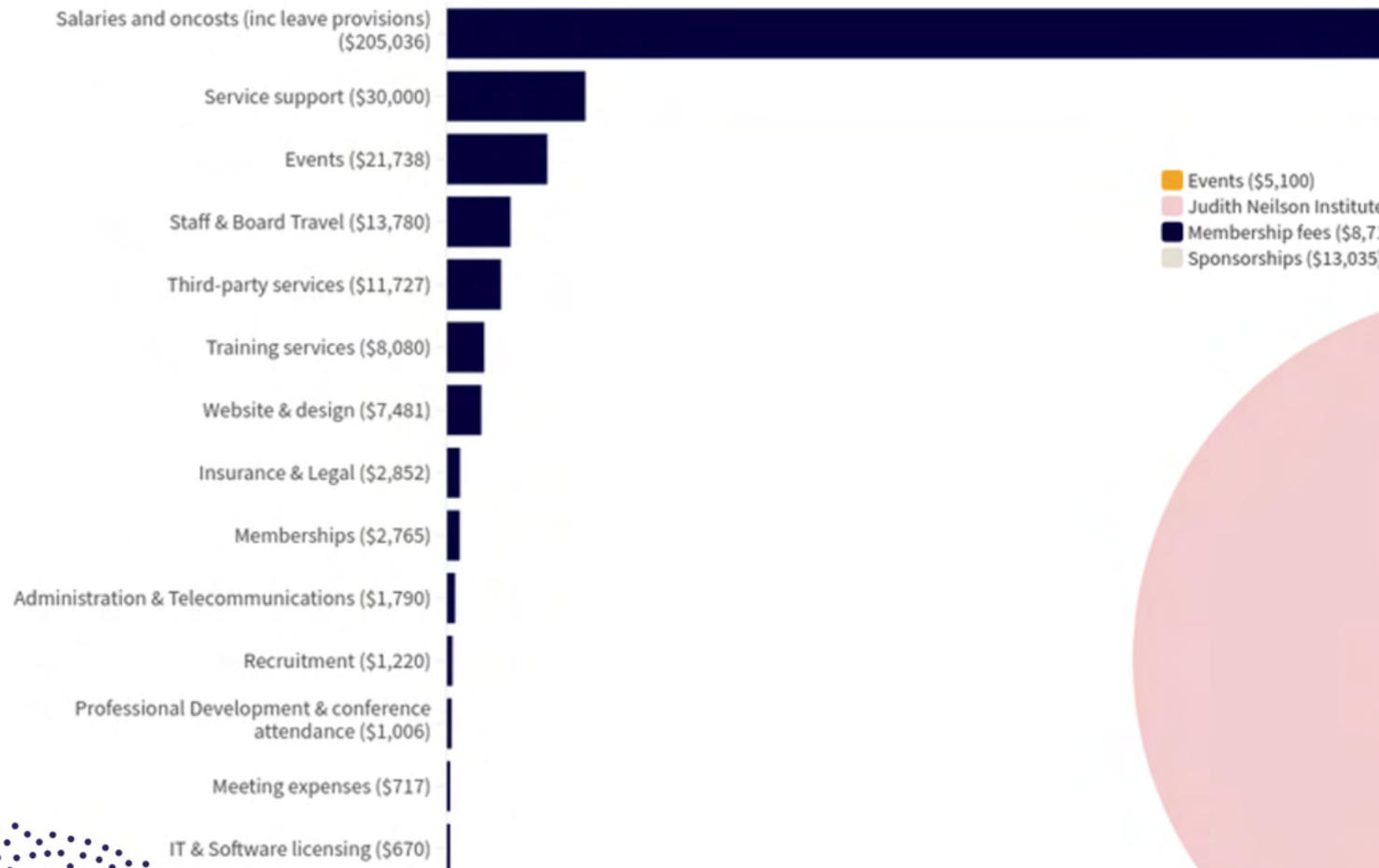
- Publisher revenue (average/median)
- Aggregated publisher monthly reach
- Workforce participation
- % audiences agree 'I trust / value X news'

LINA Indicators

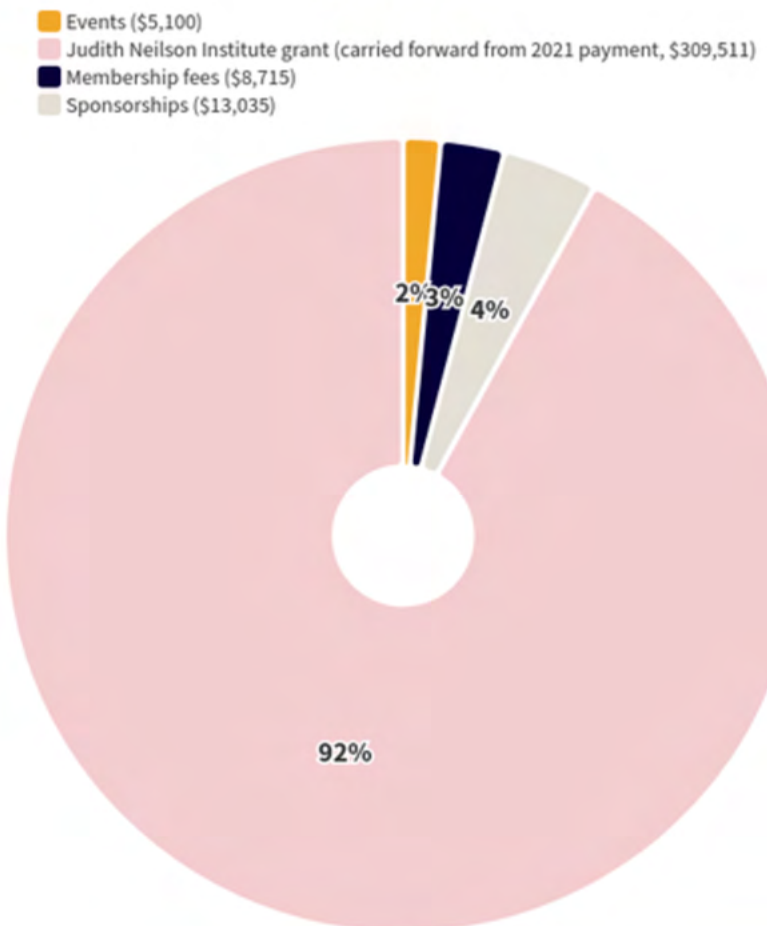
- Membership numbers / retention
- Member satisfaction
- Member participation in LINA activities / services
- Percent of activity goals achieved

LINA Finance 22/23

EXPENDITURE



INCOME





Contact

lina.org.au

communications@lina.org.au

[Facebook](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

LINA gratefully acknowledges the support of the Judith Neilson Institute
and the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia



COMMUNITY
BROADCASTING
ASSOCIATION OF
AUSTRALIA

As well as the sponsors for our Summit event

