

# ANNUAL REPORT

2023-24

# LINA

Local & Independent News Association





# Acknowledgement of Country

The Local and Independent News Association (LINA) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia. We acknowledge First Nations' sovereignty and recognise the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities by Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia.

We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and to Elders past and present. We support and contribute to the process of reconciliation.

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been telling stories for millennia and we continue this rich tradition of sharing, protecting and enhancing culture. We honour the dedication and expertise of First Nations newsrooms and their work to strengthen and connect communities.



In March 2024, Aboriginal people voted to elect representatives to South Australia's state-based First Nations Voice to Parliament, a historic moment for South Australia and the nation. *InDaily's* political reporter Thomas Kelsall was supported by a LINA micro-grant to travel to remote and regional SA to observe the elections, speak to Aboriginal people about their hopes and experiences, and produce a detailed first-person examination of the election and its potential impacts. Photos: Thomas Kelsall

# Our key pillars

*"When I'm starting to think I should just give up then LINA kinda picks me up and throws me back into the ring for another round. I would have quit long ago if not for LINA's support."*

Raphaella Crosby, *The New England Times*



## 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 2023-24 included:

- The distribution of microgrants and Environmental Reporting Grants to fund the production of public interest journalism stories.
- Delivering training sessions on topics including emergency reporting, solutions journalism, an editorial guide to the Voice referendum, reporting on mental health, and more.
- The development of numerous guides and resources supporting editorial policies.
- Providing on-demand support with the applications of newsrooms seeking award recognition or external grants and funding opportunities.



## 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 up-skilling on key topics.

Actions in this area in 2023-24 included:

- Providing on-demand technical and IT support.
- Partnering with Bastion Agency to pilot a 12 week Revenue Growth Program for eight newsrooms.
- The development of a tailored 'Impact Tracker' to support newsrooms to communicate their value to funders and advertisers.
- Coordinating the week-long awareness and fundraising campaign *Our News. Your Voice*.
- Training and other resources across a number of topics including best practice SEO, digital fundraising guidance, HR processes and support.



## 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 in this area in 2023-24 included:

- The development of a centralised sub-editing service for newsrooms' use on-demand.
- Partnering with the Australian Press Council to ensure all LINA member publications can access this independent complaints handling body.
- Coordination of the annual LINA Summit, held in Port Douglas in May 2024, and grants to support member publishers' travel expenses.
- Hosting regular online 'shop-talk' sessions for ideas sharing and ad-hoc social and networking events.
- Facilitation of an engaged Slack channel for day-to-day interactions, monthly to bi-monthly newsletters and tip sheets.

A portrait of Jon Bisset, a man with a grey beard and glasses, wearing a blue blazer over a light-colored patterned shirt. He is smiling and standing against a plain, light-colored wall.

# Chairperson's report

It has been gratifying to see LINA go from strength to strength this year as we have welcomed new members, expanded our member support services and developed some fantastic new partnerships across the media industry, including the ongoing relationship between LINA and the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia.

The challenges facing local news providers across all mediums show no signs of abating: constrained capacity to adapt business models; reticence to pay for news from audiences; mis and disinformation circulating in our communities; and now generative AI raises both opportunities and threats for news production. It is not a space for the faint-hearted. And yet, every day community-oriented people are undertaking the work of keeping the residents in the regions they care about informed, safe, entertained and connected. Community media as a means of bringing our society together and helping us make sense of the things we see around us, is more important than ever.

I continue to be inspired by the publishers who contribute time to the LINA Board and have been honoured to bring together this group of industry experts to guide LINA through its second year of operations. I want to thank the LINA Board members for their consistent and thoughtful commitment to leading the organisation through its establishment phase.

I also want to acknowledge the Commonwealth of Australia, particularly Minister for Communications, Michelle Rowland for understanding the need to support local and independent news publishers and providing funding to LINA this year. With your support, LINA has evolved from a handful of small businesses operating in isolation to a movement of public interest news publishers working together for the benefit of the communities they serve. I am proud to stand alongside them to share stories that would otherwise remain untold. A special thanks goes to Claire Stutchbery, our Executive Director, and her dedicated team. Their tireless efforts and commitment have been instrumental in LINA's growth and success this year.

**Jon Bisset**

**Chair**



# LINA Board

## **JON BISSET, CHAIR – APPOINTED FEB 2022**

Jon is the Chief Executive Officer of the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA). 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 CBAA 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 LINA Summit 2024. From left: Nelson Yap, Jacky Barker, Emma Bones, Claire Stuchbery, Jon Bisset and Peri Strathearn (Alan Sunderland not pictured)

## **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 five years as a Political Editor in the Canberra Press Gallery. He has won two Walkley Awards.

Alan 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.

Below: Claire Stuchbery, Kate Thwaites MP & Alan Sunderland

**The LINA Board held six meetings in 2023-24**







**Claire Stuchbery**

**LINA Executive Director**

# Executive Director's report

Having established there was a need for an industry association supporting small, independent news publishers in Australia, LINA welcomed its first member in October 2022. Our objective for last year was to build a membership, find out what they needed, and secure resources to do it. If that was the spark that ignited LINA, then it's fair to say this year has been lit.

LINA's membership has grown to 111 publications, produced by 70 publishers, as at June 2024. With each new member the grassroots journalism movement grows and we're so proud to see these greenshoots getting in and getting it done in their communities where there are stories to be uncovered, information to be shared, and connections to be made. It's an inspiring crew of people to be supporting and I am grateful for the faith LINA member publishers place in the association and the spirit of reciprocity they bring to supporting each other.

Our own team has grown from 1.6 full-time equivalent (FTE) to a group of seven people working 5.2 FTE, making their own skills and experience available to newsrooms, amplifying the work our members do in their communities and demonstrating leadership for a part of the news media industry that was previously unrepresented. I am grateful to the staff team and the Board for their passion they bring to this work throughout the year. And a 96 percent membership satisfaction rate in our most recent member survey suggests I'm not the only one benefiting from our enthusiastic team!

I am privileged to work with people so committed to strengthening communities, both within LINA's team and across our member publisher group. I loved bringing them together at our annual summit in Port Douglas this year. I have been humbled by the support provided by so many of the industry partners who have collaborated with us in strengthening public interest journalism this year and growing the sustainability of newsrooms across the country. The results outlined in this report are a testament to our collective effort and I am grateful for your ongoing commitment to media diversity in Australia.

# LINA staff team

**Claire Stuchbery, Executive Director**

Commenced July 2022

**Clare Hastings, Executive Support Officer**

Commenced February 2024

**Nell O'Shea Carré, Policy & Strategic Communications Officer**

Commenced January 2024

**Adrian O'Hagan, Technical Manager**

Commenced June 2024

**Emma Marshall, Membership Engagement Coordinator**

Commenced August 2023

**Zahra Khalid, Data & Insights Analyst**

Commenced October 2023

**Evie Dinkelmeyer, Communications Officer**

Commenced April 2024



LINA staff team with contractors Helyna Farrow and Rochelle Cannington at the 2024 LINA Summit.

From left: Clare Hastings, Helyna Farrow, Emma Marshall, Adrian O'Hagan, Claire Stuchbery, Nell O'Shea Carré, Zahra Khalid, Evie Dinkelmeyer, Rochelle Cannington.

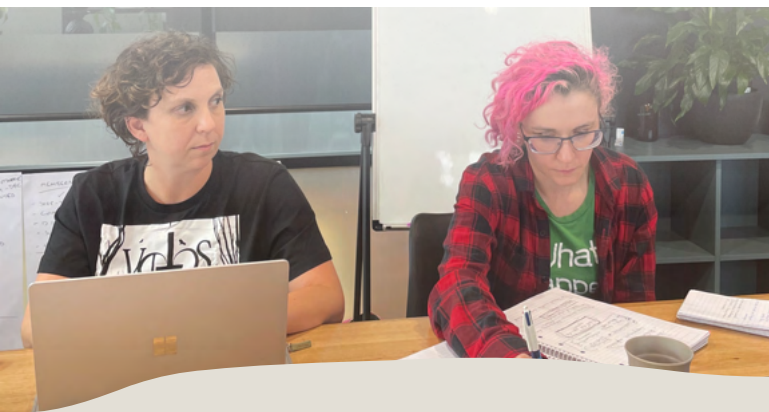
**Helyna Farrow, Project Officer, sub-editing service**

Three months contract

**Rochelle Cannington, Project Officer, collective fundraising campaign**

Three months contract

LINA also thanks Claire Albrecht, Julia Mendelawitz, Lily Martin and Kristen Morris for their contribution to the staff team in 2023-24.





# About LINA

The Local & Independent News Association (LINA) is a national industry association supporting local 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, local 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.

LINA's 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 began accepting membership applications in September 2022. Within the first few months of inviting membership applications, LINA has grown to represent almost half of the estimated 100 digital-native hyperlocal publishers identified as potentially eligible for membership and continues to welcome new members each week.

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.



Left: Genevieve Swart (*The Illawarra Flame*) & Clare Hastings (LINA)  
Right: Jamie Jansen, Sam Cullen and Aggy Renaudin (*Newsport*)

# 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 fewer than five staff.

A full list of LINA members can be viewed on our website's [Member Directory](#).

***“When it comes to local, community-based journalism, a quiet revolution is under way.”***

Alan Sunderland, *The Ten Rules of Reporting*

Pictured top: *Coonamble Times*

Below: Bob Burton, *Tasmanian Inquirer* wins MEAA Excellence in Journalism award





# Hallmarks of LINA membership

- Publishing quality news content that meets the LINA Editorial Standards and Australian Press Council Standards of Practice;
- 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, these publications are owned and operated within the community in which the organisation serves);
- Engaging journalists and contributors who are based within the organisation's location/community; and
- Community focused, 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.

***"Our cultural consumption, and in particular our media consumption, teach us about our society and how to act in it."***

Hartley John, *Communication, Cultural and Media Studies: The Key Concepts*, London, Routledge, 2002,

***"Information is as vital to the healthy functioning of communities as clean air, safe streets, good schools and public health."***

Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy, 2009

Below left to right: David Washington (*Solstice Media*), Kim Smee (*Manly Observer*), Michael Warren (*Newsport*), Nelson Yap (*Australian Property Journal*), Tina Brown (*The Post*) & Peri Strathearn (*Murray Bridge News*) discuss paywalls at the LINA Summit



# Membership overview

As at 30 June 2024

70 PUBLISHERS  
111 MASTHEADS



Top: Jacky Barker (In the Cove) & Denise Shrivell (TrueNorth)

Below: Wyanita Tranter (NIRS) & Rebecca Guest (The Fold Media)



## In 2023-24...

**53%**  
created a new  
revenue  
stream

**45%**  
launched a  
new service

**70%**  
increased  
their  
subscribers

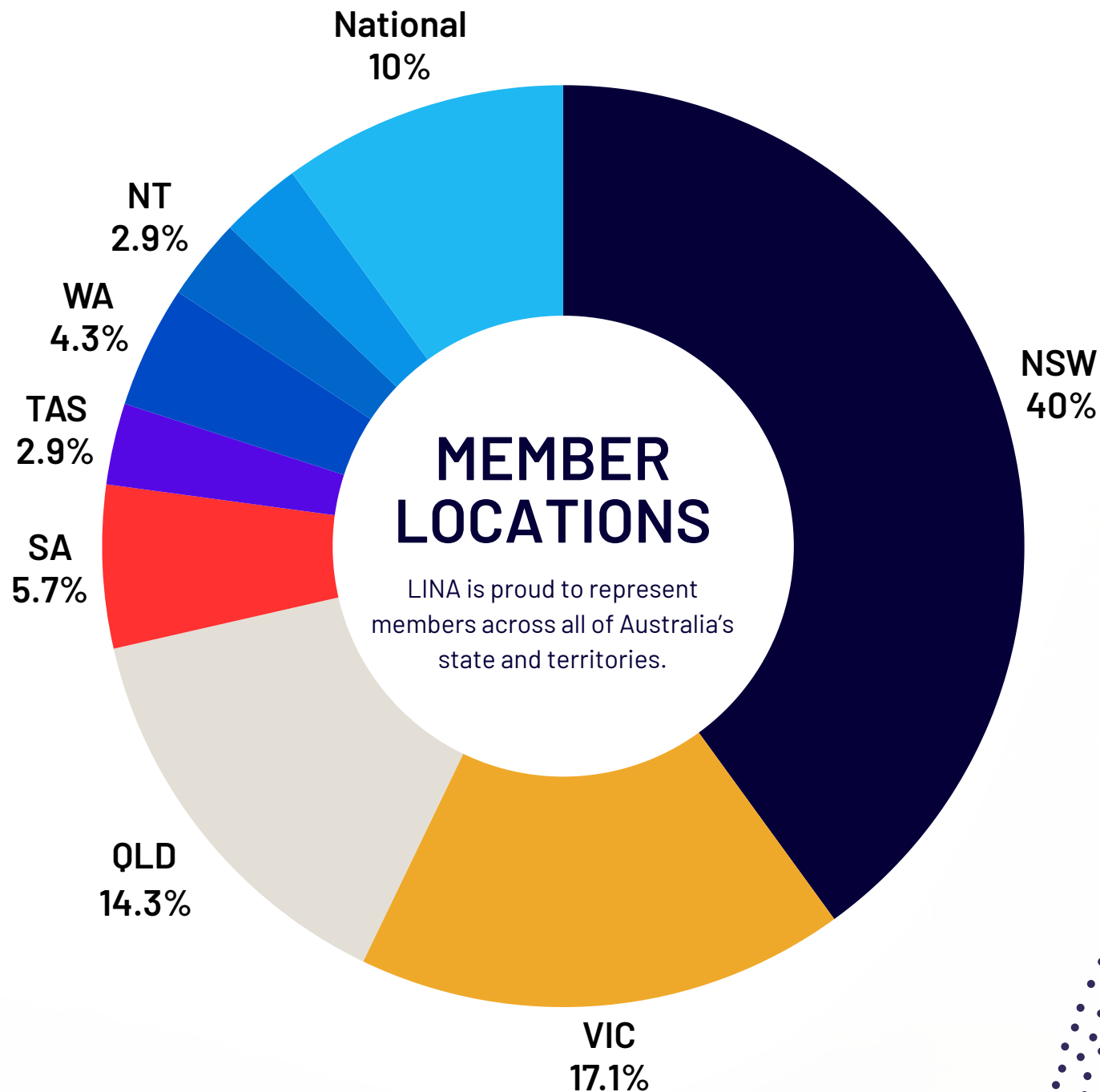
**30%**  
hired new  
staff members

**2,000**  
news stories were  
produced  
collectively each  
week

**10.2%**  
income  
growth  
averaged

*Findings from respondents to LINA's 2024 Annual Member Survey*





***'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

# 2023-24 Highlights

***"Public interest journalism is essential to a democracy. Active citizenship requires access to reliable information, and democracy cannot flourish without a diversity of media sources and a regulatory regime that protects consumers against the spread of misinformation."***

Senate Environment and Communication References Committee, Media Diversity in Australia report, December 2021



Lesa Bell (Gympie Living) and Vivienne Wynter (The Pineapple)

## Making our mark in communities: Impact tracking

LINA partnered with US-based company, Impact Architects, who specialise in helping local newsrooms demonstrate the difference they make in communities across the world. Five LINA members participated in a pilot group to understand and track their impact in local communities – *In the Cove*, *Hyperlocal News*, *The Westsider*, *IndyNR* and *The Fold Media*. Based on learnings from the pilot group, a template impact framework was developed.

LINA's Data & Insights Analyst Zahra Khalid has been working with publishers to customise the framework for each newsroom and set up impact dashboards to help members monitor their engagement in one place and display their impact over time. In 2023-24, this one-to-one support was provided to 12 publishers who now have impact tracking dashboards to help them understand and compare the impact of different content and activities and demonstrate their value within the local community. In addition, Rosemary D'Amour (Impact Architects) and Zahra delivered a one-day intensive to establish impact dashboards in conjunction with the LINA Summit, attended by another five publishers.

An impact framework has been established for LINA itself and the dashboard has contributed to this report.

***"Thank you so much for all your hard work with this impact tracking process... we're fast appreciating its value."***

Hyperlocal News

## Building sustainability: Revenue Growth Program

LINA partnered with Bastion Agency to develop a 12-week revenue growth program for members. Participants were supported to experiment with income streams, with best-practice implementation support and one-to-one mentoring from industry experts Tracy Sheen, Jacqui Park and Eli Flourney. Participants shared their project concepts with other LINA member publishers at the Summit.

Examples of projects newsrooms are being supported to implement include:

- In the Cove – developing a WhatsApp page to grow audience engagement
- NIRS – development and promotion of a donations page
- The Fold Media – creating a news quiz as a value-add for subscribers
- Hills to Hawkesbury Community News – creating a dining guide with filters for the local area as a paid offering to cafes and restaurants
- Fleurieu App – reframing media kit to include sponsored content offering and social media options

**+\$6k**  
digital ad revenue  
NEWSROOM A

**+20%**  
revenue  
NEWSROOM B

**+7,800**  
app downloads  
NEWSROOM C

**+217%**  
donations  
NEWSROOM D



## Reporting untold stories | Microgrants

Applications for micro-grants through LINA opened in January 2024, supporting publishers to cover investigative, multi-platform and/or solutions-oriented reporting projects that lie beyond the scope of their day-to-day journalism activities. The application process allows a maximum two week turnaround on requests for support and a maximum 12-week window to complete the project. **In 2023-24, 29 projects were supported across 15 publishers, distributing a total of \$48,350 to LINA member publishers.**

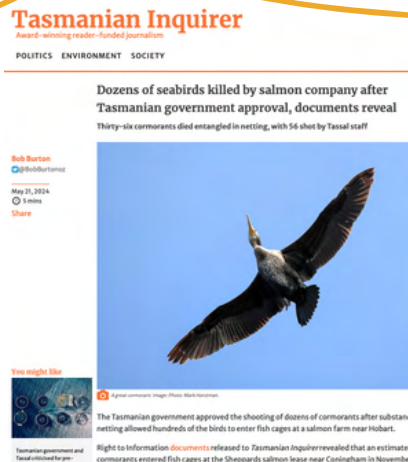
### Tasmanian Inquirer

Award-winning reader-funded journalism

#### 'Dozens of seabirds killed by salmon company after Tasmanian Government approval, documents reveal'

##### Case study

A micro-grant of \$1,000 supported a freelance journalist to research this story, photography to support the publication, and sub-editing. The piece was published on 21st May, 2024 and was mentioned on ABC Radio in the morning news that day and repeated the headline in news bulletins throughout the day, acknowledging *Tasmanian Inquirer* as the source. A Greens MP, Vica Bayley raised a question about the issue in Tasmanian State Parliament. The *Guardian* republished the story later that day with minor tweaks, resulting in several NGOs picking up the story in their own media releases. The story generated a handful of new subscribers for *Tasmanian Inquirer* and significant interest in a topic that would not otherwise have been covered in regional Tasmania.



### INDAILY

ADELAIDE Independent news

#### 'SA Aboriginal Leaders Grapple with a Second Chance for First Nations Voice'

##### Case study

A micro-grant of \$633 supported *InDaily* to undertake a long-form investigation over two articles on South Australia's state-based First Nations Voice to Parliament. Grant funds supported Political Reporter Thomas Kelsall to travel to remote communities in Port Lincoln, Ceduna and Yalata to observe elections and speak to Aboriginal people about their hopes and experiences, and potential impacts from the election process. The stories were published on the *InDaily* website, the *New Daily* site and promoted through Facebook, Instagram, X and LinkedIn accounts. The grant allowed this story to be covered in a more representative manner, centering Aboriginal voices that would otherwise not have been represented in the article.



### ManninghamLife

Our stories, our community

#### "Council Election 2024 - voting records"

##### Case study

In preparation for their local election, *Manningham Life* analysed four years' worth of petitions and issues raised at council meetings, and collated councillors' voting records into a reader-friendly table. A \$2,000 micro-grant covered the print costs for this to be included in the publication's print distribution.

This was the first time such information was analysed and collated to inform voters in the local community.



Manningham Life  
Founder and Editor  
Stella Yee at the  
2024 LINA Summit

**"The stories we ran [funded by a micro-grant] ended up being breaking news and picked up by a number of other state-wide and national publications."**

The Post, Western Australian publication

## High quality news | Sub-editing services

LINA recruited 10 sub-editors, five experienced and five learning the niche craft, and developed a mentoring program in partnership with the Community Media Training Organisation (CMTO) to assist the transfer of knowledge and expand the sub-editing skills available to the industry. The training and mentoring program started in March and continued through to the end of June 2024, with sub-editors improving the quality of news services offered along the way. These sub-editors have now been contracted to provide services within a 48-hour turnaround to newsrooms as required. A centralised sub-editing service was launched in May and is now available across the industry and at a subsidised rate for LINA member publishers.



## People first | HR for newsrooms

LINA partnered with Nurture HR Consulting to offer free on-demand HR support to members. This service is available to respond to questions on topics including understanding staff and volunteer obligations, appropriate levels of pay, and working through general personnel challenges.

Following consultation and feedback at the 2024 LINA Summit, this service was expanded to include subsidies for more extended audits to provide newsrooms with help on topics such as succession planning or organisational structure review.

Pictured top: Sub-editor online training session.  
Left: Claire Stuchbery and CMTO's Mikaela Ford at Converge 2023.

## Building capacity | Learning and skill building programs

In 2023-24 LINA coordinated 15 industry 'shop-talk' sessions including discussion topics and presentations on:

- Apps and alternate distribution methods
- Best practice SEO
- Best practice digital fundraising actions
- Chatbots and journalism
- Content sharing and collaboration
- DPA x LINA CMS showcase
- End of financial year processes
- Emergency reporting: Preparation for summer
- HR processes and supports
- Super in the media industry
- Reporting on mental health
- Solutions journalism
- 'Stop Doing List': Things publishers have found ineffective
- The Voice referendum: A guide for editorial policies and fair reporting

Other learning opportunities provided to LINA members include:

- A self-paced 'Introduction to Media Law for Publishers' course
- Guides to audio editing and 'cleaning up' audio recordings from the field
- An introduction and skills refresher course for interviewing as a journalist.
- Opportunities to participate in Google training labs, tailored to LINA member cohorts. To date, 44 publishers have participated in Google programs through LINA.



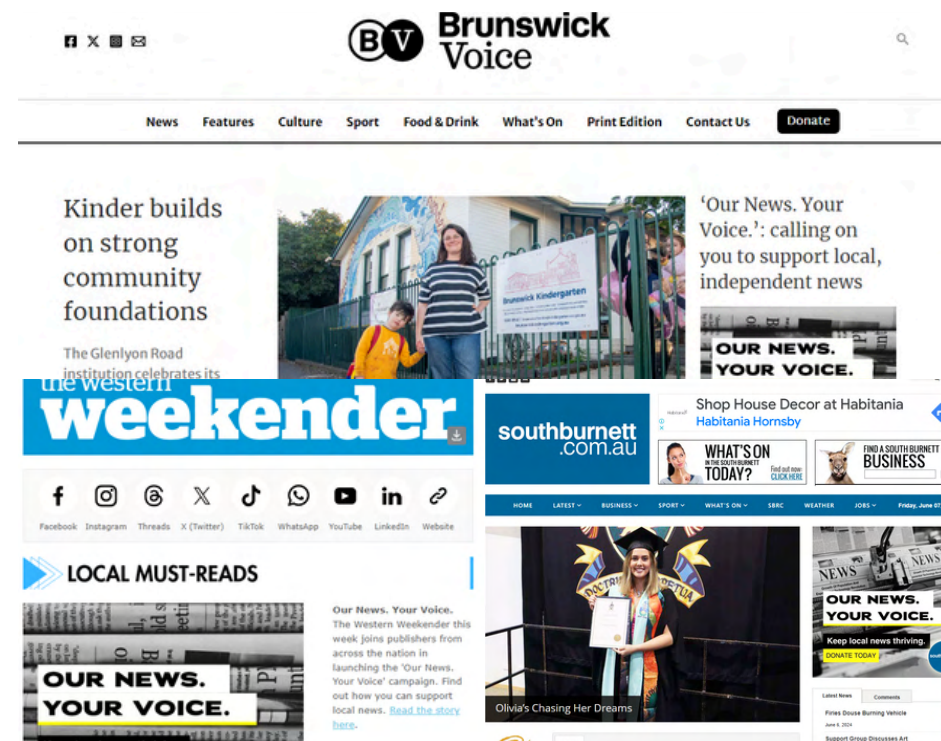
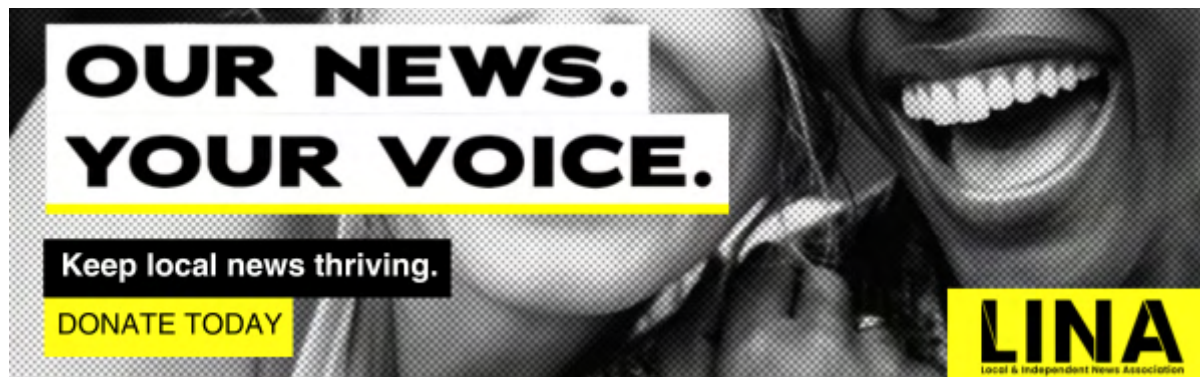
## Raising awareness | Our News. Your Voice campaign

Piloted in 2024, *Our News. Your Voice* was a week-long, Australia-wide pledge drive by 32 local and independent newsrooms, all LINA member publishers. Each publication received donations directly from their communities via their unique donation pages.

\$92,000 was raised from 941 individual donations, which was then matched, doubling individual contributions. Newsrooms were upskilled in running a digital campaign and supported to implement payment platform software on websites. Many readers committed to recurring payments, meaning newsrooms have continued to benefit throughout the year.

To coordinate this campaign LINA partnered with:

- Think HQ to develop a messaging toolkit for publishers to customise;
- PressPatron to manage the collection of funds, integrated with Stripe so that contributions go directly to publishers, but are visible to LINA for reporting and matched funding purposes. Thirty of the 32 participating newsrooms did not have this functionality previously and can now access it without incurring commission fees; and,
- The Balanced Effect to help connect LINA with potential funders and generate warm introductions. Newsrooms were supported with one-to-one coaching on how to run a digital campaign, webinar training and draft wording to develop online fundraising skills and make the campaign process less time-consuming for newsrooms.



Pictured: Homepages of participating newsrooms during the week-long campaign.

***"We'll use this money to commission around 25 new articles from emerging and established journalists which is fabulous and will be the first time we've been able to pay writers... So a really big deal for this little platform."***

*The Pineapple, Regional Queensland charitable news publication*

**+\$92k**

raised for newsrooms

**941**

individual donations

## Saving time and money | Member services

### In 2023-24 LINA offered members:

#### Subscription and service discount from the following partners:

- Newsletter Glue – newsletter building tool
- KBI Group – specialist insurance brokers
- Free Canva pro subscriptions for all LINA members
- Discounted registration for Legal Wise seminars
- Entry level access to AAP services for small newsrooms
- VettNews CX – dashboard to manage corrections

#### Guides on the following topics:

- Best practice ad sizing and using IAB standard ad sizes
- An explanatory list of potential revenue sources for publishers
- Running a smooth web platform
- Handbooks on ChatGPT
- How to move a website to a new content management system
- Shared learnings from PS Media's local leadership, funders and public discussion forums
- Shared learnings from the State of Digital Publishings' Wordpress Publishers Performance Summit (online)
- Maximising engagement
- Choosing a business structure
- Understanding and using meta data tags
- Hiring a digital designer or developer
- Ensuring digital accessibility
- Setting up a subscription service
- Revenue streams

#### Other member services

- Risk management, complaints policy, social media terms of use and privacy policy templates.
- Media kit design and audience survey templates.
- Social media tile design templates.
- Checklist of essentials for start-up, growing and mature news businesses.
- On demand, hands-on, one-to-one IT technical support.
- On demand HR support services.
- A resource of free tools to assist with productivity, content production, social media tracking, images, video and sound.
- Facilitation of an active Slack channel with daily posts, discussion between members and questions for LINA staff.
- Internship placements with publishers for students from the University of Melbourne, Charles Sturt University and Edith Cowan University.
- A searchable quick-reference research repository collating useful quotes, statistics and statements from a broad range of academic and industry research on topics such as purpose, impact, sustainability, policy context in Australia and globally, audience trends, journalism trends, consumer trust and access.
- Support for awards nominations and other recognition of local journalism excellence. This includes hands-on support to nominate member publishers for recognition and the sharing of opportunities with members.
- Alerts on relevant grant opportunities for small businesses.



*LINA has provided so many opportunities to learn, not just about the publishing business but also for personal growth."*

Stella Yee, Founder and Editor of Manningham Life

Pictured left: Nelson Yap  
Right: Impact Tracking workshop in progress





## Making connections | Annual Summit

The second annual LINA Summit was held at the Port Douglas Community Hall on Tuesday 30 April to Thursday 2 May, 2024, in partnership with local publication *Newsport*. The program included two workshop 'intensives' designed for small groups, two social evening events, and two days of panel discussions, presentations and workshops.

LINA member publishers received discounted ticketing and travel subsidies to help them participate in this annual gathering of publishers. Seventy-six people attended the event, representing 53 organisations, including 32 member publishers. The program covered topics related to revenue and sustainability for newsrooms, audience trust and engagement, public interest journalism, and how journalists and publishers can support their work by harnessing new technology, including AI.

***"There are a lot of technological tools available to support independent publishers, and this week has demystified those tools for me and made me feel more confident about using them."***

Vivienne Wynter, Founder and Editor of *The Pineapple*

***"Publishing is very challenging in a digital age. [At the Summit] you're sharing stories, and what I find I get out of it is I learn from other people's experiences and pick up things that I've never thought of before."***

Christopher Gogos, Managing Director and Publisher of *Neos Kosmos*





# Partnerships

LINA strives to connect its members with relevant industry partners to leverage expertise, scale and resources for developing news services. Some of the significant partnerships developed in 2023-24 include:

## Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)

A Strategic Partnership with ABC included shared resources, content collaborations, pre-publication advice, knowledge sharing through information sessions delivered by ABC personnel on emergency reporting in preparation for summer, SEO best practice, solutions journalism, building audience trust and reporting sensitively on the Voice referendum, and two LINA members making use of equipment no longer required by the ABC. LINA and the ABC continue to work together to develop processes for content amplification and sharing to enhance visibility of local news and the diversity of stories represented in ABC channels.

## Community Media Training Organisation (CMTO)

CMTO developed bespoke courses for newsrooms on media law, interview skills, multimedia news production and the sub-editors mentoring program. This relationship gave LINA publishers access to qualified trainers with media-specific experience at discounted rates.

## Copyright Agency

Copyright Agency has helped publishers understand their rights and obligations relating to copyright and to respond to copyright challenges caused by AI. Copyright Agency also sponsored the Summit and presented a session at the event.

## Australian Press Council (APC)

Group membership of the Australian Press Council has ensured professional editorial standards are met and that audiences and publishers have a mechanism for handling complaints.

## Bastion Agency

Bastion Agency helped coordinate mentors and the delivery of the Revenue Growth Program. This relationship provided LINA members access to industry expertise from within Australia and international knowledge-sharing.

## Digital Publishers Alliance (DPA)

Our partnership with DPA facilitated the showcasing of relevant suppliers and tools for digital publishers at all levels.

## Google

LINA members participated in two bespoke Google Fundamentals Lab programs, and a select group of members are currently testing a new publishing tool in development to help shape its functionality for newsrooms. Google provided some sponsorship support for the Annual Summit and delivered a session on third party cookie deprecation at the event.

Pictured from top: ABC partners, Daily Motion's Jean-Baptiste Alary and CBAA's Martin Davies and Impact Architect's Rosemary D'Amour





# Partnerships

## Medianet

Medianet promoted local news publishers through its media release distribution system. This includes the supply of relevant information as story leads for local newsrooms and also amplifying LINA's profile to other media, gaining coverage for local and independent news organisations in mainstream media outlets.

***"The best local news organisations introduce us to people we don't know, who share our concerns and aspirations. They connects people in a community to one another and to the outside world."***

Penny Abernathy, The State of Local News, Local News Initiative, August 2022

## Nurture HR Consulting

LINA members can now access on-demand HR support through a partnership with Nurture HR Consulting. This has supported best practice employment processes around engagement with contractors, award rates, management of freelance journalists and administrative staff, superannuation obligations and other emerging issues. LINA has developed a range of template materials to make recruitment and contracting easier for publishers, which have been reviewed by the HR experts. Four publishers have accessed one-to-one direct support to address queries and processes on staffing and a 'shop-talk' session focused on legislative changes relating to HR. Nurture HR Consulting keeps a watching brief on emerging HR issues so that LINA can alert members to any changes required in personnel management.

***"Local media create opportunities for citizens to discuss local issues and propose solutions, offering a form of 'mediated social capital' through which they can connect citizens with one another and with those in power."***

Hess and Waller, 2017

Pictured from left: Claire Stuchbery, Canva's Lou Hunt and Claire Albrecht.

Middle: Claire Stuchbery and *Manningham Life* Editor Stella Yee at the *Manningham Life* annual morning tea.

Right: Claire Stuchbery, Cameron Paine and Mara Williams at the 2023 CBAA conference



# Industry leadership



## Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) reforms

The Productivity Commission published the philanthropy inquiry's *Future Foundations for Giving* report in November 2023, which included the recommendation to include public interest journalism in eligibility for deductible gift recipient status. LINA responded supporting the expansion of DGR scope to public interest journalism, noting minimal tax implications and positive public benefit from establishing a DGR category for public interest journalism and the opportunity for the government to grow giving while enabling a non-profit news sector in Australia. Further, Claire addressed the commissioners at the philanthropy inquiry hearing, supporting the expansion of DGR scope to public interest journalism. LINA also responded to the *Treasury Laws Amendment – DGR Registers Reform 2023* draft on this topic.

## Media concentration

The Standing Committee on Environment and Communications is considering an inquiry into the impact of media concentration in Australia and related areas of regulation and policy. LINA's submission supported the rationale for an inquiry and, in particular, consideration of barriers faced by small, independent and community news outlets in Australia. LINA drew attention to particular aspects of the proposed inquiry, while encouraging the government to undertake this work concurrently to the News MAP and other components of policy work currently in development, which remains urgent and should not be delayed.

***“The expertise of LINA and its members is informing the Government’s approach to the News MAP.”***

Minister for Communications the Hon. Michelle Rowlands MP

## Media regulations

LINA responded to the ACMA consultations on a draft amendment bill to increase the ACMA's powers to address mis and disinformation and has participated in multiple consultations through the year on the development of a framework for measuring media diversity. LINA has been keeping a watching brief on proposed changes to the Privacy Act which may affect news publishers, including attending a roundtable discussing a journalism exemption, direct marketing, targeting and trading data use, individual rights and notifiable data breaches scheme issues.

## Social media

LINA responded to an ACCC Request for Information regarding advice to the Assistant Treasurer relating to Meta's Facebook and Instagram services. This response outlined the disproportionate impact that the removal of news content on Facebook and Instagram would have on smaller and local publishers, and called for government support for these publishers should Meta be designated under the news media bargaining code. LINA also released a [public statement](#) on Tuesday April 2, the day Facebook removed its news feed, highlighting the potential impact on small publishers and calling on the government to take action to counter economic and audience impacts for local and independent publishers.

LINA made a written submission to the government's Inquiry on Social Media and Australian Society and spoke at a public hearing on the topic. Our submission reiterated that smaller publishers are disproportionately affected by the actions of social media giants and should receive financial support from government to overcome this.



## Local government

LINA made a written submission on Inquiry into local government sustainability to the Standing Committee on Regional Development, Infrastructure and Transport. LINA outlined the role of local and independent news in supporting local government sustainability, recommending local governments should be obligated to share notices of public information in local digital publications, and governments at all levels should be legislated to allocate a percentage (at least 10%) of their advertising budget to locally produced media services, including both campaign and non-campaign advertising.

## Media policy reform

LINA made a substantial submission to the News Media Assistance Program (News MAP) consultation, as well as participating in three in-depth consultations with representatives from the Department of Communications, including:

- Two x 90-minute in person conversations with department staff teams;
- A 90-minute group discussion online including LINA members: *Murray Bridge News*, *The Illawarra Flame*, *Newsport*, *The Brunswick Voice*, *City Hub Sydney* and *Croakey Health Media*; and
- Participation in one of PIJI's online roundtable discussions on the News MAP, alongside members on Friday March 8.

## Sector funding

LINA made a Pre-Budget Submission 2024-25 outlining potential support measures for the industry both through LINA and direct to publishers.

Pictured top right: Claire Stuchbery presenting at the 2024 LINA Summit.  
Below: Alan Sunderland, Brian Mitchell MP and Claire Stuchbery in Canberra

## Local news in disaster response

LINA submitted information to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet's COVID-19 Response Inquiry highlighting the role of local and independent news services during the pandemic, including the establishment of new services in response to a lack of available information. LINA participated in roundtable discussions on methods for improving future pandemic responses, and made a submission to the Senate Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience processes, highlighting the role of local news in emergency preparedness and community rebuilding processes.

## Representation

LINA represented its members at the:

- Automated News & Media Symposium
- Wordpress Publishers Performance Summit
- Google News Summit
- Digital Publishers Alliance Independents Day
- PS Media Town Hall sessions
- ABC community consultation with stakeholders on its move to Parramatta
- CBAA's conference in Adelaide, along with five member publishers
- CONVERGE Canberra, the First Nations Media Australia annual conference
- The Public Interest Journalism Initiative's Future Focus Roundtable on Local News in Sydney
- Google News Initiative Summit in Sydney, along with five member publishers
- State of Digital Publishing's Wordpress Publishers Performance Summit (online)
- Contribution to the 2023 Digital News Report, University of Canberra
- Engagement with Deakin University researchers on ABC partnership potential
- Discussion of AI copyright
- *Manningham Life's* end-of-year celebration

***"There is no doubt that LINA is helping to sustain a diverse news media ecosystem. The work of LINA and its members is vital to the communities you serve and what brings us together."***

The Hon Michelle Rowland MP, Minister for Communications

In addition, LINA facilitated and supported the participation of members directly with Department of Communications consultation processes on the News MAP, Public Interest Journalism Initiative roundtable discussions, research groups and ACCC consultation processes.



## Member engagement and consultation in industry leadership

LINA facilitated and supported the participation of members directly with Department of Communications consultation processes on the News MAP, Public Interest Journalism Initiative roundtable discussions, research groups and ACCC consultation processes.

LINA staff are in regular contact with members, providing opportunity for input to our policies, processes and services through:

- Direct phone calls and emails
- Discussion at our annual Summit
- Discussion at online forums such as the shop-talk sessions and an annual update session providing members with direct access to the LINA Board for questions and comments
- Monthly newsletters to members and stakeholders
- Bi-monthly member-only newsletters, including upcoming policy issues of note
- Social media: LinkedIn and Facebook
- An active Slack channel monitored by staff daily

All submissions are [available on the LINA website](#).

***"For years, I felt in the wilderness as I struggled to put out local news and keep abreast of all the issues that impact local news publishers. [Now] LINA is doing an amazing job supporting local and independent news publishers like myself."***

Jacky Barker, Founder of *In the Cove*



9

formal submissions to  
government  
contributing to various  
inquiries and reviews







## National Indigenous Radio Service (NIRS)

National Indigenous Radio Service provides hourly bulletins every week day to First Nations community radio stations throughout the country, as well as an online news site. The publisher's aim is to spotlight Indigenous perspectives in the media. Article topics range from the Ngururrpa Rangers who have just discovered the largest population of one of Australia's rarest birds, to the new laws passed in the Northern Territory to lower the age of criminal responsibility to 10 years old.



## The Post

*The Post* is a Sydney North Shore and Northern Beaches independent and locally owned and printed newsmagazine. In March *The Post* published an exclusive on local councillors and council staff using taxpayers funds to book an extravagant conference. Facilitated by LINA's strategic partnership with the ABC, *The Post* was able to receive a pre-publication review of this article from ABC's legal team, providing feedback to mitigate for defamation risk. Following publication, the story was then picked up by 2GB, Sydney's premier news and talk radio station, giving the issue wider coverage.



## The Illawarra Flame

*The Illawarra Flame* is an independent NSW publication. Named after a beautiful tree, the *Flame* shines a light on local people and places. In 2023 *The Flame*'s reporting was praised on Media Watch for debunking misinformation circulating in the community surrounding a proposed offshore wind farm. Its 'Common Ground' series on energy transition finds commonalities in issues that can be divisive.

**"Bravo to Genevieve Swart and The Illawarra Flame. Instead of buying into the narrative of conflict and division over hashtag #offshorewind they have instead looked for areas of common ground and unity ... This is journalism that connects rather than divides."**

Associate Professor Michelle Voyer, University of Wollongong

# Meet the LINA newsrooms



## The Westsider

*The Westsider* is a community run newspaper covering news, culture, environment and lifestyle topics in Melbourne's western suburbs. The publisher relies on volunteer written contributions, as well as student written articles submitted through a partnership with RMIT University.

The newspaper reflects Melbourne's ethnically diverse population through spotlighting groups like Wyndham Women — a cooking group who share a recipe and an accompanying story about the meal to readers every week. The paper also reports on council matters, including the ongoing housing crisis in Techno Park Drive, a migrant hostel turned thriving suburb. After hazardous storage tanks were built next to the community, thousands of residents were forced out of their homes. *The Westsider* interviewed many locals who questioned why the council had waited thirty years after the tanks were built to send out eviction notices.



Above: LINA's Evie Dinkelmeyer interviews Editor of the Westsider Barbara Heggen for the *Meet the Newsrooms* podcast.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

**STRENGTHENING  
PUBLIC INTEREST  
JOURNALISM**

**BUILDING CAPACITY  
OF NEWSROOMS**

**FACILITATING  
NETWORKING AND  
SHARED SERVICES**

### OUR VISION

A vibrant and diverse local news landscape providing news services to communities across Australia.

## GOALS

Increasing capability for public interest news reporting

Championing the work done by local independent publishers

Building news publishers' financial sustainability – including revenue generating actions

Growing audience engagement with local and diverse news sources

Facilitating peer-to-peer engagement

Generating economies of scale for small businesses

### OUR MISSION

Supporting hyperlocal and independent digital news publishers.

## SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

- LINA members are trusted sources of news for their communities
- LINA members have a voice on industry-wide issues
- The work of LINA members is recognised and rewarded for its quality

- An increasing number of sustainable member publishers with diverse income streams
- Audience numbers and engagement growing for member publications
- Workforce growth among LINA membership

- LINA members benefitting from shared communication and collaboration
- Increased access to shared and/or cost effective third party services
- Membership satisfied and number of members strong and growing

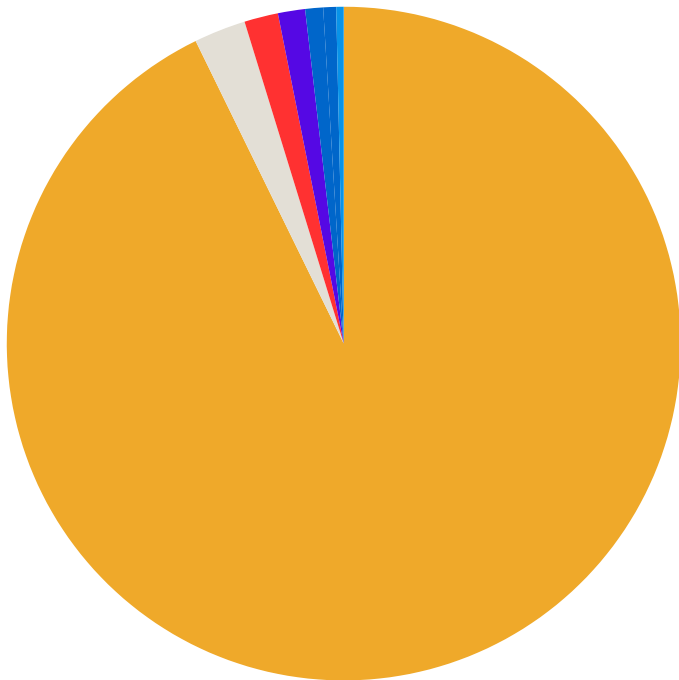
Right: Emma Marshall, Member Engagement Coordinator



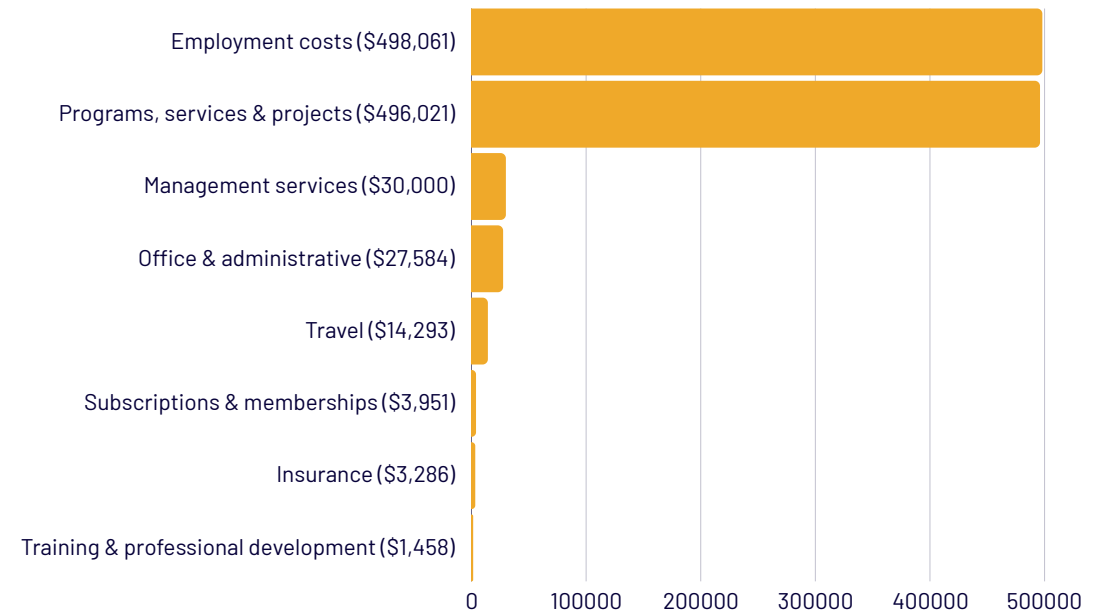


# Financials 2023-24

## Revenue



## Expenses



***"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



# Thank you

LINA gratefully acknowledges the support of the Commonwealth of Australia and the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA), along with the event sponsors of the 2024 LINA Summit.



COMMUNITY  
BROADCASTING  
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AUSTRALIA



Australian Government

Department of Communications and the Arts

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