



# KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOUR PROGRAM



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*A social cohesion* partnership with the  
NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet  
JUNE 2025 TO JANUARY 2026

**Claire Stuchbery** - Executive Director



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# Purpose

## Amplifying Young Voices

In June 2025, the Local & Independent News Association (LINA) was contracted to design and deliver a comprehensive program supporting a group of **diverse young people** to engage with **traditional and new media**, both through **building skills and contacts** to support higher engagement with traditional media and through **capability building** to influence online conversations through digital content creation.

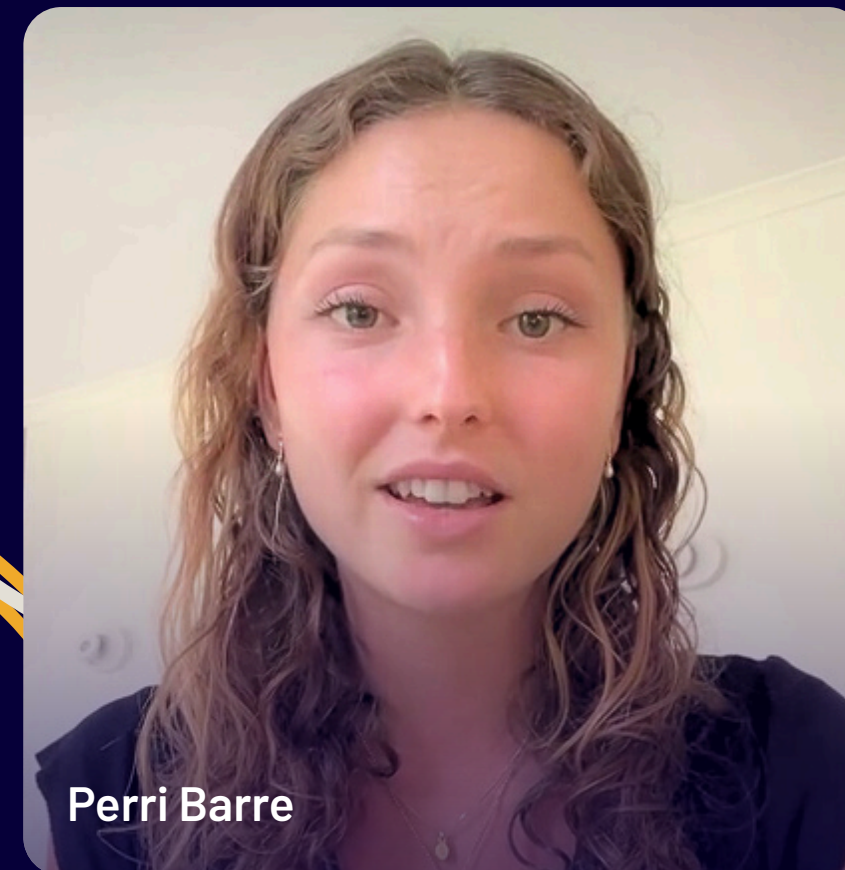
### DELIVERY INCLUSIONS:

- Draft training program
- Support for 20-30 young people between the ages 12-24
- Evaluation and outcomes measurement
- Two focus briefings
- A final report outlining key learnings and opportunities for government.

**BUDGET RANGE:**  
**\$95-\$120k+ gst**



Maddie Heslop interviewed by  
Ariba Omar, a Know Your  
Neighbour participant



Perri Barre



Oskar Alefaio

# Project Plan

## TIMEFRAME AND MILESTONES

Jun - Jul 2025

1



Expression of interest  
callout to NSW based  
newsrooms

Aug

2



Newsroom selection with  
geographic & cultural  
diversity considerations  
**Goal: 20**  
**23 Newsrooms selected**

Late Aug

3

Newsrooms recruit  
young participants from  
local area  
  
Support documentation  
for callout supplied by  
LINA to newsrooms

Sep

4



Participant selection  
prioritising diversity  
**33 participants selected**

Oct

5



Training delivery  
**8 hours online over 4  
weeks**

Nov

6

Mentoring from  
newsrooms, interviews  
conducted and stories  
produced  
**Aiming for 3 content  
pieces each**

Dec-Jan

7



Stories published

Feb 2026

8



Reporting outcomes



# Newsroom

## PARTICIPATION

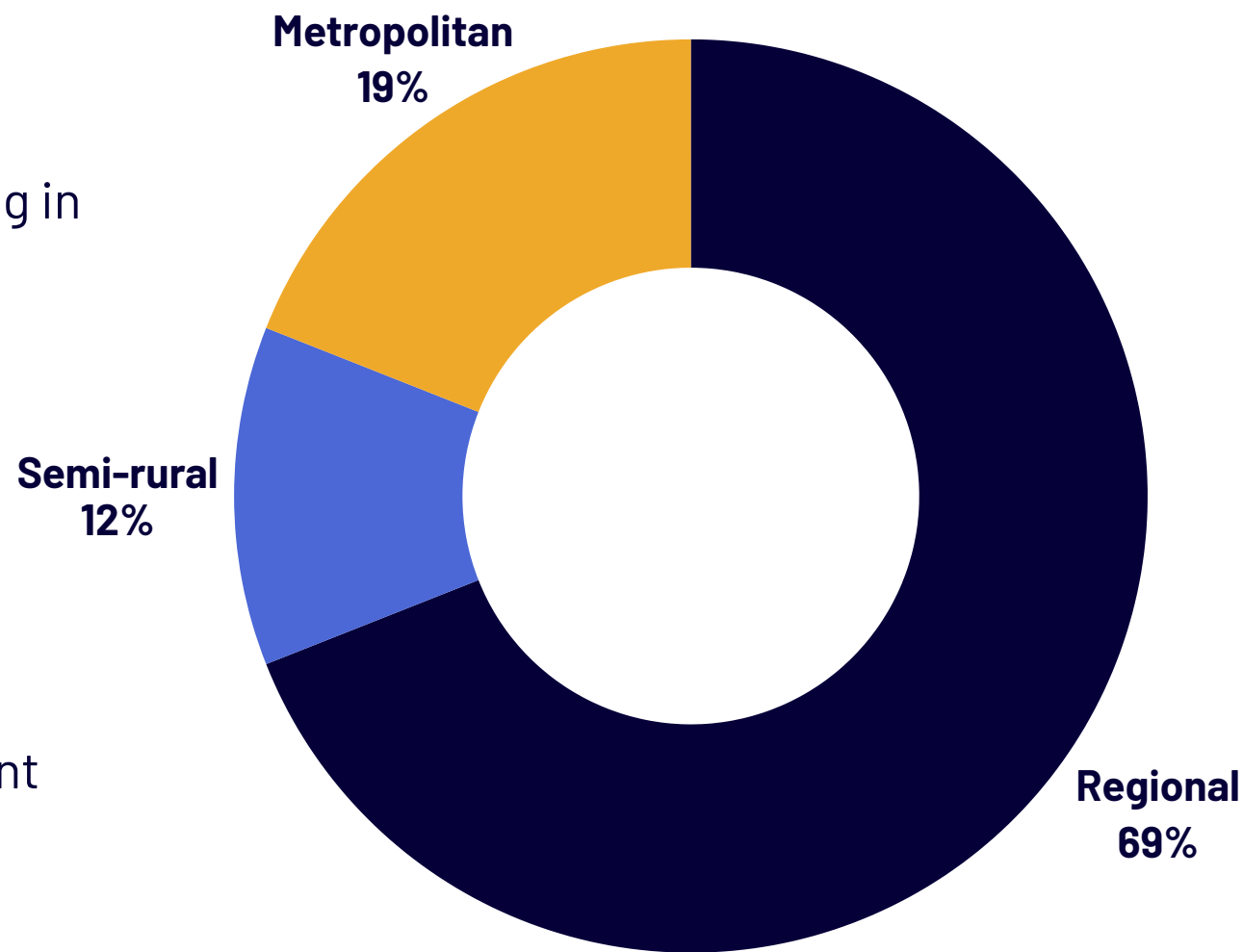
Delegates at LINA's 2025 Annual Summit

LINA's membership includes 55 newsrooms based in NSW, both in regional areas and the suburbs of Sydney.

23 newsrooms expressed interest in participating in the program. **15 newsrooms were successful in recruiting young participants** in their area.

Reasons for newsroom attrition included:

- not supplying Working With Children Check documentation in a time to meet project timeframes
- overcommitment of workload and subsequent lack of capacity to provide quality mentoring
- barriers to recruitment through a lack of engagement from young people in some regions.



## LOCATIONS

The 15 newsroom participants were:

- The Coonamble Times (Coonamble)
- The Bugle News (Kiama)
- IndyNR (Lismore)
- Ballina News Daily (Ballina)
- Region Riverina (Wagga)
- The Illawarra Flame (Illawarra)
- Manly Observer (Manly)
- Missing Perspectives (Chippendale)
- Spark Shoalhaven (Shoalhaven)
- Western Weekender (Penrith)
- Galston & District Community News
- Dooral Roundup
- Hills to Hawkesbury Community News
- The Fold Southern Highlands (Mittagong)
- The Fold Illawarra (Illawarra)

# Young People

## OVERVIEW

The 33 young participants involved in the program brought a wide variety of backgrounds and diverse perspectives, including people who identified as:

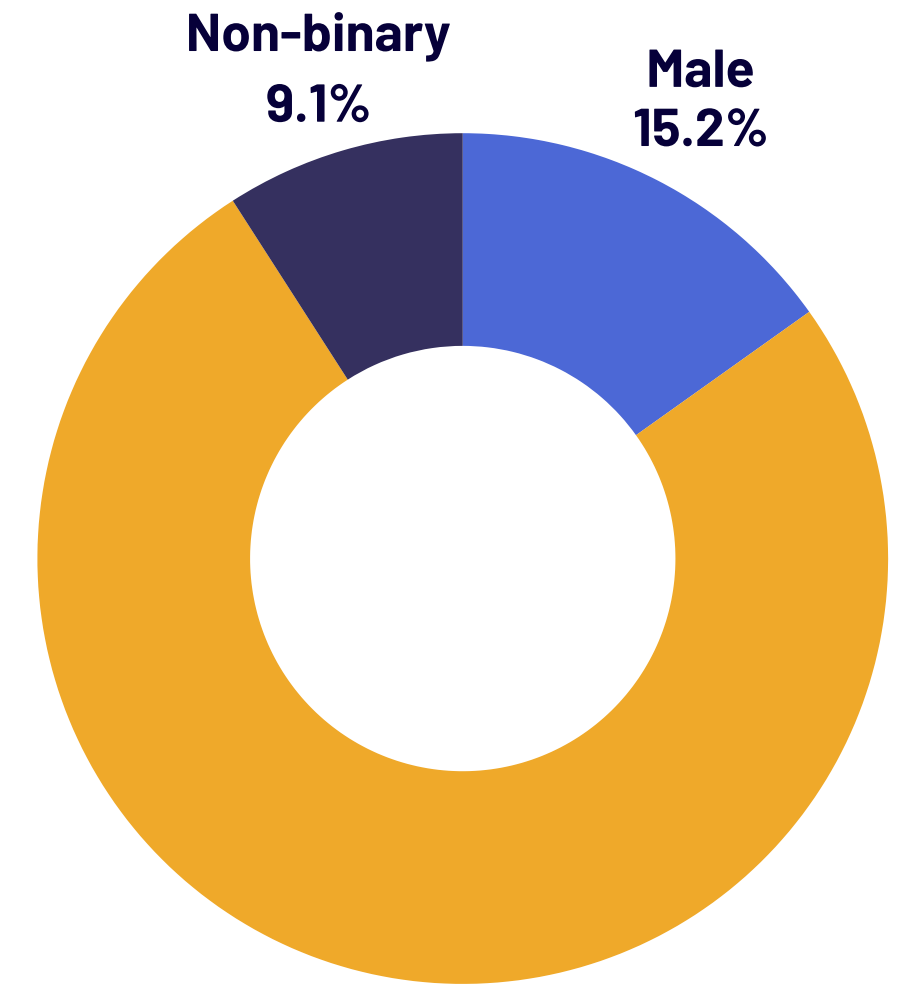
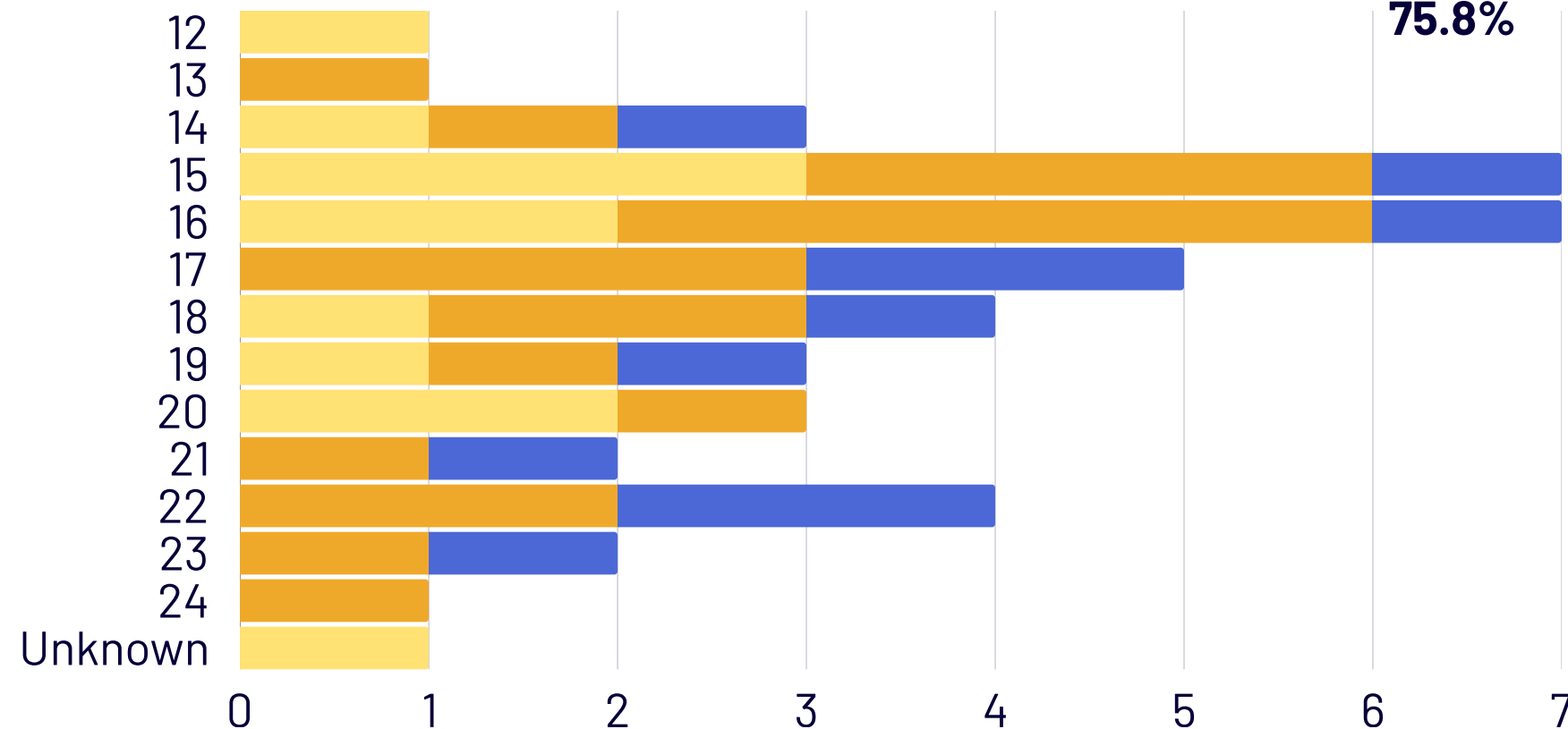
- Aboriginal
- Lebanese
- Ukranian
- Peruvian
- Ethiopian
- Saudi Arabian
- Indian
- Turkish/Albanian
- Samoan
- Thai
- Dutch
- Irish
- Italian
- Egyptian
- Anglo-saxon
- LGBTIQ+
- Non-binary
- Person with a disability



Sophie Jenner for the IndieNR

### COMPLETION RATE BY AGE

- Completed training
- Completed work
- Ongoing employment by age



### GENDER

# Training

LINA partnered with the Community Media Training Organisation (CMTO) to deliver 4 x 2 hour sessions, held online from 4-6pm on Wednesday afternoons throughout October.

Anita Annabel delivered the training, engaging guest presenters on specific topics. Anita is an experienced entertainment journalist. She hosts The Good Chat podcast and has previously holding roles at Mediaweek, Val Morgan digital and most recently hosting breakfast programming on Radio 4BC in Brisbane. Anita focused on making the training sessions fun, relatable and interactive for young participants.



*"The training sessions really helped me gain an understanding on what it means to be a journalist and helped me better see if I wanted to pursue that career. The host was amazing, she was energetic and encouraged everyone to join in on discussions and activities that made it very enjoyable."*

Evangeline

## Session

### 1. What is Journalism?

Understanding news vs opinion, editorial standards and platforms.

### 2. Writing for news and social media


Including verifying sources, mis and disinformation

### 3. Interview techniques

Including tips on mobile and social journalism

### 4. Basic editing

Audio and social media storytelling



**SAME STORY, THREE-WAYS**

Using the same scenario (below), let's discuss how you would write a story using each journalism type - news, opinion and feature.

**SCENARIO**

Taylor Swift's surprise pop-up concert in Sydney's Circular Quay last night drew thousands of people. There was heavy rain, but fans stayed until the end.

# Training

*“The power of a story is so interesting. The way things are portrayed can make such a big difference in the way people view the world.”*

Sophia

## REFLECTIONS FROM CMTO

Participants demonstrated consistently high engagement across all sessions, with the majority contributing verbally, keeping cameras on, and responding to reflective and analytical prompts. Rather than passive attendance, students actively shaped discussion, shared personal perspectives, and built on one another’s ideas, indicating strong investment in both the program and the learning environment.

Across the program, participants showed clear growth in confidence and communication skills. Early contributions were shorter and exploratory, while later sessions featured longer, self-directed responses, critical questioning, and the confident use of journalism language. By the final session, participants were initiating ideas, articulating opinions, and reflecting independently on their learning.

Participants moved beyond surface understanding to applied learning, demonstrating the ability to identify media types, analyse tone and voice, recognise misinformation, and transfer skills to real-world contexts such as social media, podcasts, and local journalism. This progression reflects meaningful skill development rather than one-off participation.

The workshop created a psychologically safe, inclusive space where young people felt comfortable sharing identity, creativity, values, and aspirations. The supportive group culture encouraged risk-taking, curiosity, and peer respect, strengthening both individual confidence and collective participation.

By the conclusion of the sessions, participants were not only engaging with journalism concepts but beginning to think and communicate like emerging journalists. The program successfully fostered confidence, critical thinking, media literacy, and community connection among young participants.

# Belonging

Young participants were encouraged to be curious about the people around them, to listen and share the stories of people they see as influential and/or interesting in their own communities and to consider that every person has their own journey, context, experience and expertise to contribute.

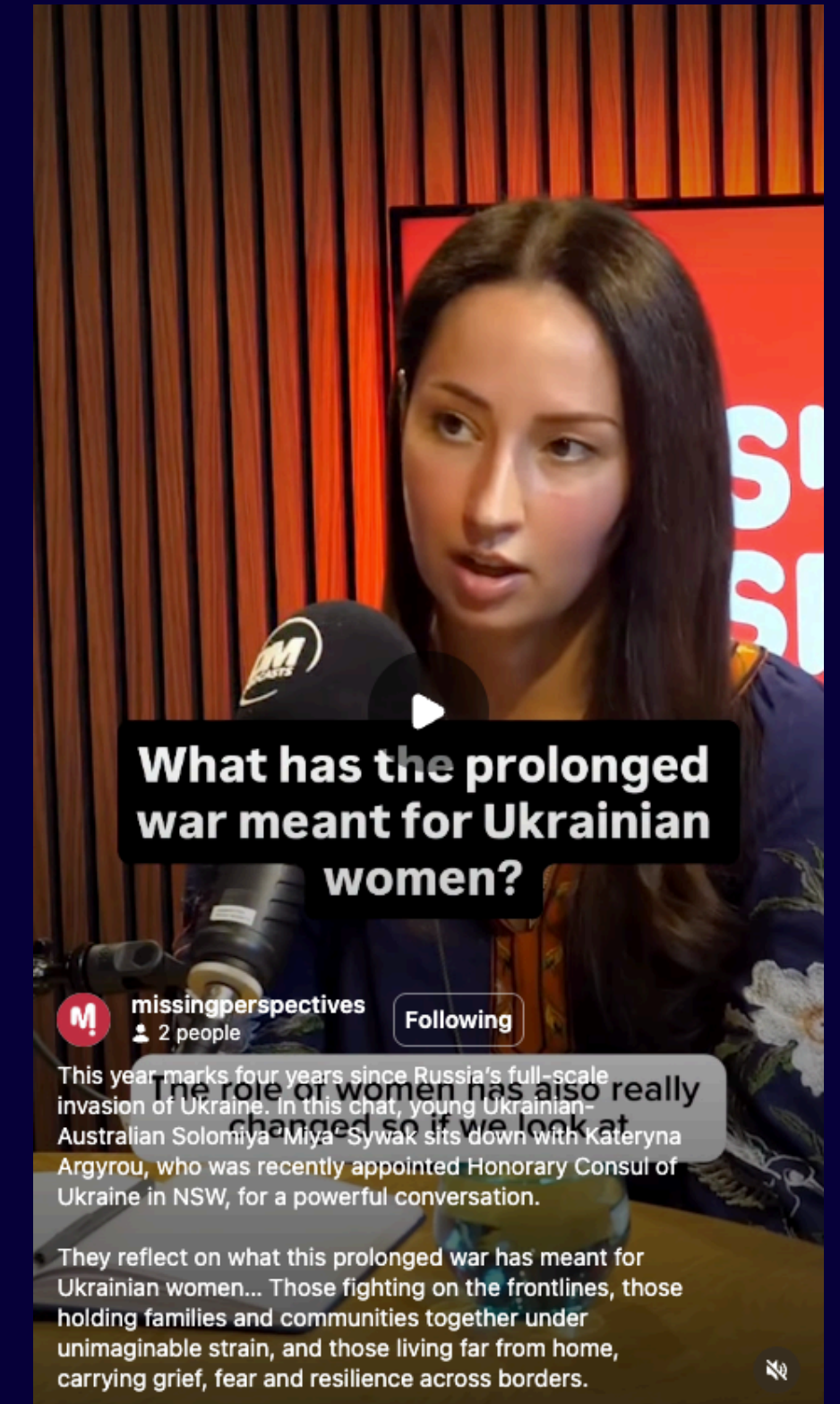
The participants chose to amplify the stories of individuals involved in:

- Local Council
- Conservation and environmental management
- Migrants bringing different experiences in settling in their current locations
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural learnings
- Prominent sportspeople
- Peers and teachers
- Unique stories in farming, hospitality, event management, community groups and charities.

# Skills Development

Key education outcomes for the young participants included:

- critical thinking in communications
- applied media literacy in an online setting
- practical skills in content making and editing
- digital distribution and social media fundamentals
- basic journalism and professional editorial standards
- confidence to appear on screen and in print.



# Untold stories

Young participants were encouraged to produce stories on topics that are important to them, with a particular focus on sharing the stories of people with diverse backgrounds and/or who they see as influential and interesting in the community.

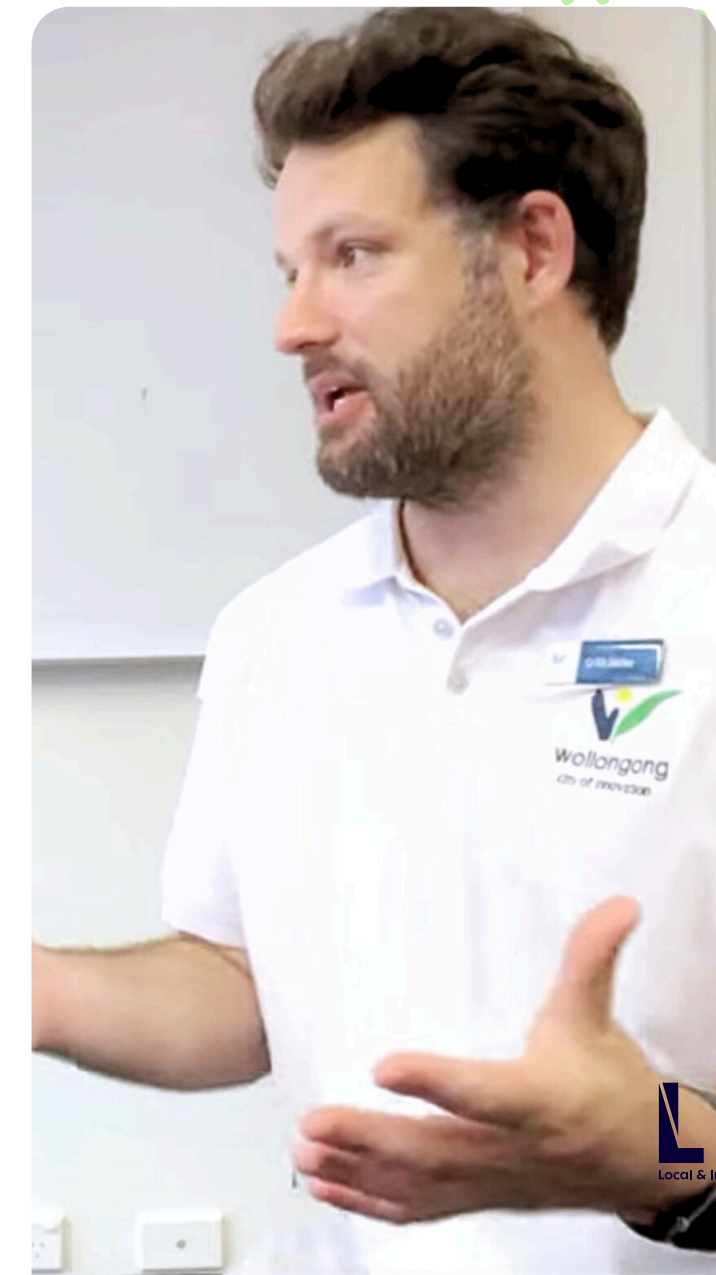
This brief intentionally provided space for young people to amplify the issues and people who are important to them. Examples included:

- Amelia Hall writing about how the **recent social media ban impacts teenagers** for The Coonamble Times
- Maisie Morrison creating a **3-episode video series** on Jane Lemann, a conservationist focused on the unique habitats of the Southern Highlands
- Sixteen year-old Ariba Omar **interviewing 14-year old Maddie Hessup** about growing up in Darwin and moving to Wagga with her parents who are in the Australian Defence Force for Region Riverina
- Kaelan O'Connor **producing a 3-part video series** with Councillor Kit Docker explaining his work at Wollongong City Council for The Fold Illawarra

- Nataaya Weaver **interviewing several migrants** in Manly about making connections in Australia and creating a video story highlighting assistance services available for Manly Observer
- Theo Adams interviewing Emma Hutchinson, Principle of Scarborough Public School on the importance of teaching Aboriginal culture for both students and teaching staff for The Fold Illawarra



Kaelan O'Connor  
interviewing Councillor  
Kit Docker




# Untold stories

- Parri Barre creating **three stories** focused on local sports clubs for Spark Shoalhaven, including Kealan Blattner, President of the Bomaderry Cricket Team and Indigenous cricket representative with Sydney Thunder
- Xavier Lynch's **video report** on gun control issues for Spark Shoalhaven
- Mackenzie Watkins **reporting** on Canberra's Multicultural Festival for Region Riverina
- Sophie Jenner writing about the **Bundgeam Preschool Open Day** and Isabelle Bennett exploring **life as a chicken farmer**, both for IndyNR
- Satrick Narinjan's **feature story** on Sony Sodhi's successful Indian restaurant business for Dooral Roundup
- Selina Sali's **3-part video series** on the youth of Wollongong for The Illawarra Flame

Canberra's beloved National Multicultural Festival gears up for 2026

8 November 2025 | By Mackenzie Watkins

Start the conversation



Canberra's beloved **National Multicultural Festival**, affectionately known as the Multiculti, is making its grand return from 6 to 8 February 2026.

Now in its 28th year, the festival has grown from humble beginnings in the 1980s into one of the city's most vibrant celebrations of cultural diversity.

From immersive performances and storytelling spaces to decorative installations and hands-on experiences, the event offers something for everyone.

"It's a really nice way to meet new people," says Cameron Dawson, who first volunteered in 2023.

"Everyone's here to help and celebrate together."

What's Trending

Conversations Stories

news

Minister for Men? Liberal leader wants us to stop telling males they're toxic

Anna May

A great initiative! It just shows Ms Strome has the right balance and political awareness to make a...

Join the conversation

news

Protection 'at scale' as more than 2000 hectares joins national parks

Ian Denney

Great news and great credit to the team that put the work in to accomplish this acquisition. My best...

Join the conversation

news

Would a special road sign make you stop somewhere new? This Bega local thinks so

Anna May

Bypass signs need to be part of the bypass funding and erected before the bypass is opened to...

Join the conversation

LIFESTYLE

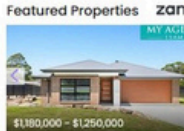
New report urges greater government protection for traditional knowledge in native food industry

Ima Expert

This is just more woke and tokenistic nonsense from labor. These taxpayer money at nosey groups...

Join the conversation

Featured Properties **zango**



\$1,180,000 - \$1,250,000


IndyNR.com

STORIES FARMING LIFESTYLE COMMUNITY WHAT'S ON CONTACT US

Kate's life on a chicken farm is a dream come true

January 18, 2026

f x in e



Kate Ziegenfusz had to learn to drive a tractor when they moved to the farm.


Isabelle Bennett

Kate Ziegenfusz's story is one of courage, adaptability, and a deep appreciation for family, learning, and country life.

Born and raised in Casino, Kate grew up surrounded by the values of community, hard work, and resilience — qualities that would shape every stage of her life.


Delhi Heights Indian Restaurant's Success

C Paton January 19, 2026 7:40 pm



By Satvik Niranjana

The Journey of the Heart from interest to occupation- guided through family, food and creating positivity. The inspiring success story of **Delhi Heights Indian Restaurant and Bar**.



An abode of food, fragrance, taste, fun & togetherness, presenting itself in an electrifying nature wherein the Bollywood music unites multiple souls over the pleasure of Indian culinary delights and radiant nature gleaming the place. Delhi Heights Indian restaurant and bar is nestled in the heart of the Hills district in Dural.

Possessing 4.6 -star google reviews and catering authentic Indian cuisine across the Hills district, it is suitable for casual family meals, group events, parties and special occasions owing its roaring success to owner and head chef, Sony Sodhi. In the heart of Dural, Sony Sodhi, the head chef and owner of the renowned and popular Delhi Heights Indian restaurant is a passionate chef who enjoys bringing people together and fostering connection through her cooking and is a popular choice for parties and live catering.

Sony Sodhi adorned in her chefs costume as she happily fulfills her parents aspirations


An experienced chef, working in Australia with over 14 years of knowledge, skills, experience and

STORIES FARMING LIFESTYLE COMMUNITY WHAT'S ON

Open Day at Bundgeam Preschool includes the Wildlife Twins, market and an auction

January 7, 2026

f x in e



Bundgeam preschool invites the community to its Open Day. Photo: Sophie Jenner

Sophie Jenner

Bundgeam Preschool welcomes the community to join in the celebrations of the expo

# Outcomes

33 young people were supported through this project. Of whom:



## 30 COMPLETED A 4-WEEK TRAINING PROGRAM

Building new skills in media literacy and learning how to produce digital news content for traditional and social media (91% completion rate)

*"I didn't really consider TikTok to be as a form of journalism. I thought it had to be very professional. But I realised it can take many forms."*

Nat



## 23 HAD THEIR WORK PUBLISHED BY DIGITAL NEWS OUTLETS

Creating new connections with editors, journalists and photographers through mentoring support provided (70% completion rate)

*"Now every time I scroll, I'm like, oh, that's that hook that we're talking about. They've hooked you in."*

Mia



12 young people will continue working with their host newsrooms on a casual or part-time basis, 92% of whom are located in regional and semi-rural communities. This means **one-third of young people involved** in the Know Your Neighbour program **will receive ongoing paid work as a result of their participation.** (36% employment rate). While this was not a direct objective of the program, it is a welcome outcome for young people in NSW.

*"Learning about the different legislative requirements you have as a journalist is pretty interesting because people just go and do whatever they want in this digital age."*

Theo

**A total 53 stories that would otherwise not have been reported were published, amplifying a broad range of voices and perspectives in news.**

# Challenges and learnings

While highly successful, the program outcomes could be improved by addressing some learnings in future iterations:

- **Recruitment:** Newsrooms were selected on the basis of connections to community groups, schools and other forums that could help engage young people in the program. However, even with those relationships in place, surprisingly some struggled to find interested participants in their local area. The capacity to share successful case studies from the 2025 pilot group would likely help inspire people for future programs.
- **Clarity of brief:** While the requirement to produce 3 x video pieces per participant was communicated in the sign-up process, some newsrooms and some participants missed the focus on video news production. This could be addressed through regular group check-ins after the training is complete.



- **Structure for newsrooms:** The program design deliberately provided space for newsrooms to determine their own mentoring processes, tailored to the needs of the young people involved. However some newsrooms could have benefited from guidance on regularity of meetings, discussion points and support requirements.
- **Attrition:** While most participants successfully completed the program and had their work published, there was some expected attrition through the program. This could be reduced through increased group check-ins to share progress and learnings across all participants throughout the program.
- **Age:** The program called for participants aged 12-24, however we found the very young participants, aged 12-13 were not yet equipped to maximise their opportunity. In future, we would restrict the age to a 10-year window of 14-24 years.

# Expenditure Example

## Total Funds budgeted:

- \$100k

## Expenditure:

- \$5,500 Training
- \$5,000 Participant fees (to young people for the work produced)
- \$50,000 Mentoring & publishing fees (to newsrooms)
- \$10,000 Reporting and evaluation
- \$25,000 Project management
- \$4,500 Administration expenses

**Total expenditure = \$100,000**

## Note:

This budget is based on approx 30 participants across 15 newsrooms. It could be scaled up or down as relevant.

*"I definitely felt supported by my host newsroom, as I was provided with face-to-face sessions on how to come up with inspiration regarding the relevance of my community. I also received guidance and feedback on my news articles on how they would be published and the requirements/standards. Oliver was constantly checking to see if I receive any assistance throughout my journey..."*

*"I learnt a lot from Oliver as he was very patient with me as I was taking more time to complete than expected...."*

*"I received positive feedback on my published work. People I know saw and shared it, which was really encouraging. My interview subject was very happy with how their story was represented..."*

*"It has definitely made me more inclined to pay attention to the news...I can confidently say this experience has strengthened my interest in journalism and content creation, particularly storytelling that highlights community voices and diverse experiences."*

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**Ariba, Region Riverina**



# Reflections

"Having Tiffany and Eleeya participate brought a fresh perspective into the newsroom and reinforced the value of creating clearer pathways for young people interested in journalism. While there was a genuine time commitment involved in mentoring, it felt aligned with our broader responsibility as a regional publisher to help develop future storytellers.

We were pleased with the work both Tiffany and Eleeya produced. Like most early-career contributors, they required guidance around structure, news judgement and deadlines, but their curiosity, enthusiasm and willingness to take feedback were strong. With editorial support, their pieces were publishable and meaningful to our local audience....



"We received positive informal feedback from the community, particularly around the idea of young people telling local stories. Readers seemed interested in seeing different voices and perspectives represented, and that in itself added value beyond the individual stories.

We do keep in touch with both Tiffany and Eleeya...The program has made us more inclined, not less, to involve young people in content creation...

We'd certainly support the program running again and expanding, particularly if funding support for ongoing employment becomes available. That would be a real game-changer in helping young reporters transition from participation to sustainable work.

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**Belle Wood, The Bugle News**



"The training was very helpful, there were different aspects to digital journalism I had not considered/learnt about (morals, types etc..) that were useful to learn. My host publication was very helpful, as Rebecca from The Fold helped navigate the process and was always open to offer feedback...

News is such a big part of our live and finding out local stories invigorates me more to chase them. Therefore, journalism is an even more exciting career prospect, there is so much to explore and write about!"

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**Theo Adams, Participant for The Fold**



"I loved meeting and working with young people. I'd recommend it to all publishers and would like to give ongoing assignments to both our chosen participants."

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**Genevieve Swart, The Illawarra Flame**



Oskar Alefaio for the Illawara Flame



Selina Sali for the Illawara Flame



Xavier Lynch for Spark Shoalhaven

# Looking ahead

## MEANINGFUL

There is opportunity to provide **ongoing employment** for young participants who have completed the 'Know Your Neighbour' training program and demonstrated an active interest in reporting to become 'Youth Reporters' in local communities.

This would:

- increase coverage of issues, stories and activities; relevant to young people in NSW, including highlighting government-led programs and opportunities;
- create place-based career pathways for young people, particularly in regional NSW;
- increase the diversity of voices represented in NSW-based media, contributing to social cohesion;
- support newsrooms to grow their audiences and standpoint diversity;

- strengthen media literacy skills and digital content production capability; and
- encourage engagement in news content among young people.

Such a program would require salary support, resourcing for newsrooms to mentor and support young contributors and program coordination - scalable to budget scope.



Isabelle Bennett for  
the IndyNR



Nataya Weaver for  
the Manly Observer



Christine McCormack interviewed by  
Ryver Newton for the Manly Observer

# Looking ahead

## REPEATABLE AND FLEXIBLE

The success of the 2025 'Know Your Neighbour' program in amplifying the voices of young people in New South Wales provides a template to repeat the program in 2026 and in future year. The number of newsrooms and participants **could be expanded**, informed by learnings from the pilot program. It may even be possible to support 2 x cohort groups in the program over the course of 12 month period.

## TRANSFERABLE

Similarly, the program could be applied in **other jurisdictions** to provide learning and engagement opportunities for young people, share stories and perspectives that increase social cohesion and develop new career pathways for employment in news media and content creation.