

ANNUAL REPORT

2025-26

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.



Rita delivers a Welcome to Country on Ngarrindjeri Land to commence the 2026 LINA Summit.

About LINA

The Local & Independent News Association (LINA) is a national industry association supporting local and independent digital news publishers. LINA's job is to help news publishers increase the diversity and relevance of news services in communities across Australia.

LINA 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.

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. As of 30 June 2026 it represented 106 publishers with a combined 174 mastheads.

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, funding support from the Commonwealth Government and operational support from the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) to increase economies of scale across the media industry.



Delegates at LINA's 2026 Annual Summit

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 2025-26 included:

- Delivery of Know Your Neighbour, supporting NSW local newsrooms to mentor young people to create digital community content and strengthen social cohesion
 - Distribution of micro-grants, Environmental Reporting Grants and Emerging Writers Grants, supporting investigative, solutions-focused, environmental and community journalism, as well as pathways for emerging writers
 - Support to help more than 60 member publishers access Commonwealth funding to employ journalists producing core news through the Journalism Assistance Fund
 - Provision of journalism training, resources and professional development, including emergency reporting, story leads, misinformation, preventing violence against women, source safety, video content, AI and civic journalism
 - Editorial, legal and copyright support, including reporting guidance, subsidised sub-editing and pre-publication legal reviews supported by LINA partner ABC Legal
- Advocacy and engagement on policies affecting public interest journalism, including the News Media Assistance Program, government advertising, philanthropy reform and Freedom of Information reforms
 - Strengthened connections and partnerships across the media, government and community sectors to support trusted local journalism, including work addressing news deserts, misinformation and access to public information
 - Partnership with McKinnon for Democracy Counts campaign and participation in Menzies Leadership Foundation's Civility Coalition.



Keer Moriarty (Scenic Rim Media) and Peri Strathearn (Murray Bridge News)

"The legal review of stories means stories we might have shied away from now get written, because we know we have a quick and easy way to have it checked."

Publisher of Riverine Grazier

OUR KEY PILLARS CONT.



Building capacity of newsrooms

LINA provides publishers with access to training events, resources, info sheets, templates, guides and playbooks to support local and diverse newsrooms. This includes 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 2025-26 included:

- Launch of the Newsroom Starter Kit, providing a free, step-by-step resource and direct support for people and communities establishing new independent local news services
- Expansion of LINA's Knowledge Centre, including practical guides, templates and resources on AI, newsletters, media kits, quality reporting, digital trends, copyright, privacy and audience engagement
- Provision of on-demand expert support and mentoring, including assistance across technology, HR, legal, audience strategy, AI, impact tracking, business planning and grant applications
- Delivery of training, webinars and professional development opportunities, covering topics including AI, video content, cybersecurity, revenue generation, advertising, newsletters, emergency reporting and journalist wellbeing
- Hosting of the LINA Summit, bringing together publishers and industry stakeholders for practical sessions on sustainable journalism, with resources made available through a dedicated online hub
- Continued support for newsroom sustainability and growth, including the Sustainable Growth Program, business coaching and mentoring, Storyleads content and revenue ideas, and Impact Tracker support
- Development and trialling of new technology and digital tools, including Partyline for community content submissions and resources to help newsrooms adopt AI while maintaining editorial standards
- Strengthened peer learning and industry connections, through LINA's Slack community, industry partnerships and sharing of relevant training, grants, awards and other opportunities

"I am 100% proud to be a LINA member - the impact the membership has had on my business in the past two years has been pretty amazing. It's re-inspired me to stay the course and re-confirmed to me that independent media has the greatest opportunity to rebuild local media from the ground up, especially in my field of video journalism."

Publisher of *Fitzmedia*

38

Publishers received
1:1 tech support

6

Publishers received
direct HR support

92

Publishers downloaded
resources and guides through
the LINA website a total

454 times through the year.

OUR KEY PILLARS CONT.



Growing financial sustainability of member publishers

LINA supports news publishers to diversify and improve revenue streams through collective fundraising and advertising projects, discounts to products and services, subsidies and more.

Actions in this area in 2025-26 included:

- Delivery of the Sustainability Growth Program, providing selected publishers with subsidised expert mentoring and hands-on support to develop and test new income-generating projects
- Coordination of the Our News, Your Voice collective fundraising campaign, raising more than \$66,000 in 2026. Fifty-nine newsrooms have raised more than \$630,000 in one-off and recurring reader contributions over the past three years of this campaign.
- Development of new advertising and revenue opportunities, including collective advertising initiatives, digital display screens through Mercato and the development of NewsREAM, a listings platform enabling publishers to generate revenue from real estate, events, jobs and business listings
- Provision of business coaching, mentoring and revenue strategy support, including coordinating Google strategy sessions and practical guidance on reader revenue, advertising, audience growth and listings
- Sharing of practical revenue and audience growth resources, impact tracking tools, training and guidance on competitions, newsletters, events and digital engagement
- Negotiation of discounted products and services to help publishers reduce operating costs and build capacity, including AI tools, insurance, photography, content, technology and professional services
- Support for publishers to access government and philanthropic funding, including grant application assistance and advocacy for programs that support business development, innovation and the sustainability of smaller and emerging newsrooms
- Advocacy for policies that strengthen the financial sustainability of independent news publishers, including the News Bargaining Incentive, government advertising and reforms to support philanthropic investment in public interest journalism.



Kwedu News publisher Harry Taruva at the LINA Summit

"This financial year is pivotal for me. I am about to leave my day job and do this full time. Thanks to LINA I feel like I have support to keep going."

Publisher of *The Point*

"The strategic direction we got from LINA is immense. The resources we get always keep us on our toes and remind us to keep improving."

Publisher of Kwedu News

OUR KEY PILLARS CONT.



Representation and recognition

LINA champions work produced by local independent publishers through representation in policy forums, support with award recognition and impact tracking.

Actions in this area in 2025-26 included:

- Representing the interests of local and independent publishers in discussions with government, regulators and policymakers across federal, state and local jurisdictions
- Enabling direct engagement between publishers and policy-makers, and publisher participation in inquiries and policy discussions to ensure their experiences and priorities informed LINA's advocacy

- Making submissions and contributing to policy development processes on issues including the News Bargaining Incentive, the News Media Assistance Program (NewsMAP), government advertising, FOI reform and misinformation
- Sharing aggregated data, case studies and experiences with government and industry stakeholders to demonstrate the value and diversity of independent news services
- Participating in industry and sector initiatives, including academic research, think-tanks and stakeholder groups, to strengthen LINA's representation and contribution to broader public interest journalism discussions
- Supporting members to pursue industry recognition through award opportunities, application assistance and promotion of finalists, winners and other achievements
- Showcasing member publishers and their work through Meet the Newsroom podcast, industry media opportunities and other LINA channels

10

Formal submissions
to government
consultation

30+

Official meetings
with government
representatives and
staffers

"Seriously fantastic work by a small and dedicated team. Keep fighting for the little guy!"

About Time



Building LINA's sustainability and capability

In its third year of operation, LINA ensured it remains well placed to support news publishers through member retention and maintaining funding.

Actions in this area in 2025-26 included:

- Securing an extension of LINA's Commonwealth funding contract for 2025-26, supporting the organisation's ongoing work with independent publishers
- Growing LINA's membership to more than 174 independent newsrooms across Australia, including emerging, regional, community, First Nations and multicultural publishers
- Strengthening LINA's organisational capability through new policy, digital systems and design expertise, as well as governance and Board development
- Conducting LINA's Annual Membership Survey and publishing the 2024-25 Annual Report, strengthening the evidence base for advocacy, member support and sector engagement
- Strengthening LINA's national representation through engagement with government, industry and sector stakeholders, including direct advocacy in Canberra and participation in major policy and democratic reform discussions
- Expanding LINA's national profile and sector connections through international and Australian industry events, partnerships and knowledge-sharing opportunities

Chairperson's report

The past year has once again highlighted the importance of local and independent newsrooms in connecting communities. In the face of increasing global polarisation, it is grassroots media that shows us who we are and how much we have in common.

This thread runs through our work at LINA as we strive to ensure all communities have access to the information they need to navigate the spaces where we live, work and gather.

The connections between publishers, reflected strongly at this year's LINA Summit, demonstrate the value of coming together as an industry, sharing knowledge and working collaboratively to address the challenges facing local and independent news. Throughout the year we have learned about AI together, adapting to it and other technological changes. We have tested and trialed new products and systems, searching always to strengthen the sustainability of independent news services in big and small ways.

LINA has continued to make the case for stronger public interest journalism publishers. From federal and state policy consultations, including advocacy around the News Bargaining Incentive, to securing significant new funding, our work has helped ensure the needs of local and independent publishers are part of important conversations about the future of Australian media.

I thank Executive Director Claire Stuchbery and the LINA staff team for their commitment, energy and practical approach to supporting our members throughout the year. Their work has strengthened LINA's foundations and delivered meaningful opportunities for publishers to build their capacity, audiences and financial sustainability.

I also thank the LINA Board for its continued leadership and contribution. Our Board members bring a breadth of experience and expertise and generously give their time to help guide the organisation and the sector.

The challenges facing local journalism remain significant. Media concentration, changing audience behaviour, continued technological disruption and financial pressures continue to reshape the industry. But the growing strength and collaboration of LINA's members also demonstrate what is possible when independent publishers work together.

LINA will continue to champion that role while providing practical support to help publishers build sustainable, resilient news services for the future.



Jon Bisset at the LINA Summit 2026



Jon Bisset

CHAIR

LINA Board

The LINA Board held **seven meetings** in 2025-26, including one in-person planning day in Sydney.



JON BISSET, CHAIR – APPOINTED FEB 2022

Jon is the Chief Executive Officer of the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBA). He is also CEO of RPH Australia, the peak body for the Radio Reading Network, a Non-Executive Director of the Community Council for Australia, Infoxchange and Spots and Space.



PERI STRATHEARN – APPOINTED NOV 2022

Peri Strathearn is the founder and managing editor of Murray Bridge News. He has worked as a journalist since 2010, previously undertaking reporting roles for Fairfax and Australian Community Media (ACM).



JACKY BARKER – APPOINTED FEB 2022

Jacky is the founder of In the Cove since its launch in 2012. Jacky has also worked as a solicitor, and is a director of Got a Pen and a founding member of The Sydney Library of Things.



JORDAN GUIAO – APPOINTED JULY 2025

Jordan Guiao is Chief Digital Officer at The Intermedia Group and a digital media leader with 20 years' experience across the ABC, SBS and Network Ten. He specialises in technology, digital platforms and media policy, and is the author of Disconnect on Australia's digital future.

Find more about board members on [LINA's website](#).



EMMA BONES – APPOINTED FEB 2022

Emma is the General Manager of the Sydney Environment Institute. She is a registered Chartered Accountant and was previously Director, Ideas at the Judith Nelson Institute for Journalism.



CLAIRE STUCHBERY – APPOINTED MAY 2022

Claire Stuchbery is LINA's Executive Director. Previously, Claire has worked in policy and stakeholder engagement for First Nations Media Australia, senior management roles with the Community Broadcasting Foundation (CBF) and a long history in community media.



LOUISE CORNEGE – APPOINTED NOVEMBER 2024

Louise Cornegé has more than two decades of experience in marketing and communications in the media and publishing including roles at Allen & Unwin, Pan Macmillan, the ABC, and the University of Queensland. She now works at The Conversation as Director of Engagement.



Left image:
LINA Board Members at the Board Planning Meeting in October 2025

Right image:
LINA Board Members at the LINA Summit 2026



Executive Director's report



Claire Stuchbery
LINA Executive Director

This past year marked a transformative period of growth, resilience, and collaboration for the Local Independent News Association (LINA). Transitioning from our 'start-up' phase, LINA's third year of operation was one of consolidation, drawing on deep listening to the community of newsrooms we have built. In doing so, LINA has deepened its role as an anchor for independent and/or local journalism.

At the heart of our mission is overcoming the isolation that can impact independent news publishers. I am proud to bring together an expanding group of newsrooms and industry partners who bring a spirit of reciprocity to LINA and to fellow publishers.

The feedback from our annual Summit, this year bringing 122 delegates from 76 organisations together in Murray Bridge, South Australia, highlighted this mindset. Publishers reported feeling connected and supported by their peers, not viewing fellow publishers as competitors, but working collaboratively to combat news apathy and strengthen community trust.

Our collective advocacy and policy engagement achieved critical milestones at state and federal levels. LINA secured vital grant approvals, including \$2 million in federal support from the Commonwealth government, funding from the NSW Premier's Department for youth journalism, and an Environmental Reporting grant that resulted in 149 articles on climate issues. Most of this resourcing flows straight to news publishers to support their work. Simultaneously, LINA championed independent digital newsrooms in policy consultations across South Australia, Queensland, New South Wales, and federal frameworks including the News MAP and the News Bargaining Incentive.

To build long-term capacity, capability, and financial health across our newsrooms, LINA focused heavily on high-impact programs and member tools. Key initiatives include:

- Reader revenue and audience engagement: Coordinating the annual *Our News, Your Voice* campaign, which has helped participating publishers raise over \$630,000 in reader contributions through PressPatron over the past three years.
- Business sustainability and coaching: Partnering with Other Labs to deliver structured growth programs, providing publishers with tailored mentoring to strengthen operational business models.
- Youth and emerging Writer Pathways: Executing the *Know Your Neighbour* program to train young community reporters alongside the CMT0, while supporting new writers into ongoing media roles through the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund.
- AI literacy and digital tools: Releasing practical policy templates, alongside member offers for assistive technology and content protection tools like Tollbit.

Complementing these projects, LINA launched a redesigned website featuring expanded resource guides, introduced the Newsroom Starter Kit to help address news deserts, and delivered direct 1:1 technical, HR, and operational support to dozens of member newsrooms.

As we look to the year ahead, LINA's focus remains providing practical and meaningful support to news publishers - services that save time and money. We remain steadfast in backing local news founders, protecting public interest journalism and creating a policy environment for independent media to thrive.

Our principles are focused not on news outlets that share information into communities, but on news services that give voice to diverse perspectives and amplify stories out of communities. All news is local to somewhere and all newsrooms must be useful in fostering strong and connected communities across Australia.

Thank you to our fierce little team who work tirelessly to support member publishers, our funders and all of the supportive partners who make this work possible. A rising tide lifts all boats.

LINA staff team

Claire Stuchbery
Executive Director

Commenced July 2022

Nell O'Shea Carré
Head of Policy & Communications

Commenced January 2024

Adrian O'Hagan
Technical Manager

Commenced June 2024

Jennifer Reuter
Digital Design & Systems
Coordinator

Commenced September 2025

Michelle Surowiec
Services Administrator

Commenced November 2025

Gary Dickson
Policy Officer

Commenced October 2025

Amy Janowski
Content & Communications Officer

Commenced April 2026

Evie Dinkelmeyer
Communications Officer

April 2024 to March 2026

Zahra Khalid
Data & Insights Analyst

Commenced October 2023 (on leave
for 2024-25)

Clare Hastings
Executive Support Officer

February 2024 to September 2025

Cheryl Charilou-Ung
Advertising Network Manager

October 2025 to March 2026

Adam Weatherhead (consultant)
Leading the Newsroom Starter Kit
and Newsletter Growth Kit



LINA staff team at the LINA Summit 2026
From left: Michelle Surowiec, Evie Dinkelmeyer, Nell O'Shea Carré,
Gary Dickson, Claire Stuchbery, Adrian O'Hagan, Jennifer Reuter.

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 \$250k and operating with fewer than four staff.

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



In the Cove journalists



Susie Williams (Fleurieu App), Anita McInnis (Yanchep News), Lawrence Gibbons (CityHub Sydney)



Nataya Weaver reporting for the Manly Observer in LINA's Know Your Neighbour program

"LINA has provided invaluable guidance, training, advocacy and practical support that has helped us navigate an increasingly challenging media landscape. They have consistently shared funding opportunities, encouraged independent publishers to apply for grants, negotiated access to valuable tools and resources, and created a collaborative network where members are willing to share knowledge and help one another."

Publisher of Fleurieu App

Hallmarks of LINA membership

To be accepted as members of LINA, publishers must:

- Publish 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;
- Be 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);
- Engage journalists and contributors who are based within the organisation's location/community; and
- Be 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

"Well-functioning economies rely on widely accessible, verified, and trustworthy information ... Public interest journalism provides a vital supply of such information."

Open letter from High Level Panel Forum on Information and Democracy



The Post's Bret Christian was honoured with a Kennedy's Lifetime Achievement Award



LINA staff at work: Jennifer, Adrian, Michelle & Gary



Workshop at the 2026 Summit



Moruya Mail recognised with award



Representatives from LINA and the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts visit The Westsider

Membership overview

AS AT 30 JUNE 2026

"LINA has provided the resources and support which has given us the confidence to try new initiatives like a donation campaign. The Canva Pro subscription has given us extra capabilities for quick and easy designs and social media posts/videos. ABC legal has backed us to be bolder in our reporting, knowing where we stand from a legal point of view. This is a great service which we would otherwise find it difficult to afford by ourselves."

Publisher of Village Voice

3

Median staff headcount per newsroom

73%

Used AI in their business, up from 51% in 2025

49%

Are led by women

2.0 FTE

Median staff capacity per newsroom

\$220k

Median annual revenue per newsroom

82%

Generate revenue from two or more broad income categories

55%

Rated their current business sustainability positively

16k

Median monthly website visitors per newsroom

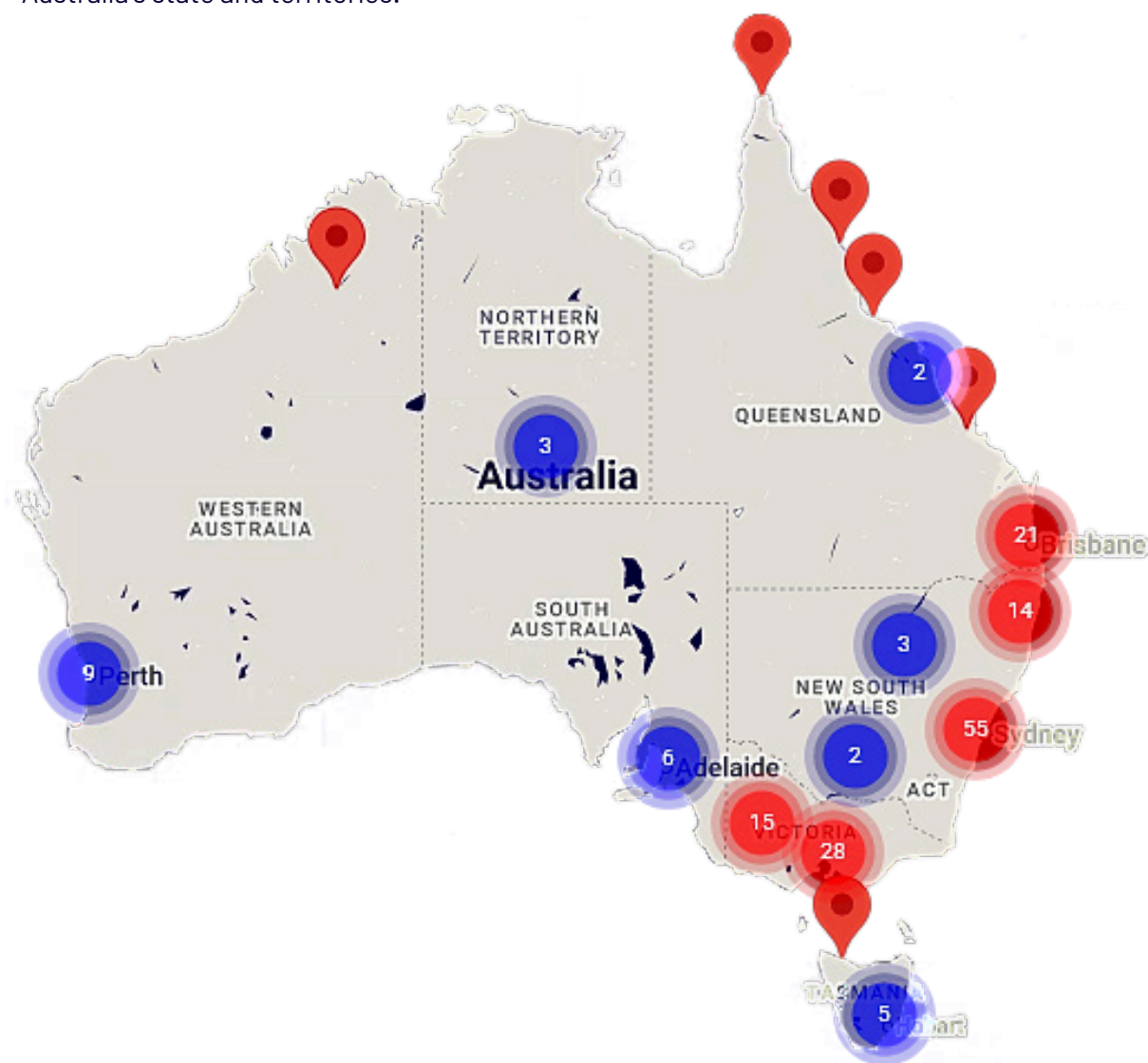
83%

Of published news content is original reporting

Findings from respondents to LINA's 2025-26 Annual Member Survey, snapshot as of 30 June 2026

MEMBERSHIP OVERVIEW CONT.

LINA is proud to represent members across all of Australia's state and territories.



"LINA has helped me realise that the Post has a commercial value as well as a social and community one. I have sought advertising for the first time, and been pleasantly surprised. I hope to expand this in future."

Publisher of Bass Coast Post

2025-26 Highlights

Launching and growing newsrooms: Newsroom Starter Kit

The Newsroom Starter Kit was launched as a free, step-by-step resource for individuals and communities establishing or growing an independent local news service.

The Kit provides practical guidance across business structure, operations, editorial, audience development, revenue generation and risk management, supported by case studies, templates and direct assistance. It was expanded during the year to provide more comprehensive support for new and pre-launch newsrooms.

Building new revenue streams: Business development

LINA introduced new tools and programs to help publishers develop additional revenue opportunities, including the Sustainability Growth Program.

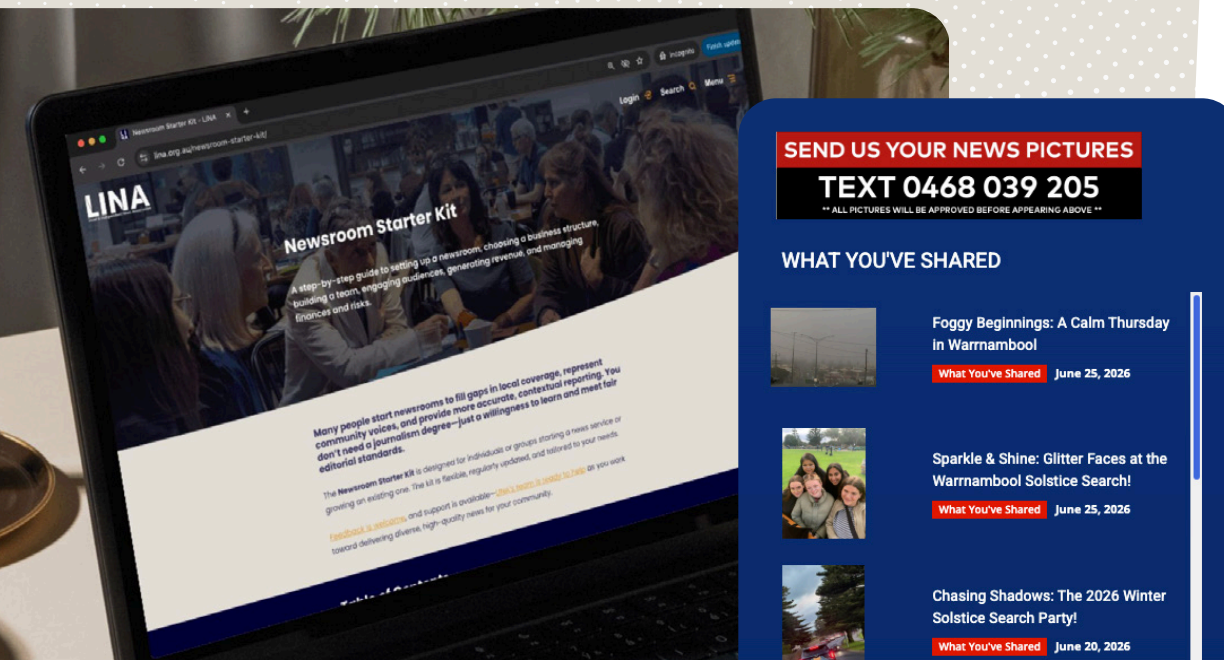
The 10-week Sustainability Growth Program provided expert mentoring and hands-on support to develop income-generating projects, delivered in partnership with Other Labs. Six publishers participated in the program.

Growing audiences: Newsletters and community engagement

LINA expanded its audience development support through the Newsletter Growth Kit, new training and practical resources on audience engagement and community contributions.

The eight-chapter Newsletter Growth Kit covers newsletter strategy, audience growth and monetisation, while the Partyline trial gave member newsrooms an opportunity to test new ways of gathering stories and contributions directly from their communities.

Partyline in action on the Southwest Local News website.



OUR NEWS. YOUR VOICE.

Keep local news thriving.

DONATE TODAY

HIGHLIGHTS CONT.

Growing reader revenue | Our News, Your Voice campaign

LINA's annual Our News, Your Voice campaign ran from 3-10 May 2026 as a collaborative fundraising and awareness week for local and independent news services.

In 2026, a total of \$56,547 was raised directly through public donations, in addition to \$10,554 in matched funding. The campaign also saw strong ongoing awareness and support for independent journalism, with new recurring donors signing up to support publishers.

The week-long collective fundraising initiative brought together more than 30 independent digital newsrooms to strengthen community journalism and diversify Australia's media landscape.

This was the third collective fundraising campaign coordinated by LINA. The campaign grows awareness of the role of local news in communities, while upskilling newsrooms in digital campaign strategies. To date, it has raised more than \$630k in reader contributions to participating newsrooms.

+\$67k

Raised for
newsrooms

Public interest journalism case studies

MURRAY BRIDGE NEWS x MANLY OBSERVER - SPARKING A NATIONAL PETITION

After connecting through the LINA Summit, Murray Bridge News and Manly Observer collaborated on reporting about a Murray Bridge mother facing deportation. The story generated more than 600,000 social media views, widespread media attention and thousands of petition signatures. Due to the media coverage, the case reached the Minister for Immigration, with the woman subsequently granted a temporary bridging visa while her case was reconsidered.

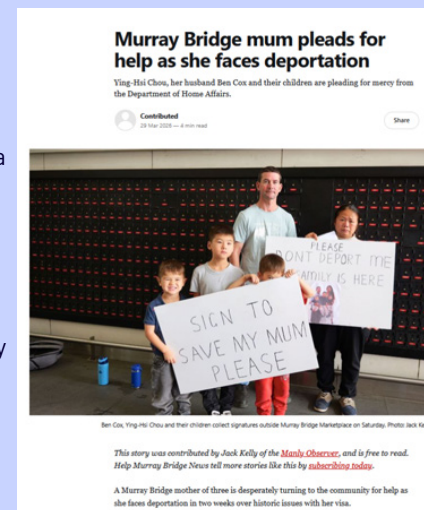
THE KLAXON - EXPOSING 'DARK MONEY'

The Klaxon investigated the use of 'dark money' in Australian politics, shining a light on astroturfing campaigns; for example how fake grassroots movements can be orchestrated by wealthy vested interests. The investigation was supported by a LINA grant, and preceded a national inquiry into the issue of astroturfing and climate disinformation in Australia.

FLEURIEU APP - PROVIDING CRITICAL EMERGENCY UPDATES

Fleurieu App shared immediate push notifications during the Nangkita bushfire. As the emergency unfolded, the newsroom provided readers with alerts within minutes and continued providing updates throughout the emergency aftermath and recovery.

"Many people later told us they first became aware of the fire through our notifications, demonstrating the important role an independent local newsroom can play in keeping communities informed during fast-moving emergency situations."



Supporting members to save time and money | Member services

In 2025-26 LINA offered members:

SUBSCRIPTION AND SERVICE DISCOUNTS FROM THE FOLLOWING PARTNERS:

- Exclusive access to discounted AAP subscriptions
- Australian Press Council membership
- Group membership to Broadstreet Ads
- Discounted insurance through KBI Group - specialist insurance brokers
- Free Canva Pro subscriptions
- Discounted access to CitySpark
- Getty Images - discount on licensing fees
- Potent Puzzles - discount on puzzle services
- PressPatron - partnership on payment platform
- WP Engine - discount across all plans and products

GUIDES ON THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

- Newsroom quality checklist: 10 steps to error-free reporting
- How three publishers use competitions as a community engagement tool
- Navigating the ACMA Register of Eligible News Businesses application process
- Two small publishers share their learnings about supporting emerging journalists
- Emergency reporting resources
- Cloudflare for Independent Publishers: 2026 Cheat Sheet
- Adding puzzles to your site for monetisation and retention
- Setting up monitoring for your website

- Launch of the Newsroom Starter Kit, providing free, practical guidance for people establishing or growing an independent newsroom
- Delivery of the Newsletter Growth Kit, providing practical guidance on newsletter strategy, audience growth and monetisation

OTHER MEMBER SERVICES

- Development of AI resources, including practical guidance, policy templates and tools to help newsrooms adopt AI while maintaining editorial standards
- Delivery of new training and resources covering video content, source protection, emergency reporting, copyright and privacy
- Introduction of new member technology and digital resilience support, including access to Cloudflare's Project Galileo and cybersecurity advice
- Expansion of grants and business support, including the Emerging Writers Grant, public interest journalism micro-grants and the Sustainability Growth Program

ONGOING MEMBER SERVICES DURING 2025-2026

- Regular newsletters, Knowledge Centre resources, guides, blogs and practical tip sheets covering journalism, business development, technology, revenue and audience growth

- Member discounts and subsidised access to industry products, services, training and events, including insurance, content, photography, advertising and technology
- Expansion of on-demand expert support across technology, IT, HR, legal issues, Google audience strategy, impact tracking and business planning
- On-demand training, webinars and professional development opportunities on topics such as monetising a community calendar, impact tracking, video content creation,, alongside award and grant application support
- Seeking partnerships and resource opportunities to bring additional resourcing into the industry to support public interest journalism
- Ongoing policy representation, government engagement and member briefings on issues affecting local and independent news publishers
- Peer-to-peer support through LINA's Slack community, in-person meet-ups and events, Meet the Newsrooms podcast series and other opportunities to share knowledge and experiences
- Practical newsroom support across editorial, legal, business, technology, HR, AI, revenue and audience development
- Expansion of legal support through free pre-publication reviews and updated legal and policy templates developed with ABC Legal

Strengthening connections

LINA Annual Summit

The fourth annual LINA Summit was held in Murray Bridge, South Australia from 25-27 March 2026 in partnership with Murray Bridge News.

With over 120 attendees, the Summit brought together LINA member newsrooms from across Australia, strengthening the connections that underpin Australia's independent news sector. Publishers gathered to share ideas, solve common challenges and learn from one another, reinforcing the value of a national support network for newsrooms serving their local communities through public interest journalism.

The three-day program combined hands-on workshops with big-picture conversations about the future of public interest journalism.

"I've definitely improved my network as a result of LINA. I've been introduced to publishing peers that have supported my work and have made what we do feel a little less lonely!"

Anonymous Publisher

"The LINA conference was excellent and directly useful for the organisation."

Publisher of Combined Coast News

Keynote speakers David Grant (Blue Engine Collaborative) and Ben May (The Code Company) challenged publishers to rethink audience growth, AI and sustainable business models, while practical sessions explored video journalism, community listening, emergency reporting, newsletters, fundraising and advertising.

Some of the strongest discussions centred on journalism's role in building stronger communities and democracy, from reporting through emergencies to working with content creators and fostering civic participation. Throughout the Summit, publishers shared practical innovations they could take home, demonstrating that collaboration remains at the heart of the local and independent news sector.

LINA thanks our Summit sponsor partners:
Advanced Planning Systems, Australian Government, Copyright Agency, DailyMotion, Everymind/Mindframe, Google News Initiative, KBI Insurance, MagManager, McKinnon, Menzies Foundation, Pongrass, The Australia Institute, WP Engine



Partnerships

LINA strives to connect its members with relevant industry partners to leverage expertise, scale and resources for developing news services.

New partnerships for 2025-26 include:

NSW PREMIER'S DEPARTMENT

Partnership delivering the Know Your Neighbour program, supporting newsrooms in New South Wales to mentor young storytellers and strengthen community journalism.

COPYRIGHT AGENCY

Connecting members with copyright royalty opportunities, advocacy, practical publisher support, and the Emerging Writers Grant.

MERCATO

Providing member newsrooms with access to digital signage screens in local businesses to promote content and create new advertising opportunities.

OTHER LABS

Strategic coaching program helping member publishers strengthen business sustainability and growth.

CITYSPARK

Practical training for publishers on monetising community event listings.

GETTY IMAGES

Joined LINA's partner network to provide additional industry support for member publishers.

POTENT

Discounted access to interactive puzzles to support audience engagement.

SCOUTLY

Advertiser prospecting tool to help publishers identify new commercial opportunities.

TOLLBIT

Digital protection tool to monitor, manage and license bot traffic on websites.



Chloe & Jenni, Other Labs



Chris Krewson (LION) and Claire Stuchbery (LINA)



Young NSW storytellers in the Know Your Neighbour program

PARTNERSHIPS CONT.

LINA strives to connect its members with relevant industry partners to leverage expertise, scale and resources for developing news services.

Ongoing partnerships continued in 2025/26 include:

AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATED PRESS (AAP)

Member publishers continued to access discounted national, state and international news coverage, along with AAP's photography service, helping newsrooms focus more resources on local reporting.

AUSTRALIAN PRESS COUNCIL

Group membership to provide a complaints handling mechanism to even the smallest publishers.

AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Ongoing strategic partnerships supporting public interest journalism across Australia, including knowledge sharing through emergency reporting resources, pre-publication legal checks and practical newsroom support for member publishers.

BALANCED EFFECT

Fundraising relationships partner.

BROADSTREET ADS

Ad server platform, including leads generation functions.

CANVA

Ongoing support for small newsrooms to use pro account features and presenting at the Online News Association conference to share innovations from Australian publishers with US newsrooms.

COMMUNITY MEDIA TRAINING ORGANISATION

For bespoke training development

GOOGLE NEWS INITIATIVE

Continued training, audience growth, revenue and AI support through workshops, creator programs and publisher development opportunities.

KBI GROUP

Discounted insurance, risk management advice and practical support for member publishers.

NATURE MEDIA CENTRE

Collaborating to improve access to spokespeople on nature and the environment.

NURTURE HR CONSULTING

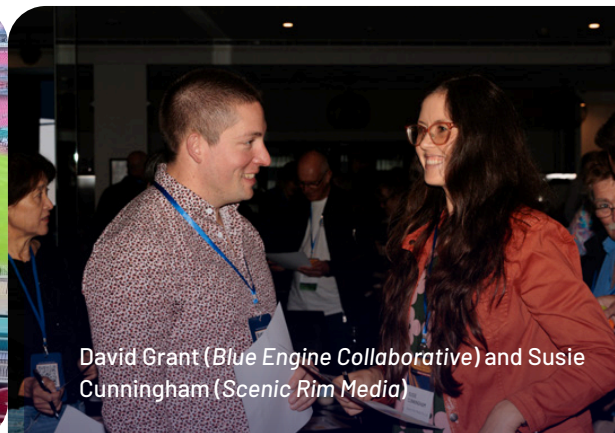
Providing specialised HR support to publishers.

Stakeholder relationships within the news, media and publishing industries in Australia and internationally, including...

The Digital Publishers Alliance, Public Interest Journalism Initiative, Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, Alliance for Journalists' Freedom, University of Canberra, Impact Architects, LION Publishers, Public Interest Publishers Alliance, Independent Multicultural Media Association.



LINA's Claire with other delegates at the 2025 LION Summit



David Grant (Blue Engine Collaborative) and Susie Cunningham (Scenic Rim Media)



Lucinda Gardiner, Copyright Agency

Industry leadership

CREATING A POLICY LANDSCAPE THAT SUPPORTS MEDIA DIVERSITY

A major focus throughout 2025–26 was the proposed News Bargaining Incentive (NBI). LINA engaged with Ministers, MPs, Senators, Treasury and the Department of Communications throughout the consultation process, making the case that smaller publishers must be included in any future bargaining framework.

Working alongside industry partners, LINA advocated for stronger incentives for platforms to negotiate with small and medium publishers, a greater share of deals for independent newsrooms, and dedicated grant funding to support emerging and community-based publishers.

LINA contributed multiple submissions, participated in direct consultations with government, and coordinated the alignment of 12 industry organisations in a statement calling for improvements to the proposed legislation. Following this engagement, draft policy was updated in August 2026 to provide greater support to local, regional and diverse news publishers.

BUILDING BRIDGES FOR MORE PUBLIC INTEREST JOURNALISM

LINA played an active role in shaping new government support programs for journalism. Representatives travelled to Canberra several times during the year, meeting with elected representatives and senior government officials, and bringing member publishers directly into policy discussions.

LINA coordinated a ‘tour’ of Melbourne newsrooms for representatives from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts. Firsthand insight into the realities of operating local news services helped inform the design of the News Media Assistance Program (NewsMAP).

LINA also advocated for the News Innovation Fund and Journalism Assistance Fund to better support emerging publishers, volunteer-supported newsrooms, business development and long-term sustainability.

Beyond federal funding reform, LINA continued advocating for policies that strengthen local journalism at every level of government. This included working with the NSW Premier's Department to deliver the ‘Know Your Neighbour’ social cohesion project.

LINA collaborated with the NSW Office of Local Government on a webinar (co-presented with Western Sydney Publishers Troy Dodds), to improve connections between councils and local news services. LINA advocated in Queensland and South Australia, and began work on a Victorian election campaign, for government advertising and public notice policies that recognise digital local newsrooms alongside traditional print publishers to strengthen civic engagement.



LINA representatives with Senator Sarah Henderson



LINA representatives with Senator Sarah Hanson-Young



LINA in Canberra

“LINA's advocacy for the industry is most significant, with high quality submissions that reflect our industry segment.”

Publisher of *Combined Coast News*



Government representatives tour LINA newsrooms.

INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP CONT.

LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELD: PRACTICAL HELP WITH ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY

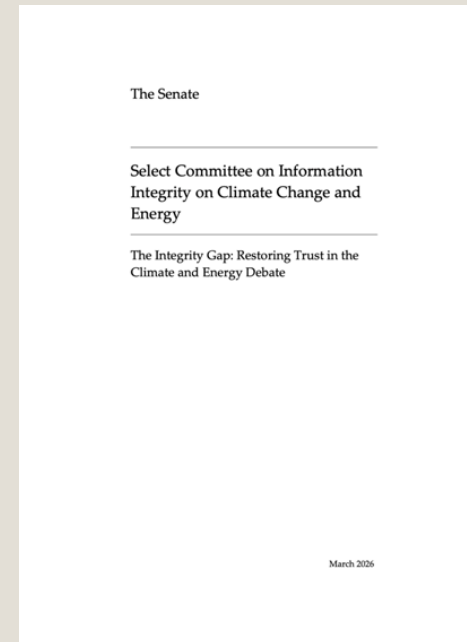
Throughout the year, LINA also provided practical policy support for members as the regulatory landscape evolved, particularly in relation to funding access. Newsrooms received guidance on applying to the Australian Communications Media Authority's Register of Eligible News Businesses, privacy law changes, copyright and AI issues, and emerging government programs, alongside regular policy briefings and discussions.

Similarly, LINA aimed to continue facilitating participation of members directly with government consultation processes, research groups, and other industry consultation processes. Supporting the access of government, academia and the public to engage with a range of independent news organisations promotes policy that supports greater media diversity.

PROMOTING GREATER INFORMATION INTEGRITY

Greater information integrity and democratic accountability are core motivators for LINA's work to increase public interest journalism. LINA made submissions to parliamentary inquiries on climate misinformation and disinformation, Freedom of Information reform, and arts and cultural philanthropy, consistently arguing that sustainable local and independent journalism is a critical defence against misinformation and an essential part of informed communities. LINA's recommendations were reflected in the final report from the inquiry into Information Integrity on Climate Change and Energy, demonstrating the growing influence of local newsroom perspectives in national policy debates.

"... The Local & Independent News Association (LINA)... noted that local news publishers are highly trusted by their communities, with audiences five times more likely to visit a local news website than Google or Facebook for local news, and almost 10 times more likely to visit a local newspaper website than a local council website for news and information. LINA pointed to the Illawarra Flame as an example of the critical role played by local and independent news organisations in providing accurate information and countering mis/disinformation within local communities (see Box 6.1)."



LINA's submission to the inquiry into Information Integrity on Climate Change and Energy was quoted throughout the Senate Select Committee's report.

Box 6.1 The Illawarra Flame

Background: The *Illawarra Flame* began as a printed business directory. It expanded into an online news service in 2022, focusing on sharing voices and issues relevant to the Illawarra region on the New South Wales coast.

The mis/disinformation incident: In October 2023, there was heated community discussion about proposed offshore wind farms. A Facebook post started circulating, claiming that a University of Tasmania study had found wind turbines to be dangerous to whales. This claim was also circulated in national media and parliament.

The Illawarra Flame's role: Concerned about the divisive impact of the story, the *Illawarra Flame* investigated the claims. It discovered the entire report was fabricated, with no scientific evidence supporting the notion that wind farms harm whales.

Outcome: The *Illawarra Flame* successfully combatted the misinformation being distributed through the community and was featured on Media Watch for its role in uncovering the truth.²⁸

INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP CONT.



Tom Mooney (McKinnon), Claire Stuchbery and Liz Gillies (Menzies Leadership Foundation)

SUPPORTING DEMOCRACY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

LINA joined a strategy advisory group for McKinnon's Democracy Counts campaign in December, a coalition of organisations advocating for practical democratic reforms that support informed communities. LINA's input helped shape a priority focus on greater funding for public interest journalism, and Democracy Counts provided extensive support for LINA's work throughout the development of the News Bargaining Incentive.

The campaign was launched in March, at an online event featuring Governor-General Sam Mostyn speaking alongside LINA's Claire Stuchbery, and others. The work centres on reforms and support structures that underpin civic engagement and better decision-making processes at all levels of government.



Top: LINA's Claire Stuchbery speaks to media at the *Democracy Counts* launch.
Right: With McKinnon CEO Leigh O'Neill and Senator David Pocock.
Left: The national townhall features Governor-General Sam Mostyn AC

INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP CONT.

LINA SUBMISSIONS DURING 2025-2026 INCLUDED:

Climate and energy misinformation and disinformation

LINA submitted that governments have a responsibility to help guarantee public access to healthy and diverse information and communications systems. Combating misinformation and disinformation, both in preventing the dissemination of false information and of countering this information after its circulation, requires a coordinated, multifaceted government response.

Freedom of Information Amendment Bill 2025

LINA expressed concern about the proposed Freedom of Information amendments, which could undermine transparency, accountability and the public's right to know.

News Bargaining Incentive

LINA submitted to consultation on the Treasury's 2025 News Bargaining Incentive consultation paper, and subsequent draft legislation. LINA also responded to consultation on the proposed revenue distribution scheme.

Pre-Budget Submissions

LINA outlined planned projects and necessary policy levers to support public interest journalism in its 2026 Pre-Budget Submission. LINA also made pre-budget submissions to the Queensland Treasury and Victorian Treasury.

Inquiry into arts and cultural philanthropy

LINA outlined the role of independent newsrooms in Australia's arts and cultural landscape, including in fostering philanthropy. The submission proposes policy reforms to assist news organisations with this function by integrating them into arts and cultural philanthropy frameworks.

Queensland Government Waste Reduction and Recycling Act

LINA responded to a proposed change that could hurt the ability of Queenslanders to access local news, and provide local governments with a new power to punish unfavourable reporting and/or privilege the distribution of their own communications at the expense of independent journalism.

All submissions are available on the LINA website.

Beyond government and policy engagement, LINA represented its members by presenting and/or attending the following other events:

CONFERENCES AND SUMMITS

- LION Publishers Summit - USA
- CBAA Annual Conference - Hobart
- Google News Summit - Sydney
- Online News Association (ONA) Conference - USA
- INMA Asia/Pacific News Media Summit - Online
- Legalwise Media Law conference - Online
- Mumbrella Publish conference - Sydney
- 2025 SXSW conference - Sydney

FORUMS, PANELS AND INDUSTRY EVENTS

- Menzies Foundation Transforming Systems Forum - Melbourne
- Kennedy Foundation Industry Gathering - Melbourne
- Brunswick Voice 5-Year Anniversary Event: Local News, Who Needs It? - Melbourne
- Broadstreet Publisher Talks and Networking Day - Melbourne
- Monash University Launch of the Constructive Institute (Australia) - Melbourne

WORKSHOPS, FOCUS GROUPS AND WORKING GROUPS

- Croakey Health Media Climate and Health Workshop - Online
- University of Melbourne Working Group on Trusted Information Sources - Melbourne
- RMIT University News, Technology and Society Network Workshop/Focus Group and subsequent report launch - Melbourne
- Mindframe Media Advisory Group - Online
- Consultation with News & Media Research Centre - Canberra
- Monash University Journalism Course Advisory Board
- Countering Disinformation industry group presentation - Online



LINA's Adrian & Nell at Mumbrella Publish



13 - 19 OCTOBER

**SXSW SYDNEY 2025
OFFICIAL SPEAKER**

LINA's Claire
presented at SXSW

Amplifying news stories

LINA raises awareness of the work local and independent news publishers undertake in communities across media and social media platforms.

Social media spotlighting includes video content with newsrooms discussing the importance of their work, sharing achievements and milestones, and increasing public understanding of the role and value of independent news.

Social media is also an opportunity for the LINA team to communicate directly with newsrooms about their work and available support.



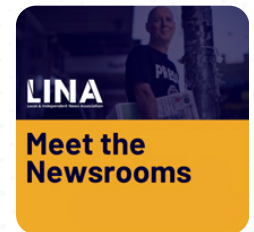
LINA Executive Director Claire Stuchbery was interviewed about the news media bargaining incentive on C31 Melbourne.

Meet the Newsrooms podcast

LINA's Meet the Newsrooms podcast continued to showcase the people behind Australia's local and independent newsrooms, creating another way for members to learn from one another and share practical ideas.

During 2025–26, five episodes were released featuring Fitzmedia, *Brunswick Voice*, *The Conversation*, *About Time* and *Manningham Life*.

In each 10-minute episode, founders and editors reflected on the stories that mattered most to their communities, the challenges of running an independent newsroom, and the innovative approaches they are using to build audiences and strengthen sustainable news businesses. The podcast is available on Apple Podcasts and Spotify, and continues to foster connections across LINA's member network.

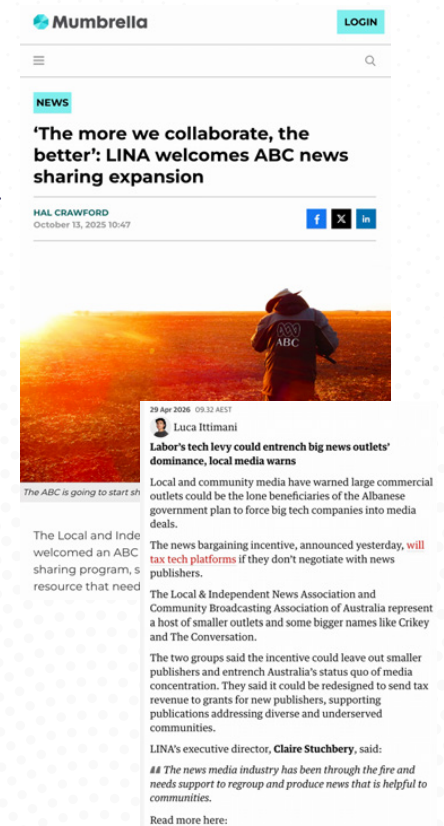


In the news

LINA's work, priorities and views were represented in over 70 news and opinion articles, media commentary, radio features, podcast episodes, livestreams and video news packages throughout the year.

These included mentions and interviews via ABC Radio, Mumbrella, National Radio News, Ad News, Ette Media, News Corp, Cheek, The Guardian, and a broad range of other outlets, including many LINA member publishers. Key topics covered include:

- The annual LINA Summit and Our News Your Voice collective fundraising campaign
- News MAP and News Bargaining Incentive
- Protecting public interest journalism as a public good
- Climate misinformation
- Journalism Assistance Fund
- Media freedom and diversity
- AI impact on local and independent news
- LINA's other policy engagement work



Member engagement and consultation

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

- Direct phone calls and emails
- Discussion at our annual Summit
- Meetings/shop-talk sessions and an annual update
- 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
- Hosting in-person casual meet-ups for publishers in Melbourne, Sydney and Hobart

"LINA has significantly improved both my confidence and my skill set as an independent regional publisher. Through training, mentoring, networking opportunities, webinars and one-on-one support, I've developed a much stronger understanding of digital publishing, newsroom sustainability, audience growth, business strategy and grant opportunities. Just as importantly, being part of a network of independent publishers has given me confidence that I'm not facing these challenges alone. The willingness of both the LINA team and fellow members to share their knowledge and experience has been invaluable."

Publisher of *Fleurieu App*

"LINA is excellent. We're grateful to have access to LINA's resources and to feel we have their support if/when issues come up! Love the events, the community and the info provided on everything from reporting in emergencies to applying for grants."

Anonymous publisher



LINA joins the *Brunswick Voice* to celebrate their 5 year birthday



Government representatives with Neos Kosmos publisher Christopher Gogos and LINA's Claire Stuchbery



LINA ensured independent publishers were represented in government roundtables and other consultations

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

OUR MISSION
Supporting local and independent public interest news publishers to distribute news content via digital media.

OUR ACTIONS
Providing practical, hands-on support for publishers for capacity building in newsrooms.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

NEWS MEDIA INDUSTRY

ORGANISATION

STRENGTHENING PUBLIC INTEREST JOURNALISM

BUILDING CAPACITY OF NEWSROOMS

GROWING FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF MEMBER PUBLISHERS

REPRESENTATION AND RECOGNITION

BUILDING LINA'S SUSTAINABILITY AND CAPABILITY

ACTIVITIES

Increasing capability for public interest news reporting and growing audience engagement with local and diverse news sources

- Pre-publication pro-bono legal support
- Grant programs to expand content production capability - micro-grants, civility incubators
- Up skilling and training
- Group membership of Australian Press Council
- Site monitoring service
- Expanding partnerships with academic institutions and others to grow career pathways

Expanding skillsets, capacity and shared services to generate economies of scale for small businesses

- Development and currency of resources and templates, including content calendar
- Regular 'shop talk' sessions and meetings for networking and learning
- Centralised HR & bookkeeping support
- Upskilling programs, bespoke courses
- Facilitated Slack channel discussion group
- Annual Summit event
- Centralised IT and technical support and associated tech partnerships

Building news publishers' financial sustainability - including revenue generating actions

- Supplier discounters - KBI, AAP, Canva etc
- Collective bargaining under News Bargaining Incentive
- Our News. Your Voice - collective fundraising campaign
- Subsidised Sustainability Growth Program
- Hands-on events and fundraising support
- Platform Collective - advertising sales representation
- NewsREAM listings SaaS
- Business development incubator
- Explore AI licensing opportunities and copyright income

Championing the work done by local independent publishers

- Representation in policy forums, including government liaison and submissions on relevant policy topics
- Providing support to members for award and recognition opportunities
- Amplifying case study examples of journalistic impact from members

Ensuring the association is well placed to support news publishers

- Seeking funding for both the industry and LINA's operations
- Building self-generated income streams
- Membership retention and growth

SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

- Average number of stories per publisher increased by +10%
- Instances of newsroom collaboration recorded +5 per annum
- Grant-funded reporting is returning positive impacts in communities
- Minimal complaint investigations through Australian Press Council <2 per annum
- Participation in online training sessions +12 publishers per session (average)

- Participation in shared services +10 publishers per service
- Recommendations from sustainability audits implements, +20 improvements recorded
- LINA members have increased workforce by FTE and volunteer/contributor headcount
- Growth in website traffic and newsletter subscriptions +10%
- Slack channel engagement up +10%
- New or updated resources published +5 per annum
- Average +8 publishers attending deep dive program per session
- Summit event attracts positive feedback overall +80% satisfied

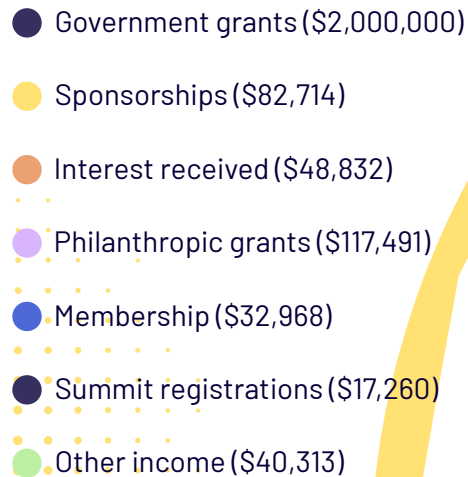
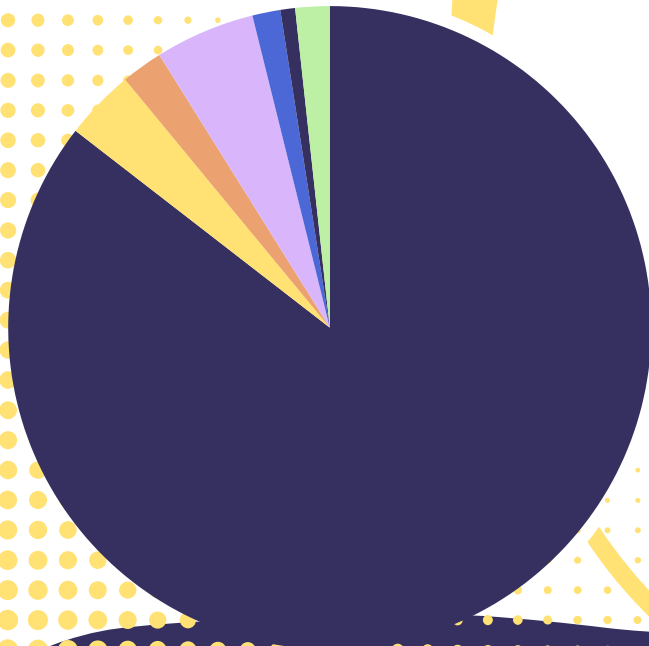
- Increase in publisher revenue +15% median
- Growth in reader revenue +20% overall
- NewsREAM product is launched and returning profit to members
- Platform Collective is launched and bringing advertising bookings to members
- New revenue products launched +20 per annum
- Reduced operational costs, +25% increase in value of discounts offered to members
- Growth in event participation +15 events support per annum
- Watching brief on opportunities for collective bargaining in effect

- LINA members have a voice on industry-wide issues
- LINA is influencing policy change
- LINA is referenced in media and industry research publications
- The work of LINA members is recognised and rewarded for its quality with +5 shortlisted award nominees per annum

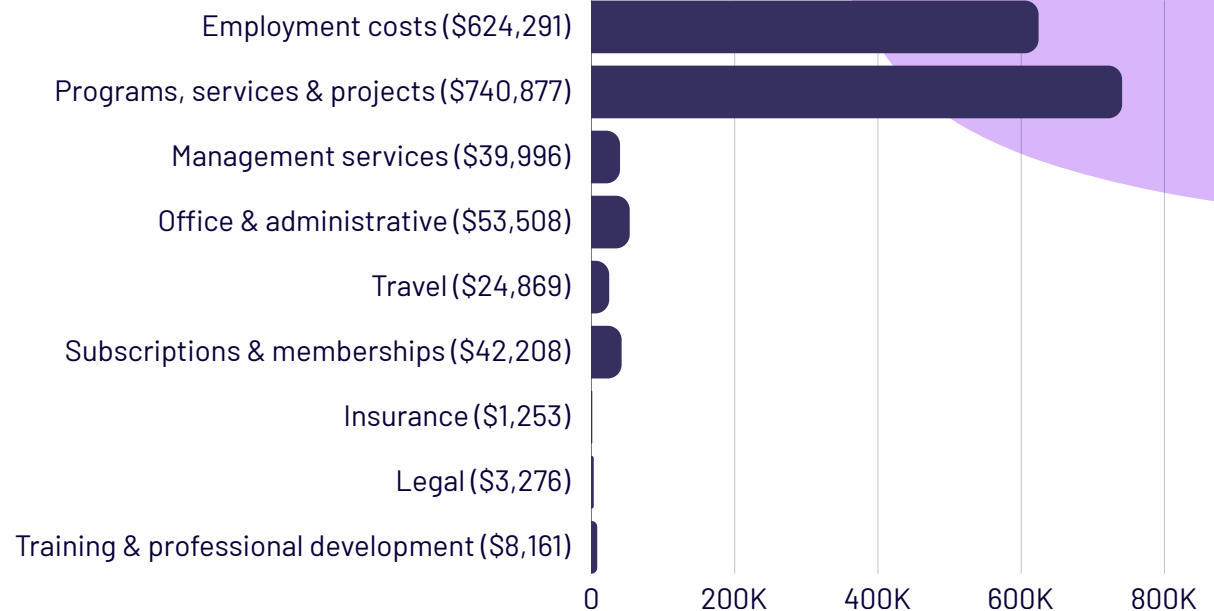
- Membership satisfaction +90%
- Increase in membership numbers +10% per annum
- Minimal newsroom closures <2 per annum
- Self-generated revenue represents +20% LINA's income
- LINA's reserved funds represent 3 months operational expenses

Financials 2025-26

Revenue



Expenses



"LINA has provided valuable support to independent publishers. We appreciate its work and encourage continued support for multicultural and community media through training, networking, and funding opportunities."

Publisher of *Bidesh Bangla*



Thank you

LINA gratefully acknowledges the support of the Commonwealth of Australia and the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBA), along with the event sponsors of the 2026 LINA Summit and other funding partners who have contributed to making our work possible throughout the year.



COMMUNITY
BROADCASTING
ASSOCIATION OF
AUSTRALIA



Australian Government

Department of Communications and the Arts

Contact

- 🌐 lina.org.au
- ✉ communications@lina.org.au
- 📘 [Facebook](#)
- 🌐 [LinkedIn](#)
- 📷 [Instagram](#)



Peri Strathearn presents at the LINA Summit



LINA's Nell and Claire representing publishers in Canberra



Claire speaking in the Canva Lounge at the Online News Association conference



The Code Company's Ben May presents at the Summit



LINA staff team, December 2025



ICTV & Yanchep News