

Director, News and Journalism Section
Platforms and News Branch – Online Safety, Media and Platforms Division
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
GPO Box 594, Canberra ACT 2601
news.journalism@communications.gov.au

26 Feb 2024

Submission to News Media Assistance Program (News MAP)

We welcome the opportunity to make a submission on the News Media Assistance Program consultation paper.

We are Chief Investigators of the Australian Research Council funded project, [Addressing Misinformation with Media Literacy through Cultural Institutions](#) and we have carried out a series of media literacy research projects over the past decade.

We are making this submission because we believe our current and recent media literacy research projects are strongly aligned with some of the focus areas in the consultation paper. While we wish to make some general comments on the overall aspirations and purpose of the News MAP, our response is focused on the following sections and related questions:

- Engagement (questions 4.1-4.3); and
- Media Literacy (questions 10.1-10.5).

Sincerely,

Associate Professor Tanya Notley

School of Humanities and Communication Arts and Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University

Professor Michael Dezuanni

Digital Media Research Centre, Queensland University of Technology

Professor Sora Park

News & Media Research Centre, University of Canberra



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. A healthy democracy needs high quality and sustained public interest journalism

News media play a critical role in an advanced democracy. We strongly support the consultation paper's claim that public interest journalism should reflect the "pluralism and diversity of our society" and provide "fair, accurate, trustworthy, timely and topical information to all of its citizens" (p9). We therefore believe that there is a need for a stronger definition of public interest journalism that goes beyond that proposed by the ACCC (cited in the consultation paper p6). A more comprehensive definition for public interest journalism should include the adoption of recognised fact-checking protocols (such as the IFCN Code of Principles) to ensure news is accurate and state the need for news producers to support a reasonable time for the right of reply to ensure news reporting is fair. In addition, to be trustworthy, public interest journalism must not be driven by an intention to mislead or be linked to any undeclared financial or political interests.

2. A healthy democracy needs well-informed citizens who are capable of identifying and creating credible and trustworthy information

To be well-informed, citizens need to have the requisite skills, knowledge and capacities to be media literate. For example, citizens need to be able to find high quality information online and recognise when information presented via different media forms is false, misleading or deliberately deceptive and they need to be able to investigate media sources to make informed decisions about which sources can be trusted. However, our *Adult Media Literacy in Australia 2021 study* finds that only 56% of Australians are confident they can find information they need online and just 39% of adult Australians say they can check if information found online is true.

3. For citizens to be well-informed, they need access to lifelong media literacy education and support

Citizens become informed about national and international events and developments primarily through a diverse range of media. Therefore, citizens need to be able to critically reflect on the media they engage with. Media literacy is the ability to apply critical thinking to digital and non-digital media through analysis, evaluation and reflection. Media literacy is a critical form of literacy that is essential for full participation in society. Multiple studies have demonstrated that increasing people's capacity for critical thinking in relation to their media use increases their ability to detect and avoid misinformation¹. Media literacy initiatives can also empower citizens to become competent and responsible media producers and consumers. However, 30% of Australian adults have never had any form of media literacy support across their lifetime.

4. Adult Australians have a low level of media literacy

The *Adult Media Literacy in Australia 2021* survey finds that most adult Australians lack confidence in their media abilities. Some groups are far more likely to have a low level of media literacy ability: older Australians, those living in rural Australia, people living with a disability or living in a low-income household. This data provides a strong foundation for a targeted approach to increase media literacy ability.

¹ For example Edwards, L., Stoilova, M., Anstead, N., Fry, A., El-Halaby, G., & Smith, M. (2021). *Rapid evidence assessment on online misinformation and media literacy*. Final report for OFCOM.

5. Australia lags behind developed countries who have developed media literacy policies and programs

Unlike in many other advanced democracies, media literacy education has not been supported by policy in Australia in a significant or sustained way. Media literacy policies now exist across many European countries, with some policies established for well over a decade. Australia is yet to act on the 2019 ACCC Digital Platform Inquiry Recommendations regarding the provision of sustained support for adult media literacy. We believe a national approach based on international best practice and a national evidence-base is needed to advance media literacy in a rapidly shifting media environment. Such an approach should be supported by the government with adequate funding.

6. A national media literacy approach is needed in Australia that builds on the strengths of existing, relevant national public institutions, universities, educational organisations and cultural organisations

In many European countries, public cultural institutions lead national media literacy efforts in recognition of the strength, capacity and public trust these institutions have. We recognise that the Australian Media Literacy Alliance (AMLA)², comprised of public cultural institutions, has been driving government and public interest in media literacy at a national level for several years while building the capacity of key mediators such as teachers and librarians. AMLA has stated that the development of a national media literacy strategy is essential to provide direction, guidance and benchmarks and to enable organisations and stakeholders to promote a unified approach to media literacy education. In addition, sustained public funding is urgently needed to promote and extend AMLA's work and to develop media literacy research, resources and programs more generally – particularly for adults. We believe government funding should recognise the important role played by public cultural institutions and mediators such as educators, community services and librarians.

7. Citizens who consume news and have higher media literacy are more engaged in civil society

There is much to gain from supporting citizens to engage regularly with high quality news media. Not only are well-informed citizens able to make better choices about their own and their family's lives – Australian and international research demonstrates that people who are more engaged with news are more likely to be engaged in their communities by taking action on the social issues that matter to them. Our research also shows that adult Australians who are engaged in more online interaction activities and those who have high media literacy are also more likely to engage in civic activities³.

² Co-authors Michael Dezuanni and Tanya Notley are founding members of the Australian Media Literacy Alliance.

³ Park, S., Lee, J. Y., Notley, T., & Dezuanni, M. (2023). Exploring the relationship between media literacy, online interaction, and civic engagement. *The Information Society*, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01972243.2023.2211055>

Background

We are the joint recipients of a significant grant from the Australian Research Council Linkage Project (2023-2026), *Addressing Misinformation using Media Literacy with Public Cultural Institutions*⁴. This project involves a collaboration with four public cultural institutions as partner organisations —the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia (NFSA), the Museum of Australian Democracy (MoAD) and the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA). Together, these partner organisations reach and engage millions of Australians every week through physical spaces (museums and libraries), broadcast media and online media.

Our project aims to address a lack of knowledge about how public cultural institutions can use media literacy to effectively address misinformation in ways that are tailored to the diverse educational needs and interests of adult Australians.

To achieve this our Project will:

1. Identify adult engagement patterns with misinformation online, through a first of its kind nationally representative activity-based survey (implemented February 2024);
2. Uncover the diverse experiences adults have with misinformation online, through a qualitative diary study (to be implemented April 2024);
3. Develop a model that enables national public cultural institutions to use evidence to design, deliver and evaluate targeted media literacy training programs and resources, through the development of a toolkit and a series of workshop events (2024-2026);
4. Inform policymakers, media professionals, civil society organisations and educators about the role media literacy can play to address misinformation, through public events and an industry-focused handbook (2024-2026).

In addition, we are the lead authors of three relevant studies that we mainly draw on in making this submission:

1. *Adult Media Literacy in Australia* (2021 and 2024 forthcoming)
2. *News and Young Australians* (2017, 2020 and 2023)
3. *Digital News Report: Australia* (conducted annually since 2015 but we cite the 2018 report which specifically examines news literacy)

⁴ See https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/medialiteracy/projects/misinformation_and_media_literacy

Response to Consultation Key Areas and Questions

This submission addresses two areas of News MAP Consultation Paper:

- 1. Engagement (part 1, objectives)**
- 2. Support for Media Literacy (part 2, measures)**

Engagement

It is important that Australian policies and funding clearly state the role and value of public interest journalism and the relationship between news engagement and media literacy. We agree with the consultation paper's proposition that both public interest journalism and media literacy are needed to support a healthy, functioning and thriving democracy and this is supported by a range of evidence. For instance, our own research demonstrates that there is a clear association between news engagement and civic engagement—adults who consume online news regularly are 20% more likely to participate in civic activities⁵. In addition, more than half of Australian children aged 12-16 who have high interest in news reported getting involved online in social issues (56%), compared to only 9% of those who have the lowest level of interest in news⁶. Furthermore, young Australians who received news literacy education reported higher digital civic engagement levels compared to those who did not receive any education⁷.

This evidence provides a clear rationale and impetus for supporting news engagement and media literacy in a sustained and ongoing way in Australia. In addition, as the consultation paper clearly states, some groups are more likely to engage in civic activities than others. Barriers that prevent equitable opportunities for civic engagement must be addressed. Findings from our research show that a lack of media literacy is associated with lower news consumption⁸ and lower civic participation⁹.

Q4.1: Is engagement the right objective?

We believe engagement is the right objective for Australian government investments in news media and media literacy. These investments should be focused on increasing the ability of all Australians to participate in society across social, civic, political and economic domains. Increasing people's engagement with news and developing their media literacy will likely result in an increased level of civic participation. To be fair, it is critical that policies recognise existing inequalities and inequities when it comes to people's ability to participate in society – funding for public interest journalism and media literacy should seek to address these existing inequalities and inequities to avoid exacerbating

⁵ Park, S., Lee, J. Y., Notley, T., & Dezuanni, M. (2023). Exploring the relationship between media literacy, online interaction, and civic engagement. The Information Society, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01972243.2023.2211055>

⁶ Notley, T., Chambers, S., Zhong, H.F., Park, S., Lee, J. and Dezuanni, M. (2023) News and Young Australians in 2023: How children and teens access, perceive and are affected by news media, Research Report, Western Sydney University.

⁷ Lee, J., Park, S. & Notley, T. (2024). Exploring the effects of news literacy education on news literacy and digital civic engagement among young people. Paper to be presented at the the 74rd Annual ICA Conference: Communication and Global Human Rights, Children, Adolescents & Media Division (20-24 June).

⁸ Park, S., Fisher, C., Fuller, G. & Lee, J. (2018). Digital News Report: Australia 2018. Canberra: News & Media Research Centre, University of Canberra. <http://apo.org.au/node/174861>

⁹ Park, S., Lee, J. Y., Notley, T., & Dezuanni, M. (2023). Exploring the relationship between media literacy, online interaction, and civic engagement. The Information Society, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01972243.2023.2211055>

them. Our research¹⁰ shows that among marginalised segments of the population, there are broader challenges related to media use and media literacy. For example, inadequate access to devices and the internet, insufficient trusted sources of information, a lack of understanding of the needs and experiences of these groups within the broader public, and attitudinal barriers to using media and technology.

Q4.2: How should the engagement objective be understood? How might the engagement objective be promoted in the contemporary media environment?

We believe it is the role of government to measure and track citizens' ability to use different media and connect media use with what media engagement can achieve for Australian communities and individuals. Therefore, the focus for an engagement objective should be on measuring people's ability to use media to participate in society in diverse and beneficial ways. We note that it is not for governments to determine the kinds of participation citizens should engage in – this needs to be determined by individuals. In our Adult Media Literacy survey we ask people about the kinds of media outcomes that are important in their lives. This survey instrument could be reviewed, adapted and extended to allow people to nominate the kinds of participation they value and to then to measure people's ability to use media to participate in these activities. This data would provide targeted insights into the kinds of media literacy support and outcomes people want and need and enable this to be tracked over time.

Engagement should also be considered in terms of how it will lead to a better Australian society and stronger democratic processes. Engagement with, and consumption of, a diversity of media sources that promote diverse voices and provide fair and inclusive representations of ideas, places and people is essential. It is therefore important to promote, maintain and regularly evaluate the diversity of news available to Australians as well as the diversity of newsrooms. This is particularly important as digital media platforms play an increasing role in people's daily news and media consumption habits. Engagement can also be enhanced by providing people with the media knowledge and skills to use and share news media stories in critically reflective ways, which can be fostered via media literacy. Engagement should include the ability for an individual to confidently ask themselves a series of critical questions as they consume and share media:

- Who made this media, and what was their motivation for making it?
- Who or what is portrayed in this media and is it a fair and accurate portrayal?
- What technologies have been used to make this media and could this have an impact on its fairness and accuracy?
- What is this media asking me to do and is this a reasonable or fair request?
- Can I trust this media?
- What techniques of persuasion or emotional manipulation have been used in this media, and what is its impact on me?
- What is my overall relationship to this media content, and how does my use of this media impact my relationship with other people and society?

¹⁰ Park, S., Lee, J., Atkinson, S. & Su, J. (2021). Media Literacy in Australia: A Qualitative Study. Canberra: News & Media Research Centre. <https://apo.org.au/node/313350>

Q4.3: What are the appropriate roles for government and industry in pursuing this objective? For example, does government have a responsibility to foster citizens' critical engagement with news content?

For critical engagement in society, citizens need access to quality news (public interest journalism) as well as the ability to discern low quality news and misinformation (media literacy). There are gaps in the provision of quality news (i.e. regional news, news that meets the need of multi-lingual communities) due to market failure (smaller audiences/smaller markets), and government intervention is needed. Australian governments need to collaborate with news organisations to support citizen engagement with high quality news since misinformation can harm democratic processes, social cohesion and public health outcomes.

News engagement is associated with civic engagement. However, some citizens and communities find it harder to find, understand, analyse, critique and share and create news media. Australian governments have an essential role to play in supporting national efforts to foster citizens' critical engagement with news content, via the promotion and implementation of media literacy initiatives. Providing targeted media literacy support to vulnerable groups is an important role of government to ensure people can fully participate in society and to reduce risks associated with media illiteracy such as vulnerability to scams and deception. In all other international jurisdictions where media literacy has been successfully implemented on a wide scale, government policy has promoted and enabled media literacy initiatives.

Support for Media Literacy

We welcome the consultation paper's recognition that there is a link between media literacy and a well-informed public. A fundamental requirement for a healthy democracy is for citizens to have the skills, knowledge and capability to use media to learn and share information about politics, policies and news events. Citizens must also be able to recognise when information is misleading or deliberately deceptive.

'Media literacy' is the ability to create, use and share media and to critically reflect on this engagement. It is now widely recognised as a critical form of literacy essential for full participation in society.

Given that almost every aspect of our lives is now mediated, an ongoing, comprehensive and coherent educational strategy for media literacy in Australia is required. This must not involve quick-fix, partial or one-off solutions. Ever evolving media technologies and practices mean that media literacy is a lifelong pursuit and interventions are required throughout a person's life to ensure they are capable of using media to participate in society in diverse ways.

We agree with the claim made in the consultation paper that the need to improve media literacy to protect Australians from a range of harms has been repeatedly and consistently identified as an important issue in "virtually all policy areas that are impacted by communications technology and media content" (p27). However, the level of importance ascribed to media literacy across policy areas in Australia at both state and Federal levels has not been matched by appropriate policy or sustained funding support.

Media Literacy funding opportunities should be made open, competitive and transparent and a shared monitoring and evaluation framework should be implemented to develop an evidence-base about what initiatives are most effective for different groups.

We note there has been some progress in relation to the development of young people's media literacy including updates to the national curriculum¹¹ and the release of a suite of high quality curriculum aligned news literacy resources by public institutions such as ABC Education, the Museum of Australian Democracy and the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia as well as commercial enterprises such as Squizkids NewsHounds program (designed for primary school students). However, there are no comprehensive Australian national resources to support adult media literacy.

Our view is that AMLA¹² is in an excellent position to promote and enable media literacy on a national scale because it is made up of trusted public institutions with large networks of influence. It would be highly beneficial to replicate the Dutch Media Literacy Network¹³ which has a core group of national public institutions at its centre, which forms the nucleus of a much wider network of aligned organisations. While AMLA has already achieved important outcomes in raising the profile of media literacy in Australia, it currently does not have the resources to expand its outreach and impact.

Discussion Questions

Q10.1 What segments/groups/demographics in the community most need support from government to improve media literacy?

Our *Adult Media Literacy in Australia 2021*¹⁴ survey found that older Australians, those in low-income households, with a low level of education, living with a disability and living in regional Australia should be considered priority groups for media literacy interventions because they have an overall lower level of confidence in their own media abilities are more likely to have no or low access to media literacy support. Our associated qualitative media literacy research identifies specific media literacy needs and barriers for Australians who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, living in regional areas, living with a disability and who are older¹⁵. We are currently implementing the next iteration of the national Adult Media Literacy survey (February 2024) to ensure there is robust national and longitudinal data available to inform media literacy policy and practice in Australia – but we require ongoing support to ensure this research can be regularly scheduled and sustained over time¹⁶.

Global studies¹⁷ consistently show that children's media literacy is influenced by their parents' socioeconomic status. Our Young Australians and News survey, conducted in 2017, 2020 and 2023 provides valuable longitudinal data about the news engagement and media literacy of young people aged 8-16 years. The 2023 survey shows that young people whose parents have a low level of

¹¹ See <https://medialiteracy.org.au/new-australian-curriculum-released/>

¹² As already noted co-authors Michael Dezuanni and Tanya Notley are members of AMLA

¹³ <https://netwerkmediawijshheid.nl/over-ons/about-dutch-media-literacy-network/>

¹⁴ Notley, T., S. Park, M. Dezuanni and S. Chambers, 2021. *Adult Media Literacy in Australia. Research Report*, Sydney, Western Sydney University, University of Canberra and Queensland University of Technology.

¹⁵ Our research suggests that these groups need to be supported using targeted research and initiatives. Park, S., Lee, J. Y., Atkinson, S and Su, J. (2021). *Media Literacy in Australia: A Qualitative Study*. Canberra: News & Media Research Centre, University of Canberra.

¹⁶ A lack of funding has meant we were not able to carry out special survey 'booster' samples with First Nations and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse groups in 2024, though we have sought Federal government funding to address this gap.

¹⁷ Hatlevik OE and Christophersen KA (2013) Digital competence at the beginning of upper secondary school: Identifying factors explaining digital inclusion. *Computers & education* 63: 240-247; Tran T, Ho MT, Pham TH, Nguyen MH, Nguyen KLP, Vuong TT, ... and Vuong QH (2020). How digital natives learn and thrive in the digital age: Evidence from an emerging economy. *Sustainability* 12(9): 3819.

education are less likely to value and engage with news¹⁸. Given that families are the most frequent and trusted source of news for young people, this likely reflects a lower level of parental engagement with news. Young people whose parent/s have a low level of education and those from regional communities were also less likely to be pro-active news consumers who seek out news independently. Further analysis of the survey data also shows that young people whose parent/s have a low level of education are less likely to have received any recent media literacy education¹⁹. Australians with a low level of education are more likely to be living in low income households²⁰. This research provides a strong rationale for ensuring that media literacy support is targeted to meet the needs of low socioeconomic Australians as well as those living in regional areas.

In September 2021, we led a consultation (in partnership with the Australian Media Literacy Alliance) with 89 organisations with an interest in promoting media literacy. These organisations were from every state and territory in Australia. Through six workshops, we developed consensus about the key tenets for a national strategy for media literacy, which are outlined in the report, *Towards a National Strategy for Media Literacy*²¹. We underscore the eight recommendations outlined on page 5 of this report as being central to a national media literacy response.

Q10.2 In what areas (e.g. Access to trusted news, media technologies and environments, evolving news consumption habits etc) is media literacy education or research most needed?

Further analysis of the *Adult Media Literacy in Australia 2021* survey shows that people want to learn to use media technologies in alignment with their values. Adult Australians prioritise the following three values most of all: benevolence ('Helping and caring for the wellbeing of those who are close'), security ('Living in a safe and stable society') and self-direction ('Being free to act independently').²² In our survey, these priorities aligned with people's interest in learning about media. Adult Australians identified it is most important for them to: 1) 'To know how to protect yourself from scams and predators online', 2) 'To use media to stay connected with your friends and family', and 3) 'To know how to think critically about the media I consume'. These media literacy goals (alongside others included in our analysis) can be used to inform the design of national media literacy initiatives. However, stakeholders across the country have identified that media literacy initiatives also need to be context and community specific. While resources and frameworks may be produced at a national level, these need to be made relevant to specific groups and communities by the people and organisations they turn to and trust when they need help accessing, understanding and creating media.

An important area requiring further consideration is the relationship between media literacy, online safety, digital literacy and information literacy. For a range of historical reasons, these concepts have tended to develop in isolation from one another, but the national consultation process conducted by AMLA²³ illustrated that community organisations see a great deal of cross over between these concepts. Pages 7 and 8 of the AMLA consultation report addresses this issue and argues that each of these areas will benefit from a unified approach that recognises the strengths of each. Most

¹⁸ Notley, T., Chambers, S., Zhong, H.F., Park, S., Lee, J. and Dezuanni, M. (2023) *News and Young Australians in 2023: How children and teens access, perceive and are affected by news media*, Research Report, Western Sydney University.

¹⁹ Lee, J., Park, S. & Notley, T. (2024). Exploring the effects of news literacy education on news literacy and digital civic engagement among young people. Paper to be presented at the the 74rd Annual ICA Conference: Communication and Global Human Rights, Children, Adolescents & Media Division (20-24 June).

²⁰ <https://www.education.gov.au/integrated-data-research/benefits-educational-attainment/introduction>

²¹ Dezuanni, M., Notley, T., Di Martino, L. (2021). *Towards a National Strategy for Media Literacy*. Research report. Australian Media Literacy Alliance.

²² Chambers, S., T. Notley, M. Dezuanni, and S. Park, 2022. 'Values and Media Literacy: Exploring the Relationship Between the Values People Prioritize in Their Life and Their Attitudes Toward Media Literacy', *International Journal of Communication*, (Vol 16, 2596-2620).

²³ Dezuanni, M., Notley, T., Di Martino, L. (2021). *Towards a National Strategy for Media Literacy*. Research report. Australian Media Literacy Alliance.

significantly, the focus on critical thinking via a ‘conceptual framework’ was understood by the stakeholders to be an essential element that distinguishes media literacy from other concepts. Further research into how to best draw on the strengths of these different approaches is needed.

Citizens are situated in a hybrid media environment. We suggest that media literacy must address not only news and information but also entertainment media. On digital media platforms like TikTok and Instagram, news, information and entertainment are frequently blurred, or sit alongside one another. We know from our News and Young Australians survey²⁴ that young people have a broader definition of what counts as news, and that they frequently access news on digital platforms, while doing something else. Therefore, we need a much better understanding of how entertainment media play a role in news engagement and consumption and how news genres and conventions have developed or are emerging alongside new technologies like Generative AI.

Q10.3 What are the social and economic risks of low media literacy levels in the community?

The AMLA national consultation report outlines the costs of media illiteracy²⁵. These are available in detail on page 11 of the report, but in summary:

- Media illiteracy has both social and economic costs²⁶.
- Misinformation flourishes in a context where media literacy levels are low. This has impacts on social engagement and democracy, but also on health and financial information.
- Bad actors, conspiracy theorists and anti-science crusaders and scammers are able to flourish in the context of media illiteracy.
- Social cohesion, acceptance of difference, tolerance, and cultural diversity can be undermined by media illiteracy.

Engaged, informed citizens are essential for the health of a democracy. Civic participation is increasingly manifested in or enabled by digital platforms such as social media.

Research demonstrates that individuals from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds are more vulnerable to misinformation and disinformation²⁷. In our study on Australian adults, we found that those who are vulnerable to misinformation and are misinformed about Covid-19 related information are much more likely to access news on social media (42%) than those who are informed (30%). Those who are informed are more likely to get news from traditional news sources (69%) than those who are misinformed (45%).²⁸

²⁴ To access these publications see <https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/medialiteracy/research/publications>

²⁵ Dezuanni, M., Notley, T., Di Martino, L. (2021). Towards a National Strategy for Media Literacy. Research report. Australian Media Literacy Alliance.

²⁶ To date, there has been no systematic economic analysis of the costs of media illiteracy, but many of the people we consulted for the national consultation report argued that their clients are further financially disadvantaged due to low levels of media literacy.

²⁷ Seo H, Xiong A, Lee S and Lee D (2022) If you have a reliable source, say something: effects of correction comments on covid-19 misinformation. In Proceedings of the international AAAI conference on web and social media (Vol. 16, pp. 896-907).

²⁸ Park, S., McCallum, K., Holland, K., McGuinness, K., Lee, J., Fisher, C. & John, E. (2022). COVID-19: Australian News & Misinformation Longitudinal Study. Canberra: News Media Research Centre, University of Canberra. doi:10.25916/0673-7f38

Q10.4 What further research and evidence is required to inform understanding of the impact of media literacy levels on the quality of news and journalism?

Our research with adult Australians finds that regional Australians, younger adults, those with low education levels are more likely to have low news literacy²⁹. Those who consume news regularly and have high interest in news are more likely to have higher news literacy. However, 76% of those who mainly access news on social media have either low or very low news literacy levels. These people are also more vulnerable to misinformation. Further research is needed to understand how to effectively engage and develop the news literacy of these groups.

Our research with young Australians (aged 8-16) finds that children who have parents with a low level of education as well as those who live in rural areas are less likely to be engaged with news and are less likely to have received news literacy education at school. Research is needed to understand how news literacy initiatives can reach and engage these young people.

Our *Adult Media Literacy in Australia 2024* survey (forthcoming) includes a significant number of new questions that will be used to examine links between news engagement, media literacy and misinformation. Our Activity-based Misinformation survey (forthcoming) will assess the ability of adult Australians to identify misinformation and assess the quality of information sources. Our Information/Misinformation Mobile Diary Study will examine the relationship between people's media practices and their encounters with misinformation. Data from these studies will provide critical insights into the relationship between news engagement and media literacy in the Australian context.

Media literacy education needs to be made available to all Australians– but as noted already, some groups have lower media ability and less access to media literacy support. Research is needed to inform the design and evaluation of initiatives for these groups.

Q10.5 What metrics and data sources should be considered to track media literacy levels of Australians in the future? What can Australia learn from approaches adopted in other countries?

Our *Adult Media Literacy in Australia* survey (2021 and 2024 forthcoming) was designed after consultations with dozens of researchers and practitioners to understand knowledge gaps. The survey asks people about the kind of media and media technologies they use and value, and whether and where they get access to media literacy support. It also asks people about their level of confidence in their own media abilities, experiences with harmful and exploitative content and how they feel these issues need to be addressed. In addition, the 2024 survey examines how media use and media abilities interact with experiences with news and misinformation. Our 2021 survey analysis has been widely recognised and utilised by media literacy stakeholders in Australia. We believe it provides the information required to track media literacy levels over time in Australia and are open to reviewing this survey and extending it based on further consultations.

Our *News and Young Australians* survey (2017, 2020 and 2023) is Australia's only national longitudinal survey to examine the news attitudes, practices and experiences of children (aged 8-16 years). In 2023 we introduced new questions to measure young people's news literacy and digital citizenship. The survey has been used to guide and inform six major news literacy projects developed

²⁹ Park, S., Fisher, C., Fuller, G. & Lee, J. (2018). Digital News Report: Australia 2018. Canberra: News & Media Research Centre, University of Canberra. <http://apo.org.au/node/174861>

in Australia since 2017 that target young Australians. We are open to reviewing this survey and adding additional questions based on further consultations.

However, these surveys need sustained funding to ensure the data collection period times remains consistent and to reach groups and minority communities using more costly booster samples and qualitative research (carried out in partnership with peak bodies where possible).

We would also like to stress how vital it is that any government funded initiatives have rigorous research with published findings to ensure efforts contribute to an evidence-base that can inform future efforts. We believe a shared evaluation framework, that is linked to desired media literacy outcomes, would ensure that research findings are consistent and comparable.

AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Associate Professor Tanya Notley

School of Humanities and Communication Arts | Institute for Culture & Society
Western Sydney University



Professor Michael Dezuanni

Digital Media Research Centre | School of Communication
Queensland University of Technology



Professor Sora Park

Professorial Research Fellow, News & Media Research Centre
Faculty of Arts & Design
University of Canberra



Appendix: Co-authors' relevant publications

Young People and Media Literacy

Published Reports

Notley, T., Chambers, S., Zhong, H.F., Park, S., Lee, J. Y., & Dezuanni, M. (2023) *News and Young Australians in 2023: How Children and Teens Access, Perceive and are Affected by News Media*, Western Sydney University.

Chambers S., and Notley, T. (2022) *InQueensland Media Academy Course Evaluation*. Research Report. Western Sydney University and Queensland University.

Notley, T., Dezuanni, M., Zhong, H.F. & Chambers, C. (2020) *News and Australian Children in 2020: How young people access, perceive and are affected by news media*, Research Report, Sydney, Western Sydney University and Queensland University of Technology.

Dezuanni, M., Notley, T. & Corser, K. (2020) *News and Australian Teachers: How news media literacy is taught in the classroom*, Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology and Western Sydney University.

Notley, T., Dezuanni, M. & Zhong, H.F. (2019) *The inclusion and representation of young people in the Australian news media*, Research report, Western Sydney University and Queensland University of Technology.

Notley, T., Dezuanni, M., Zhong, H.F. & Howden, S. (2017) *News and Australia's children: how young people access, perceive and are affected by the news*, Research Report, Sydney, Crinkling News, Western Sydney University and Queensland University of Technology.

Journal Articles

Notley, T., Zhong, H.F., Dezuanni, M., & Gilbert, S. (2022) 'Comparing children's and teens' news engagement practices and affective news experiences', *Journal of Youth Studies*.

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Biographical information

Associate Professor Tanya Notley – Western Sydney University

Tanya Notley's research and teaching focus on the social and cultural impact of communication technologies. She collaborates with cultural institutions, education providers and social justice organisations in the areas of media literacy and digital inclusion. Notley leads The Advancing Media Literacy [research program](#) at Western Sydney University. In the past five years this program has supported 10 externally funded media literacy research projects, involving sustained collaborations with 15 industry partners including Australian Associated Press, Meta, Google, ABC Education, UNESCO, the Museum of Australian Democracy, the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia and the UN Information Center for Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific. This research has informed national school curriculum, government policies and media literacy initiatives that have reached millions of Australians. Notley's research has also resulted in at least 150 media stories, with media including ABC and SBS news, the Australian, Radio National (AM and PM) the Project (Channel 10), New York Times and many more. Notley served as Co-Chair for the Australian Media Literacy Alliance 2020-2024.

Professor Michael Dezuanni – Queensland University of Technology

Professor Dezuanni is a leading Australian media literacy scholar. He is Program Lead for Digital Inclusion and Participation in the Digital Media Research Centre at QUT. He is also a program leader and Chief Investigator in the ARC Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child. Michael is an invited member of numerous advisory committees, including the Australian Media Literacy Alliance, the Alanah and Madeline Foundation's Media Literacy advisory group, the Australian Digital Inclusion Alliance, the State Library of Queensland's Digital Inclusion advisory group, and NBN Co's Low Income Digital Inclusion Forum. Michael has been an expert advisor for the development of the Australian Curriculum (Media Arts). He is the author of four books and over fifty peer reviewed journal articles and book chapters about media literacy, digital inclusion and the use of digital technologies in everyday life.

Professor Sora Park - University of Canberra

Dr Sora Park is internationally recognised as an expert in digital media users and media policy. She has extensive global experience in government and private sector consulting and has a broad range of research expertise ranging from large-scale surveys to in-depth qualitative methods. As the Project Leader of the *Digital News Report: Australia*, she has an ongoing collaboration with the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford tracking digital news consumers through annual surveys of 40+ countries. She also leads an Australian Research Council Discovery Project 'The Rise of Mistrust: Digital Platforms and Trust in News Media' and a Linkage Project 'Heartbeat of Australia: Tracking, Understanding and Engaging News Audiences'.

Organisation Overview

Institute for Culture & Society, Western Sydney University

The *Institute for Culture and Society* (ICS) is home to the largest dedicated concentration of socio-cultural research in Australia. Its research program is designed to build the cultural intelligence needed to address the challenges, contradictions and complexities of a 21st-century world that is increasingly globalised, diverse and technologically mediated. ICS's current membership of over 60 researchers includes 23 professors, one Future Fellow, three DECRA scholars as well as close to 50 HDR candidates, with a balanced research profile of mid- and early-career researchers, post-doctoral fellows and adjunct appointments. ICS also currently hosts nodes from two Centres of Excellence. ICS members are supported by a team of dedicated professional staff. The Institute operates a vigorous annual program of workshops, seminars, symposia and conferences, attracting leading international visiting fellows. Many of these events provide a platform for the presentation of research findings to a broad and invested audience.

<https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/ics/>

QUT Digital Media Research Centre

The QUT Digital Media Research Centre (DMRC) conducts world-leading interdisciplinary research for a flourishing digital society. The Centre's researchers addresses local, national and global challenges at the forefront of digital transformation, and provide an ambitious, stimulating and supportive research culture for our researchers, students, and partners. The DMRC is a global leader in digital humanities and social science research with a focus on communication, media, and the law. It is one of Australia's top organisations for media and communication research, areas in which QUT has achieved the highest possible rankings in ERA, the national research quality assessment exercise. The Centre's research programs investigate the digital transformation of media industries, the challenges of digital inclusion and governance, the growing role of AI and automation in the information environment, and the role of social media in public communication.

<https://research.qut.edu.au/dmrc/the-centre/>

News & Media Research Centre, University of Canberra

The News and Media Research Centre (N&MRC) advances public understanding of the changing media environment. N&MRC is Australia's nationally recognised research centre for the study of news media industries, audiences and public discourse. At a time of epistemic crisis for the media industries, we research and advocate for a media system that builds trust, inclusivity and diversity, to defend and repair the social fabric. The Centre publishes independent reports based on surveys, qualitative and content analyses of news media markets and news consumption. Since 2015, the N&MRC has produced the *Digital News Report: Australia*, a national annual online survey of more than 2,000 adult Australians that monitors changes in consumption, as part of a global study of 46 news markets by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford.

<https://www.canberra.edu.au/research/centres/nmrc>