

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Local newspapers most trusted, new study reveals, but they're left out of govt's plan to save journalism**

**16.06.2026**

Local and regional papers are the most trusted news brands in Australia behind public broadcasters, with 61% of Australia's rating them trustworthy and just 12% rating them untrustworthy, according to a new study out today.

The University of Canberra's *Digital News Report 2026* found Australians had less trust in larger commercial news brands such as the *Daily Telegraph* (46% trustworthy to 23% untrustworthy) and *The Age* (51% trustworthy to 17% untrustworthy).

Democracy Counts, which contributed commentary to the report, said the findings had implications for the government's plan to redistribute the proceeds of a tax on tech giants to fund public interest journalism.

"A tax on tech giants to fund public interest journalism is a really necessary thing to protect democracy, but the current proposal needs tweaking to ensure it's not just the big news media players that benefit," said Campaign Director Tom Mooney.

"Australia has one of the most concentrated news markets in the world and hundreds of local and independent newsrooms have closed in recent years.

"This has left communities without local news and information, a gap ripe to be filled by malicious or AI-driven mis and disinformation.

"It means local political decisions are going without scrutiny and it's eroding the sense of community that local or niche publications foster."

The *Digital News Report 2026* found people living outside major cities, women, under-35s, those with on lower incomes and those with less formal education were more likely to distrust the news.

There was a strong correlation between those who didn't trust the news and news avoidance.



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“If you don’t see the issues that matter to your local community or people like you reflected in the news, you lose trust, and you disengage,” Mr Mooney said.

“We need to break the cycle of media deserts, distrust and disengagement by ensuring local and independent newsrooms can survive and thrive.

“Democracy cannot function without well-informed citizens and public interest journalism.”

[Read the 2026 Digital News Report.](#)

[Read more](#) **about the changes to the social media tax (News Bargaining Incentive) that are being proposed by Democracy Counts and other groups.**

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