

Journalism Across Australia

So You Want to Be a Journalist · By Simon Townsend · 4 min read

Simon started his career on the NSW Central Coast. He worked in Sydney, moved through Melbourne for television, spent time reporting overseas, and returned to teach. His view of the trade was always that the real Australian journalism happened outside the CBD mastheads, because that was where reporters did everything and owned their bylines from day one.

This page is a snapshot of the Australian journalism landscape in 2026: who is publishing where, who is hiring, where a young reporter might actually get a foot in, and where the industry has thinned out.

The national and metropolitan dailies

News Corp: *The Australian* (national), *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), *Herald Sun* (Melbourne), *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), *Northern Territory News*, *The Mercury* (Hobart). Plus a long tail of regional titles. Cadet and graduate programs still run.

Nine (formerly Fairfax): *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *The Australian Financial Review*. Graduate programs, Good Weekend commissions freelance features, business desks commission for the AFR.

The Guardian Australia. Sydney-based, independent, solid features and news output. Freelance commissions across all desks.

ABC. National broadcaster. The largest single journalism employer in Australia. News, Current Affairs, Rural, Regional, 7.30, Four Corners, Foreign Correspondent, digital, podcasts. Cadet and graduate programs are significant recruiters.

SBS. Smaller but growing journalism unit. Strong on migration, multicultural affairs, international desks.

The independent and subscriber-supported press

The Saturday Paper. Schwartz Media. Independent weekly. Long-form news and opinion.

Crikey. Daily subscription newsletter. Strong commissioning of freelance analysis.

The Monthly. Monthly long-form magazine. Prestigious commissioning.

Inside Story. Online essays and commentary.

The New Daily. Free daily news service funded by super funds. Commissions features.

Michael West Media. Independent investigations. Focused on corporate and political accountability.

Rationale Magazine, *Eureka Street*, *Meanjin*, *Overland*, *Griffith Review*. Essay and literary journalism.

Substack and subscription newsletters. A growing category of independent reporting in Australia, from Bernard Keane's political newsletters to Amy Remeikis's political analysis to specialty beats in tech, health, and the arts.

Regional Australia

Regional Australia has lost more than 100 mastheads in the last decade, most of them closed by Australian Community Media and News Corp during the 2020 consolidation. Some have survived, some have been replaced by community publications and independent operations.

Australian Community Media (ACM) still operates *The Canberra Times*, *The Newcastle Herald*, *The Illawarra Mercury*, *The Border Mail*, *The Examiner* (Launceston), and numerous smaller papers.

News Corp regional mastheads consolidated heavily after 2020. Many went digital-only. Some closed. Cadetships at the surviving regional titles are among the best training opportunities in Australia for a young reporter.

Independent regional journalism has grown: *The Waverley*, *The Shovel*, *The Spy Report*, *The Byron Echo*, and dozens of others. Some are fully commercial. Some are community-owned. Most are small and creative.

First Nations journalism: *National Indigenous Times*, *Koori Mail*, *IndigenousX*, *NITV* (SBS). Growing and increasingly important.

Capital cities

Sydney. Home to News Corp's national operations, Nine's publishing, Guardian Australia, much of the ABC's national bulletins. Strong freelance market in digital, business, entertainment. Most competitive entry point for metropolitan work.

Melbourne. Home to The Age, Herald Sun, the Schwartz Media stable (Saturday Paper, Monthly, Quarterly Essay), plus independents like Crikey. Melbourne has a reputation for long-form features and arts coverage.

Brisbane. The Courier-Mail, ABC Brisbane, regional Queensland coverage. QUT's journalism program feeds into the market. Political reporting is strong because of the always-interesting Queensland parliament.

Adelaide. The Advertiser, InDaily (independent), ABC Adelaide. Smaller market, close-knit, good place to learn.

Perth. The West Australian (Seven West Media), ABC WA. Long-distance coverage of mining, indigenous affairs, state politics. Perth has distinctive stories that Sydney papers often miss.

Hobart. The Mercury, ABC Tasmania, independent outlets. Small market with a long journalistic tradition.

Darwin. NT News, ABC Darwin. Distinctive journalism shaped by geography and the Territory's political dynamics.

Canberra. The Canberra Times, Parliamentary press gallery bureaus for every major masthead, the ABC parliamentary coverage. Political journalism capital.

The press gallery

Canberra's parliamentary press gallery is the centre of Australian political journalism. Every major masthead has a bureau. Membership of the gallery is accreditation, not appointment: any accredited journalist with appropriate editor support can apply. The gallery has its own traditions, internal politics, and Walkley-winning history. It is also where most of the major political scoops in Australian public life have been broken.

What has changed

Newsroom staffing is down. Beats have thinned out. Specialist rounds are now shared across reporters. Sub-editors in most newsrooms are fewer than half what they were twenty years ago, which means individual reporters carry more risk for their own copy.

Digital skills are now assumed. A graduate reporter who cannot edit audio, shoot basic video, write for SEO, and handle multiple CMSes is at a real disadvantage.

Freelance is larger as a share of commissioned work. Staff features have given way to commissioned features. Building a freelance career is no longer a fallback, it is a primary path for many.

Where the job market actually is

ABC cadetships and graduate programs (national and regional).

News Corp metropolitan cadetships.

Nine graduate programs.

Guardian Australia intakes.

Regional cadetships at surviving ACM and News Corp titles.

SBS traineeships and graduate roles.

Community and independent publications (often part-time or pay-poor, but real journalism).

PR and content roles that can be used as a bridge back to journalism (be careful, but many journalists do this).

A specific Simon point

Simon was particular about regional cadetships. He used to say that a two-year cadetship at a country daily would teach a young journalist more than four years at a metropolitan paper, because on a small paper you wrote everything: the shire council, the courts, the football club, the obituary page, the agricultural show, the funny-headline page. You came out the other side a working journalist in a way that no metropolitan training regime could match.

That is still true. If you are young, mobile, and serious, a regional cadetship will make you a better reporter faster than a metropolitan role. Editors at the metro papers know this, and they respect it.

Reprinted from The Wonderful World of Journalism. Written in the spirit of Simon Townsend's journalism craft advice. Visit simontownsendjournalist.com for the full archive.