

Centre for Media Transition



Hi there

The Year in Media Transition

And so the year creaks to a close. Unless, that is, we suddenly wake to find that another couple of months have been hiding behind the couch. Given [this is 2020](#), it remains a possibility.

Disregarding improbable temporal shocks, we can now reflect on the media year that was. Globally, journalism took a big hit from Covid-19, a hit that [was gendered](#). In the US, New Zealand and Myanmar (among others), national elections elicited polarising and dangerous misinformation campaigns. And in Australia, dramatic media law reform is in full swing.



Here at the CMT, our research touched on these issues and more. Our [First Draft](#) team continued to [expose misinformation](#). We worked with DIGI, the Australian tech industry association, to produce [a discussion paper for DIGI's draft disinformation code](#) of practice. We focused on glocalism, developing [frame reflection interviews](#) as a way of preparing journalists for a regional or foreign posting. We provided input for the development of the [news media bargaining code](#), including by collaborating [with the Public Interest Journalism Initiative](#). We also [prepared submissions](#) on defamation law reform, choice and fairness in telecommunications and online safety legislation reform, as well as privacy law reform (see below). And, after reflecting on the perils of [bias and commercial influence](#) on news

media, we published our thoughts on [the ACCC and Australian media policy](#).

And below, in today's newsletter, we give our perspective on the federal government's vision for media, outline our new privacy research, give a misinformation update, and summarise this week's JERAA conference.

It's been a big year. And at 11am next Friday, December 11, we'll be hosting a virtual event called The Year in Media Transition, with three of journalism's leading lights: Nine's [Jacqueline Maley](#); the ABC's [Louise Milligan](#); and The Australian's [Troy Bramston](#). We'll cover the big stories of the year, and the big issues affecting media. We'd love to see you there. To attend, register [here](#).



Sacha Molitorisz
CMT Postdoctoral Fellow

Green paper on media reform offers new ideas



'Media reform' is a term that often means 'deregulation'. At least that's what it usually means for media diversity. And while there was a good case for dumping some rules to allow Australian businesses to compete with global media and digital platforms, enough is enough!

This is why it's refreshing to see the [Media Reform Green Paper](#) – launched at a [CAMLA](#) event last week by Communications Minister Paul Fletcher – respond to the challenges of technological and market change, without simply removing existing rules. Even the launch was an innovation, with the combined webinar and onsite event at Bird & Bird flagging the return of face-to-face events.

We'll look more substantively at the paper in the new year (submissions are open until 7 March).

For now, we'll note it combines licensing and spectrum changes with content obligations. Moving commercial and national free-to-air broadcasters onto shared multiplex transmitters could free up spectrum to be auctioned for 5G mobile services. In turn, the

proceeds could kick-start content funds supporting both Australian content and public interest news. This alone helps to move our thinking on responding to the global media environment. But in addition, there's a parallel plan for bringing Netflix and other SVOD (subscription video on demand) services into the regulatory environment to support Australian content.

We'll be keeping an eye on a side issue that does worry us – the opportunity for regional broadcasters to push their case for merging three networks into one – but for now, we'll just commend the attempt to tackle difficult policy challenges.



Derek Wilding
CMT Co-Director

Privately optimistic about reform

Speaking of law reform, on Sunday [the CMT submitted its response](#) to the Attorney-General's [Issues Paper on privacy law reform](#). We argued that the *Privacy Act 1988* is not fit for purpose and requires dramatic reform. It also needs to be supplemented with the introduction of a statutory tort of serious invasion of privacy, among other measures. Privacy reform has been on the table before. Let's hope this time there are results.

Indeed, our new research reveals that Australians want the law to do a better job protecting privacy. In July this year, the CMT conducted focus groups into consent, privacy and smartphones. In six Zoom sessions, we asked small groups whether they thought consent was broken, how it might be improved, and what other mechanisms might be used to help navigate the minefield of data use and abuse. The results were rich. During 12 hours of discussions and exercises, we were told: yes, consent is broken, but it can be fixed – with the help of good design, and good law.



This week we published a report stemming from the research: [The Consent Trap, Australian focus groups on smartphones, privacy and consent](#). The title came from a Sydney participant who said, 'Consent is a trap ... but it's better than nothing.' Read the report [here](#), or the two-page summary [here](#). And a big thank you to the International

Association of Privacy Professionals – Australia/New Zealand Chapter Inc, who funded the research as part of their legacy grants scheme. (The views in the report are ours, not necessarily theirs.)



Sacha Molitorisz
CMT Postdoctoral Fellow

Protecting each other from harmful info



It's been a busy year in the [First Draft](#) Australian bureau, which has grown quickly since we first started monitoring mis- and dis-information for last year's Australian federal elections. Now considered an 'APAC' bureau, we've developed a leadership position in Asia with our new global reporting teams also monitoring Chinese language social media. Just this past month, our investigations have formed the backbone of long-form analysis pieces

by the *Washington Post*, NBC, *South China Morning Post* and the ABC, and most recently [a New York Times feature](#) that included our colleagues' data journalism.

As well as a focus on US elections, the Australian bureau keeps a keen eye on the region. We conducted training ahead of Myanmar's general elections in November. Earlier, our training, monitoring and research over several months for the New Zealand elections and referenda saw editors across the major mastheads admit that they relied upon our guidance daily.

As I write this, the team is busily monitoring the nuances around China-Australia relations; assisting with putting the final touches on the draft disinformation regulatory code; and editing 'end of year' articles to be part of a First Draft website series. Meanwhile, First Draft's headquarters in London is launching a new iteration of its web-based CrossCheck platform, which will have full workflow functionality for journalists and experts. For 2021

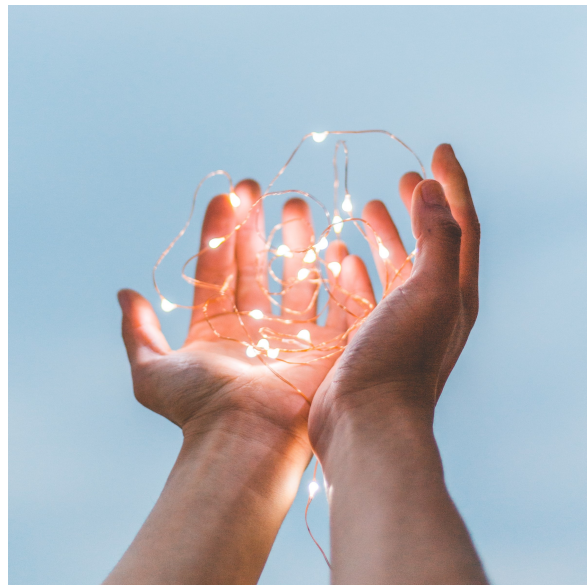
our plans include: a strong focus on the Pacific; a new style of training for 'celebrities'; and publication of the findings from our survey of ANZ-Pacific journalists and how prepared they feel to work in an era of mis- and disinformation.



Anne Kruger
First Draft APAC Director

And that's a wrap!

This week the annual Journalism Education & Research Association of Australia (JERAA) conference was held in Melbourne. Or, more accurately, on Microsoft Teams – which was appropriate, given since several sessions addressed the sometimes awkward relationship between journalism and big tech. And the substance of the conference can be summed up in 11 words: Journalism (and journalism education) are in big trouble; still, there's hope.



On Wednesday, the opening keynote was given by journalist Maria Ressa from her home in the Philippines, where she was [convicted of 'cyberlibel'](#) in June and now faces the Kafkaesque prospect of six years in jail. In clinical detail, Ressa detailed how she and her news outlet, [Rappler](#), have been attacked in systematic online campaigns of misinformation, some originating from China. Ressa is inspiring and brilliant. We need [to support her](#).

Thursday morning's keynote was by Emily Bell and Julie Posetti, summarising [their report](#) into the impacts of Covid-19 on journalism. Nearly half of the journalists they surveyed saw a revenue decline at their organisation of more than 50 per cent; but more than 60 per cent of their sample felt an increased commitment to journalism. Indeed, throughout the conference, there was a profound resolve to support journalism and to teach journalism, at a time when the old business model has collapsed, when support for the study of journalism appears to be waning and when some countries' governments are attacking public interest journalism - and the truth - with venomous self-interest.

The conference, which finishes today, illuminated the challenge ahead, but also the opportunity. Together, if we get it right, the fourth estate will emerge better and stronger than ever, and democracy will be the beneficiary. And on that note, bye for now.



Sacha Molitorisz
CMT Postdoctoral Fellow

This is our last newsletter of the year. The next edition will land in your inbox on 22 January 2021. Thank you for all the support in 2020, and here's to a 2021 that, like good journalism, is unequivocally in the public interest. In the meantime, the CMT wishes you a joyous and restorative break.

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The Centre for Media Transition and UTS acknowledges the Gadigal and Guring-gai people of the Eora Nation upon whose ancestral lands our university now stands. We pay respect to the Elders both past and present, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for these places.

#ICYMI You can read more of our publications and the reports below on our [website](#).



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