

Hi there

Small change, big change



Budget analysis can feel like reading tea leaves as government priorities are discerned via dollars. In our area of the shifting media landscape, the 2021 budget held two important signs.

Australian Associated Press has been thrown a \$15m lifeline and given 'Deductible Gift Recipient' status. This gives the newswire some certainty for the next two years as it rebuilds itself as a charity, having previously been cooperatively industry-run and majority-owned by NewsCorp and Nine

Entertainment. Meanwhile, the Australian Communications & Media Authority has been given an additional \$4.2m to create registers and monitor compliance for the much-discussed News Media Bargaining Code, the result of world-first legislation passed in May that is meant to make digital platforms pay more for news.

The budget lines are modest, but this is the new media landscape of unusual funding models.

Of course, it's not all about the new. As [pointed out by the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance](#), traditional government funding of public broadcasters is far from certain. [The Australian reports](#) the broadcasting budgets of the ABC and SBS could be cut by up to six per cent in real terms over the next four years, despite around \$30m for new language services allocated to SBS. Even if [talk in the corridors of more media mergers has been quashed for now](#), the crucial role played by public broadcasters cannot be overlooked.

The lack of support for SBS and especially the ABC is out of step with the Australian public which, in a confusing media environment, [places its trust in the national broadcasters](#). It is also out of step with the needs of democratic renewal. People like to see their governments held to account by the fourth estate. As shown by [Oxford Reuters Institute research](#), trust in institutions is built through trust in journalism.

With that trust comes responsibility to report carefully on currents of war and rising xenophobia and to tackle the world of mis- and disinformation. All these issues feature below, as does the perennial issue of freedom of the press, a topic that took on extra resonance last Saturday when it arose in the atmospheric surrounds of an ex-jail in Bendigo. Judging from Sacha's report of the Bendigo Writer's Festival, the Ulumbarra Theatre is a successful repurposing of a physical environment. The information environment must also be redesigned with both new features and important legacy elements in mind.



Chrisanthi Giotis
Postdoctoral Fellow

The drums of war – beating too hard?

Here are some important statistics to think about: China's army is roughly 35 times larger than Australia's and its navy about 16 times bigger. Its aircraft outnumber ours 10 to one.

This makes you wonder, why is Australia talking up the possibility of war with our largest trading partner China? And is the hawkishness of some sections of the Australian media just a little too enthusiastic about the prospect of Australian support of any western military action in defence of Taiwan?



China is sounding impatient to be sure, in its wait for Taiwan to return to the fold but it's not sounding too impressed either with Australia's warning that war is on the cards: the communist party's *People's Daily* has opined that Australia has a pathological obsession with war against China. The US President Joe Biden is sending signals he wants to avoid any diplomatic or military escalation with China on any issue and increase the communication channels between Washington and Beijing to prioritise crisis talks, should

they be needed.

This week on Fourth Estate on 2SER, I talked to two recently former China correspondents, both forced to leave Beijing as the climate there towards Australian media took a chilly turn. The ABC's Bill Birtles and the AFR's Mike Smith talk about what Australia is getting wrong about China and how the media could inject some nuance – if it chooses to. They also share some interesting views on what China gets wrong about us!

Listen to the episode [here](#).



Monica Attard
CMT Co-Director

A rally call to stop Asian hate



Racism is not new. But incidents such as the [Atlanta shooting](#) in March resulting in eight deaths, six of which were Asian women, attract international attention and bring the conversation to the surface.

On April 30, Students for Humanity UTS hosted a [#StopAsianHate](#) Panel to honour the victims of that shooting and explore the wider context of the crime which came at a time of heightened anti-Asian rhetoric and [will be prosecuted in the U.S as a hate crime motivated by racism](#).

The panel featured [Shirley Le](#), a Vietnamese Australian writer and Creative Producer at Sweatshop: Western Sydney Literacy Movement, UTS's own [Christina Ho](#), associate professor in Social and Political Sciences and Adri Lozano, a convenor for the [Asian Australian Alliance](#) and consultant working particularly in racial justice and the performing arts.

In a constantly changing news cycle where today's news quickly recedes, the panel offered audiences a moment to take a deeper look into this tragedy and also focus on the [#StopAsianHate](#) Campaign, born out of the rising vilification and targeted attacks towards Asian peoples in the wake of Covid-19. This campaign gained even more traction shortly after the Atlanta shootings.

The panel talked about the connection between negative media representation, politics, stereotypes of Asian Australians and hate crimes. And there was discussion of the intricacies of racism beyond overt representations and slurs including the role of cultural appreciation in combatting the myths that plague the Asian community.

As the president of Students For Humanity UTS, I was honoured to convene this panel. However, it's unjust that the deaths of these Asian women needed to be politicised rather than grieved ordinarily. This reflects how vital politics are to the identities of people of colour. We cannot escape it, in life or death. This conversation deserves more of a platform and I'm really appreciative of everyone who showed up in solidarity with the Asian Australian community and Asian community more broadly.



Suzy Monzer

President of Students for Humanity UTS

Demystifying mis- and disinformation, daily and weekly

As 2021 continues to throw up mis- and disinformation challenges [First Draft](#) has been working doggedly to help empower and protect communities by sharing insights, free training and resources to help build resilience and improve access to accurate information.

Recent investigations by the APAC team have revealed how [misinformation hides in plain sight on the comments section of Facebook](#), how [Chinese-made vaccines are subject to misleading misinformation narratives](#) and coming next week, a look at vaccine hesitancy in Hong Kong.

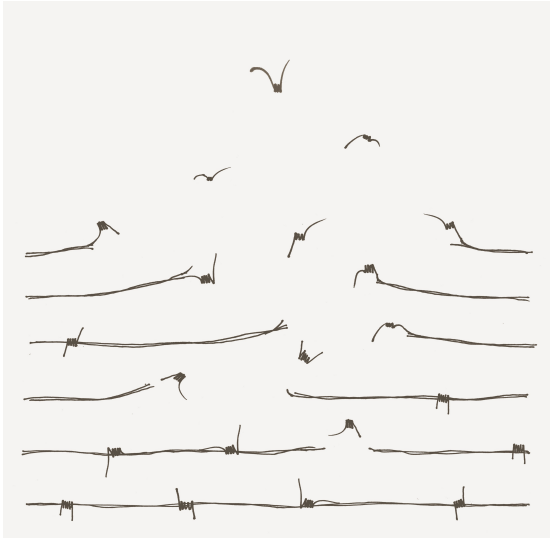
The [Daily and Weekly briefings](#) is where you can stay up to date with all the latest First Draft monitoring insights on misinformation from around the world, so if you haven't already, sign up [now](#).



Rosa Alice

Communications Officer

Freedom and the festival



Last Saturday night, [Louise Milligan](#) chose to stay out of jail.

At the [Bendigo Writers Festival](#), a panel session entitled '[Strewth! What's happened to the media?](#)' was held in the Ulumbarra Theatre, a beautiful venue fashioned out of Bendigo's repurposed old jail. Moderated by local journo [Sarah Lawrence](#), the panel featured author and journo [Peter Cronau](#), investigative reporter [Margaret](#)

[Simons](#) and me. Unfortunately, though, Milligan was unwell. Currently defending a high-profile defamation suit brought by former Attorney-General Christian Porter, she cancelled at the last minute. Her replacement was ex-The Age editor [Michael Gawenda](#).

It proved to be a lively discussion, ranging over the low levels of trust in journalism, the impact of the news media bargaining code, and the devastating effects of the collapse of local news media. The topic of defamation, however, was untouched.

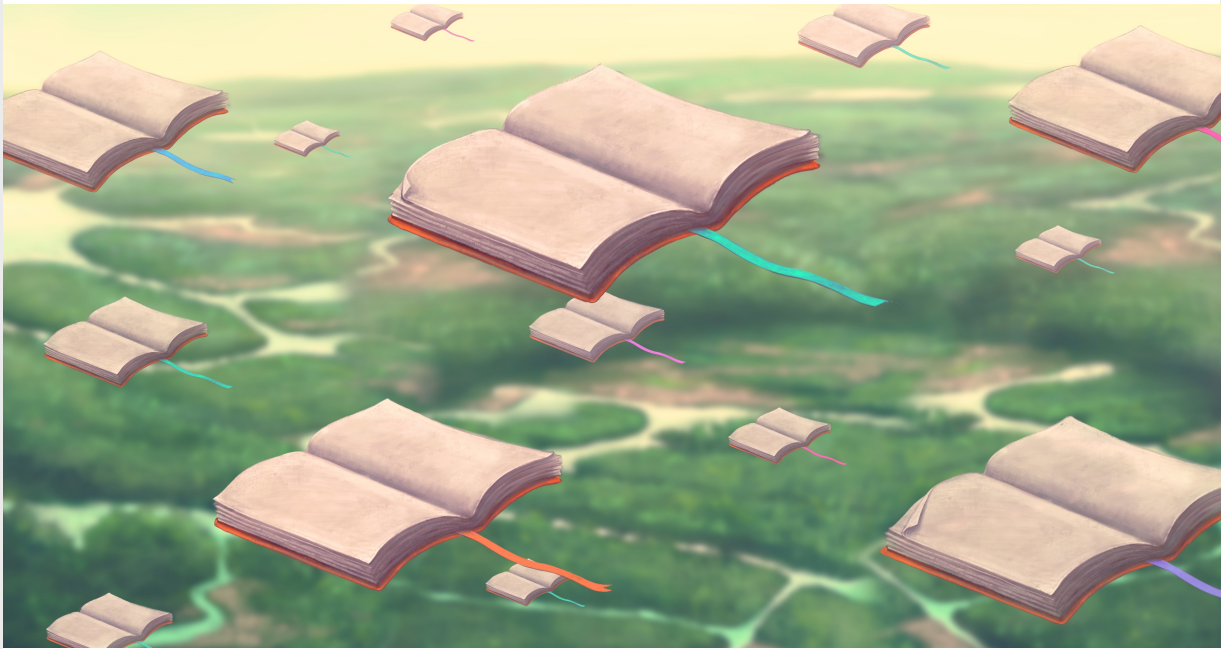
By Sunday, thankfully, Milligan was well enough to appear in a session entitled, 'The Witness', to discuss a legal system that brutalises witnesses. Also on Sunday, [Amanda Dunn](#) interrogated me about [my book](#) on digital privacy, asking expansive questions about Cambridge Analytica, the law and the relational nature of privacy.

One thread connecting these sessions was freedom: freedom of the press; the freedom afforded by the right to privacy; and the freedom afforded by a democracy that isn't a given, but needs defending.



Sacha Molitorisz
UTS Lecturer in Law/FASS

Worth a read



Fourth estate must be distinguished from 'citizen journalist' brigade

On World Press Freedom Day, May 3, came a renewed call for a voluntary certification scheme for journalists aimed at improving standards. Dr Simon Longstaff, executive director of The Ethics Centre and Honorary Professor at ANU's School of Philosophy and Professor Peter Greste, Director and spokesperson of the Alliance for Journalists' Freedom wrote on this in *The Australian*. Read it [here](#).

Ghosts Can't Sue

In the wake of revelations about the 1979 Luna Park Ghost Train fire by the ABC's *Exposed* team former ABC journalist Jonathan Holmes took to the ABC Alumni website to look at the challenges posed by defamation law forty years ago when Four Corners took on NSW Premier Neville Wran. Jonathan asks whether new amendments, which come into force in some states in July, will make any difference. Read it [here](#).

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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.



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