

Centre for Media Transition



Hi there

Go fourth and prosper



On Sunday, the Centre for Media Transition will [celebrate its fourth birthday](#).

Unfortunately, lockdown means we can't throw a party. So we'll just take a moment to pause and reflect.

On 25 July 2017, with Donald Trump in the White House and Justin Bieber in the charts, the CMT was officially launched by outspoken journalism professor [Jeff Jarvis](#). At a [live event](#) (!) titled, 'How media manipulators are spreading lies, hate and destroying democracy — and what

journalism and its partners can do', Jarvis spoke about how digital tools were enabling individuals and governments to promote views formerly considered fringe, fake or far worse. This, Jarvis said, presented a fundamental challenge for journalism, and for society. Ever since that launch, the CMT has been working to understand changes in media and journalism, with a view to finding ways to promote the public interest.

Sitting at the intersection of law and media, the CMT has researched: how Australians [trust news](#); the [impact of digital platforms](#) on journalism; existential challenges to [regional media](#); strategies to combat [misinformation](#); consumer concerns about [bias and commercial influence](#); the [ethics and law of privacy](#), as well the challenges of protecting [data on smartphones](#); the crisis in [journalism jobs](#); how ['frame reflection interviews'](#) can counter Islamophobia; shortcomings in the [rule-making frameworks](#) for self- and co-regulation in communications; [improving foreign correspondence](#) by drawing on diasporic knowledge; potential avenues for news media [innovation](#); and the design and operation of [Australia's](#)

[News Media Bargaining Code](#). One [grand new project](#) with the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation and The Guardian will see the CMT researching how mainstream media can facilitate more rural and regional news getting to its audiences as well as five UTS journalism students each posted for a year to rural newspapers, starting with the *Gilgandra Weekly*. Speaking of students, we're deeply grateful to UTS journalism postgrad Max Melzer, who produced [this highlight reel](#) of the CMT's first four years.

So far, the CMT hasn't saved journalism. And given the scale of media transition, there are some issues we're leaving to others, including the impacts of Justin Bieber. (In case you're wondering, research reveals that [if every Alexa speaker in the world played Despacito](#) at the same time, the volume would be equivalent to a shotgun blast.) However, we have shed light on a range of significant media issues, and even offered some solutions. By doing so, we hope that our work helps point to ways the media – including news media – can flourish. And here's hoping that next July we can celebrate our fifth birthday together in person.



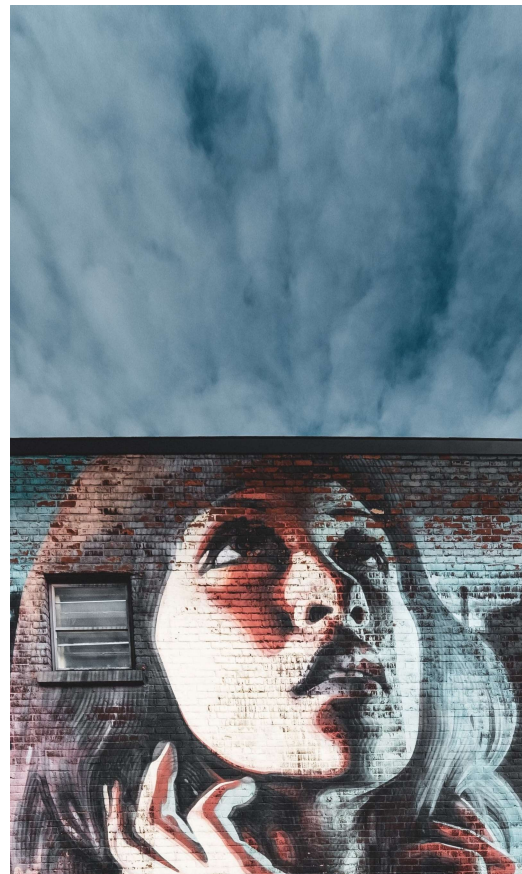
Sacha Molitorisz
UTS Lecturer in Law/FASS

Watching the working class

As I write this a police helicopter is passing overhead, again. Welcome to working from home in the Sydney LGA of Canterbury-Bankstown.

More distressing than the deep, repetitive whirring is the balcony-to-balcony conversation I had with my eight-year-old neighbour last week. At another point when the chopper was overhead, she said: "Lucky Chrisanthi I came inside". She thought the police would be after her simply for playing on the cement strip that counts as a backyard in my block, in-between clothes-lines full of hi-viz and uniforms. That innocent fear is subconsciously inherited through [long histories of over-policing and negative media attention](#).

This lockdown has put on show both inequality and how little the dynamics of working-class communities are understood. For



years, as mainstream media struggled with shrinking budgets, it [abandoned issues relevant to working class](#) communities who were not seen as a [key paying demographic](#). This can have dangerous consequences. In the UK, [veteran journalist Jon Snow](#) argues that the catastrophic Grenfell fire could have been averted if journalists had been closer to that community. In the US, higher media distrust in disadvantaged communities is well-documented.

But it's not all doom and gloom. [Recent research](#) in Philadelphia has found that in some marginalised communities, where journalists were already involved in experiments seeking to reverse media distrust, those existing connections were a huge benefit when the pandemic hit. The ABC has opened a western Sydney office; and as shown [in my research](#) ABC journalists in Melbourne sought to work with communities to make sure that their attempts to fight the pandemic were properly understood.

Right now, in Sydney, all eyes are on essential workers – often migrant and low-paid. That attention could lead to shallow stereotypes and a blame game, or it could lead to a more nuanced understanding of the crucial role, and unfair burden, placed by this pandemic on essential workers. Such a result would be a win for society and for stemming the tide of media distrust among working class communities.

Place your bets. And oh, by the way, the helicopter is back.



Chrisanthi Giotis
CMT Postdoctoral Fellow

Anti-vax misinformation that just won't die



Against a backdrop of a worryingly [slow vaccine rollout](#), freshly-immunised Aussies have started posting selfies to social media alongside the phrase, 'job done'. However, this has provided ammunition and motivation for anti-vaxxers, who are responding quickly to such posts by using social media and direct messaging apps to spread misinformation directly aimed at their family and friends.

On platforms including WhatsApp, the misinformation includes conspiracy theories that vaccinated people will 'die within two years' and that vaccines were invented to

depopulate the world. The messages often quote unsupported claims by former Pfizer employee Michael Yeadon, which have repeatedly [been debunked](#). French virologist Luc Montagnier, a former Nobel Prize winner who has previously spread conspiracy theories about Covid-19, is often cited. There's [no evidence](#) Montagnier made these specific claims.

So, what to do? While fact-checks are effective for those who already have strong trust in the media, sharing debunks and anti-vaccination messages directly with family and friends who are vaccine-hesitant may not be the best approach. First Draft regards this as an exercise in building trust. It's about addressing people's concerns without ridiculing them. It's about affirming and developing their critical thinking. And it's about showing that something is false but taking people through how you learned that. It also involves finding trusted sources in someone's community who speak to their lived experience. In this context, we need to rethink our definition of 'influencer' - it might be a community leader, or sports or cultural role models. To counter a lack of non-English resources, the ABC recently published a series of public health messages in [multiple languages](#) to appeal to Sydney's diverse communities.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday morning NSW One Nation leader Mark Latham [asked on Twitter](#) why fully-vaccinated Sydneysiders still need to be kept in lockdown. Earlier, ABC TV journalist Jeremy Fernandez had provided this useful [explainer](#), with the key take away: once you are vaccinated you are safe, but not everyone around you is - yet.



Anne Kruger and the First Draft APAC Team

What we're hearing_reading_viewing

On Mumbrella, [a revealing extract](#) about Fairfax from Tim Burrowes's new book, [Media Unmade: Australian media's most disruptive decade](#)

On ABC iview, the eye-opening [Ms Represented with Annabel Crabb](#), about women in Aussie politics

Ronan Farrow's amazing [Catch and Kill](#) podcast

In *The Conversation*, ['We need to collect ethnicity data during COVID testing if we're to get on top of Sydney's outbreak'](#) by Andrew



Jakubowicz

And from *The Saturday Paper*, 'The rise and rise of Australian authoritarianism' by Brian Toohey (paywall)

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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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