

# Save Public Interest Journalism – for health

Public interest journalism is an important determinant of health, due to its roles in accountability and scrutinising power, contributing to health literacy, and empowering communities. A strong public interest journalism sector contributes to planetary health and health equity, as well as healthier people, communities, societies, and systems of governance.

**PIJ is under attack!**

- Collapse of the underpinning business model
- Market power of digital platforms
- Neoliberalism
- Rise of authoritarianism
- Attacks on press freedom and safety
- Sector's failure to innovate, adapt and represent communities.

In Australia, from 2006 to 2016 the number of people employed as journalists and writers fell by nine percent and by 26 percent for traditional print journalists.

Between 2011 and 2017, an estimated 3,000 journalists lost their jobs through redundancies alone.

This was before the COVID-19 pandemic – it is much worse now. Job losses and newsroom closures and contractions have escalated in 2020.

Public Interest Journalism Initiative and The Judith Neilson Institute for Journalism and Ideas ([August, 2020](#))



Design and concept by Dr Ruth Armstrong, Dr Megan Williams, Mitchell Ward and Dr Melissa Sweet (2019)

This ecological analysis of the upstream determinants of a healthy, sustainable public interest journalism sector is informed by Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing, and a decolonising methodology. This model draws connections between the underlying determinants of the crisis in public interest journalism and the community's health. It also suggests that public health engagement with these determinants can contribute to healthier outcomes.

Poster Presentation to 16th World Congress on Public Health, October 2020 #WCPH2020

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*"The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the essential role of journalists... Readership and audiences are record high. But revenues are record low.*

*This is not only the pandemic's fault. It is a longer-term trend that sky-rocketed with the digitalisation and emergence of online platforms. The advertising is moving online, leaving the content creators, journalists, in a difficult situation. Almost half of EU citizens now rely on online news as their main source for information about national and European politics. This trend puts the local media, those that are the closest to citizens, at special risk.*

*All this has an impact on our democracies. The weaker the 'fourth estate' is, the weaker its ability to watch the hands of those in power – the weaker our democracy."*

**Speech** by the Vice-President of the European Commission, Věra Jourová, a Czech politician and lawyer, on 7 July 2020

*"The emerging deficits in the quantity and quality of available local news and information threaten community cohesion and economic recovery during these uncertain times and undermine Australia's democratic systems. Many Australian communities face the real possibility that the essential service of local news will no longer be there for them."*

**Democracy threatened**

Public Interest Journalism Initiative and The Judith Neilson Institute for Journalism and Ideas ([August, 2020](#))

**Calls to public health action**

1. Include public interest journalism in models of the social determinants of health – in practice, research, advocacy and education
2. Advocate for policy reform to support public interest journalism, including non-profit and community-based models
3. Advocate for regulation of the digital platforms



We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the country where we live, work and travel upon, and to Elders, past, present and future.

