Media Units 1 & 2

Chapter 13 — Media and change: influence and issues

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Chapter 13 Media and change: influence and issues — 13A The influence of technological development on audiences and the individual

Theory

Chapter 12 established the ground this subtopic stands on: what new media technologies are and what forms they take (12A), what new media audiences are like (12B), and how audiences interact and engage across converging forms (12C). This subtopic takes the next dot point — *the influence of technological development, audiences, the individual, media industries and institutions* — and works the first half of it: what technological development has done **to audiences** and **to the individual**. Its matching key skill asks you to *analyse* that influence, which is a higher demand than describing it.

Two boundaries keep this subtopic honest. **13B** takes the same dot point's other half — industries and institutions — so the commercial and structural story belongs there. **13C** takes social, ethical and legal issues in the media industry in the last two years, so a survey of current controversies belongs there. What is left here is the question the Area of Study opens with: *what is the impact of new media technologies on us as individuals and as a society?*

What counts as a technological development

A **technological development** is a specific, datable change in the technology available to media producers or audiences that alters what can be made, distributed, found, consumed or shared. Three tests separate a real development from a vague gesture at "the internet".

It is specific. "Digital technology" is not a development; it is an era. *Delivery of a full season of a program on demand, all episodes released at once* is a development. *A camera capable of broadcast-quality video inside a phone that is already connected to a network* is a development. *Recommendation of the next item by an algorithm rather than by a schedule or an editor* is a development. Each of these can be dated, and each changed a practice that can be named.

It is datable. You do not need the exact year, but you need a before and an after. An influence argument is a comparison across time, and a claim with no "before" in it is not an argument about change.

It changed a practice. Technology that nobody adopted influenced nobody. The development that matters is the one audiences took up, and the evidence of influence is in what people started or stopped doing — not in the specification of the device.

> Weak: "Social media has had a huge influence on audiences."
>
> Available: "Once a phone camera could publish to a public feed in one action, the audience for a local sports match stopped being the people at the ground and became anyone the players' accounts reached — and the club, which had never published anything, acquired a distribution problem it had not asked for."

The first sentence names no development, no practice and no change. The second names the development (capture and publication collapsed into one action), the practice it changed (who could see a local match), and a consequence for a specific group.

Affordance, not compulsion

The single most common failure in this Area of Study is to write as though technology acts on people the way weather acts on a paddock. It does not. Technology offers; people take up, adapt, refuse or misuse the offer.

An **affordance** is what a technology makes easy, hard, possible or impossible — the range of actions it invites without determining which of them anyone takes. Autoplay affords continuing; it does not compel anyone to keep watching. A public reply field affords a response from a stranger; it does not require one. Location tagging affords being found; it also affords being tracked, which is the same affordance read from the other side.

Two positions frame every argument in this Area of Study, and you should be able to name both.

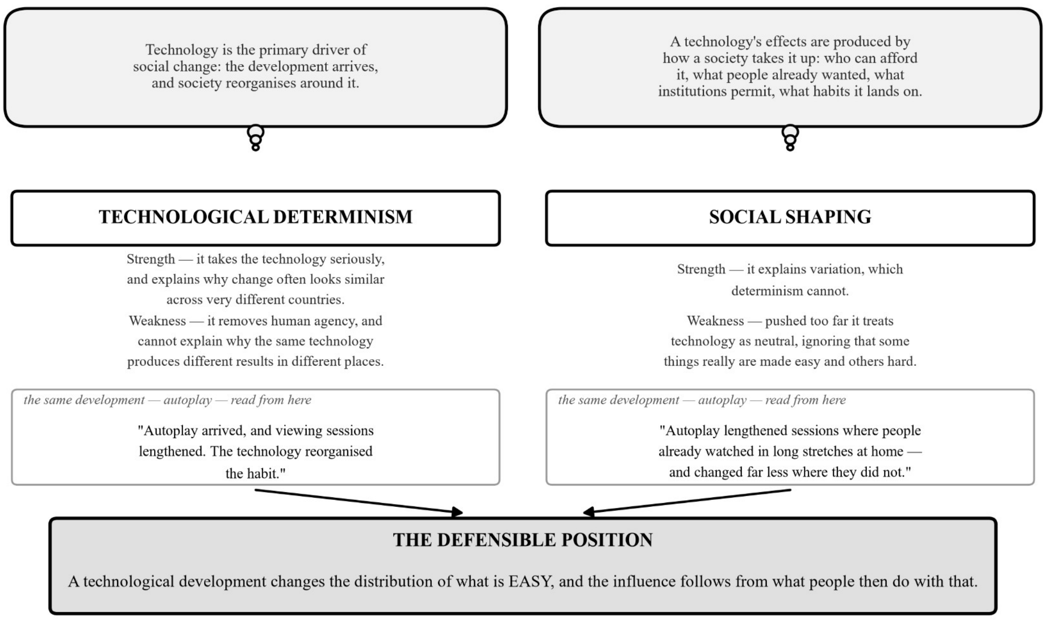
Technological determinism is the argument that technology is the primary driver of social change: the development arrives, and society reorganises around it. Its strength is that it takes the technology seriously and explains why change often looks similar across very different countries. Its weakness is that it removes human agency and cannot explain why the same technology produces different results in different places.

Social shaping is the argument that a technology's effects are produced by how a society takes it up: by who can afford it, what people already wanted, what institutions permit, and what habits it lands on. Its strength is that it explains variation. Its weakness is that pushed too far it treats technology as neutral, which ignores that some things really are made easy and others really are made hard.

The defensible position sits between them, and it is the position this subtopic teaches: **a technological development changes the distribution of what is easy, and the influence follows from what people then do with that.** Write "afforded", "made possible", "made cheap", "removed the need for" — not "forced", "made people", "destroyed".

The figure below sets the two positions side by side as what they are — **positions held in an argument**, not descriptions of the world — with the strength and the weakness of each, and one development read from both. Notice that neither reading of autoplay is wrong. What separates them is what each treats as the cause.

Two positions, not two facts. Name both — then take the one that sits between them.



Which is a rule about verbs. Write afforded · made possible · made cheap · removed the need for.
Never forced · made people · destroyed.

Two scales: audiences and the individual

The dot point names two targets, and it names them separately because **the same development often does opposite things at the two scales**. Learning to hold both is the analytical skill this subtopic is built around.

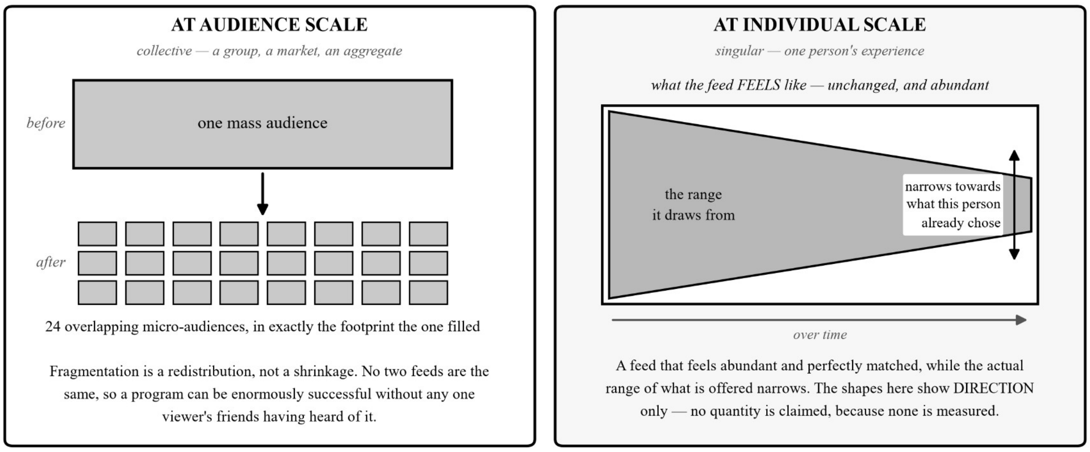
	Audiences	**The individual**
Scale	Collective — a group, a market, an aggregate	Singular — one person's experience
What changes	Size, composition, how it is assembled, how it is reached, how it is counted	Habits, attention, identity, relationships, wellbeing, obligations
Evidence	Patterns of consumption, distribution reach, measurement data	A person's practices, choices and reported experience
Typical claim	"The audience for X fragmented into hundreds of niche audiences"	"A viewer now decides when a program ends, and often does not decide at all"

Take **algorithmic recommendation**, the practice of a system selecting the next item for a user from signals about their past behaviour and the behaviour of similar users.

- *At audience scale* it dissolves the single mass audience into thousands of overlapping micro- audiences, because no two feeds are the same. A program can be enormously successful without any one viewer's friends having heard of it.
- *At individual scale* it produces the opposite sensation: a feed that feels abundant and perfectly matched, while the actual range of what is offered narrows towards what the person already chose.

Both are true, and an answer that reports only one has answered half the dot point. The figure below holds the two together. Read the left panel carefully: the blocks after fragmentation occupy **exactly** the footprint the single mass audience filled, because fragmentation redistributes an audience rather than shrinking it — an answer that treats a fragmented audience as a smaller one has made a different claim from the one the evidence supports. The right panel claims no quantity at all, and says so on its face: the envelope of what the feed *feels* like stays the same size while the range it draws from narrows.

One development — algorithmic recommendation. Two scales, and it does opposite things at each.



Both are true. An answer that reports only one has answered half the dot point.

What technological development did to audiences

Five shifts cover most of what can be argued at audience scale. Each is a change in a practice, not in a device.

1. From the schedule to on demand. When distribution was scarce and timed, an audience was assembled by a broadcaster at an hour of its choosing; watching was simultaneous, and the experience was shared because there was no alternative. On-demand delivery moved the decision to the audience. The consequence is not simply convenience: it is the **decline of the shared moment**. Audiences still gather simultaneously — for live sport, for finals, for a national emergency — but those events are now exceptions that get their value partly from being exceptions.

2. From mass to fragmented. Cheap distribution removed the need for a product to be broadly acceptable in order to be viable. The result is **fragmentation**: the splitting of a large general audience into many smaller ones organised by interest rather than by geography or timeslot. A regional newspaper once served everyone within a delivery radius, whatever their interests; a feed serves people with an interest, wherever they are. Fragmentation gives minority interests products that would never have cleared a mass-market threshold, and it takes away the common reference points a mass audience once shared.

3. From counted to measured. A broadcast audience was estimated from a sample and known as a number. A connected audience is measured continuously, per person, per second — what was opened, how far it was watched, where it was abandoned, what was watched next. This is the deepest change of the five, because measurement feeds back into production: what gets made is shaped by what the measurement rewards, which is usually completion and return, not satisfaction.

4. From receiver to supplier. Audiences now supply the material that other audiences consume. The study design puts this precisely: audiences are consumers, producers and products, often simultaneously. At audience scale the consequence is that a platform's content costs collapse — the audience makes the product — while the volume of available material grows past any possibility of editorial oversight.

5. From national gatekeeping to global distribution. Australian audiences were once reached through a small number of Australian institutions operating under Australian rules. Much of what Australians now watch, hear and read arrives from services headquartered elsewhere. At audience scale this widens choice and weakens the reach of national arrangements — a point 13B develops for the industry side.

A caution on all five: **audiences add, they rarely simply replace**. Radio survived television; cinema survived the video recorder; print survived the web in altered form. The accurate claim is usually about **redistribution** — of time, attention and money — not about extinction. A student who writes that a new form "killed" an older one is almost always overstating, and a marker will notice.

What technological development did to the individual

The Area of Study is explicit that changes in the media have **social, emotional and ethical consequences** for individuals. That triad is your sorting frame, and using it is the fastest way to lift an answer from a list into an analysis.

Social consequences concern relationships and participation — who a person is connected to, how they belong, who they can reach and who can reach them. A person can now maintain a relationship with a group they have never met and sustain a **parasocial relationship** — a one-sided sense of intimacy with a media figure who does not know the audience member exists — with far more material than a weekly program once supplied. The same connectivity means contact is no longer bounded by place or hour, so a person may be reachable by anyone, at any time, including people they would rather not hear from.

Emotional consequences concern how media use feels and what it does to wellbeing. Continuous availability removes the natural end points media used to have: a newspaper finished, a program ended, a cinema emptied. A feed does not end, and interfaces that autoplay, refresh or reward return are designed so that stopping is a decision the individual must make repeatedly. Publishing to a public audience also exposes an individual to metrics on their own life — visible counts attached to a photograph of themselves — and to comparison against material selected and constructed to be compared favourably against.

Ethical consequences concern responsibility — what an individual now owes to others, and what is owed to them. A person with a phone camera holds a publishing capability that once belonged to institutions, and with it the obligations institutions carry: consent, accuracy, the harm a publication can do to a person who did not choose to be in it. The obligation runs the other way too. Every use of a connected service produces **personal information** about the user, and in Australia the handling of that information is governed by the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) and the Australian Privacy Principles, which apply to most large businesses and to overseas platforms carrying on business in Australia. Since 10 June 2025 an individual has also had a statutory cause of action for a **serious invasion of privacy**, introduced by the *Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024* (Cth) — a change that matters here because it treats privacy as something an individual can act on, not only something a regulator polices. The wider issue landscape belongs to 13C; what belongs here is the point that technological development moved a set of ethical decisions from institutions onto individuals.

Two further individual-scale changes are worth naming because questions reach for them.

The individual as producer. The production capability that once required a crew, a facility and a distributor now fits in a pocket, and the distribution that once required a licence requires an account. For an individual this is genuine expansion — a person can make and reach an audience without permission from any institution. It also transfers work and risk: the individual is now also the publisher, the moderator of their own comments, and the person legally exposed for what they post.

The individual as data. An audience member is also a **product**: their attention and their behavioural data are what the service actually sells. The consequence for the individual is that the media they receive is assembled partly from a record of themselves, and that record persists.

Influence is not evenly distributed

The weakest influence answers assume one undifferentiated "everyone". The strongest ask *who*, and find that the same development lands very differently on different people.

- **Access.** The **digital divide** is the gap between those who have reliable, affordable access to media technologies and the skills to use them, and those who do not. In Australia it runs along income, age, disability, language and — most sharply — the difference between metropolitan, regional and remote connectivity. A development that assumes fast, unmetered data excludes people before it influences them.

- **Skills.** Access without the literacy to evaluate what arrives is only partial access.
- **Age.** A person whose media habits formed under a schedule experiences on-demand delivery as an addition to a settled routine; a person who has never known a schedule experiences it as the ordinary condition of media.
- **Regulatory position.** As at 2026, Australian law itself sorts audiences by age. The *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024* (Cth) amended the *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth) to require age-restricted social media platforms to take reasonable steps to prevent Australians under 16 from holding accounts; the obligation commenced on 10 December 2025, is enforced by the **eSafety Commissioner**, and carries civil penalties running to tens of millions of dollars for systemic failure. The obligation falls on the platform — there is no penalty for a young person or their parents. Whatever a student thinks of the policy, its analytical significance here is precise: **a legal instrument has redefined who may be an audience member for a whole class of media form.**

Making an influence claim: the house method

Six moves. Used in order, they produce an answer that analyses rather than describes.

1. **Name the development specifically, and date it.** One development, named as a capability or a practice, with a before and an after.
2. **Name the affordance.** What did it make easy, cheap, instant or possible that was not before?
3. **Name the practice that changed.** What did audiences or individuals start or stop doing? This is the evidence step; without it the answer is speculation.
4. **Take it to both scales.** State the audience-scale consequence and the individual-scale consequence, and say whether they pull the same way or opposite ways.
5. **Sort the consequence** as social, emotional or ethical, and say who gains and who loses.
6. **Qualify.** Name a group the development did not reach, an older form that survived it, or the evidence that would be needed to settle the claim.

Five traps

Trap	What it looks like	Fix
Determinism	"Smartphones destroyed attention spans."	Rewrite as affordance: what became easy, and what did people do with it?
No before	"Audiences can watch whatever they want."	Compared with when? An influence claim is a comparison.
One scale only	An answer about audiences that never mentions a person, or vice versa	Take every claim to both scales.
Undated nostalgia	"The media used to bring families together."	Assertions about the past need the same evidence as claims about the present.
Everyone	"Society now has no attention span."	Ask *which audience*, and name a group for whom it is not true.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Explain the influence of on-demand delivery with algorithmic recommendation on audiences and on the individual. *(6 marks)*

> **Stimulus.** Bellcott is a subscription video service available in Australia. Until 2019 it released one episode of each original series per week at 7.30 pm on a Thursday and promoted its catalogue through a single editorially chosen home page identical for every subscriber. From 2020 it released every episode of a series at once and replaced the home page with a personalised rail of recommendations generated from each

subscriber's viewing history, with the next episode starting automatically eight seconds after the previous one ends.

Working	Comment
The development is precise and datable: between 2019 and 2020 Bellcott moved from timed weekly release with a single editorial front page to full-season release with a personalised, automatically advancing feed.	Move 1. Name the development as a change in capability and practice, with a before and an after. Never open with "streaming changed everything".
Two affordances follow. Full-season release makes continuing immediate rather than delayed by a week; personalised recommendation with autoplay makes choosing unnecessary, because a choice is already made and begun for the viewer.	Move 2. Affordances, stated as what became easy — not as what viewers were "made" to do.
The practice that changed is visible in both: subscribers who once watched one hour on a Thursday now watch several hours in one sitting, and subscribers who once saw the same front page as everyone else now see a page assembled from their own history.	Move 3. The evidence step. Influence is proven in changed behaviour, not in the specification of the service.
At audience scale, the timed release had assembled an audience: everyone watching at 7.30 on Thursday, able to talk about the same episode on Friday. Full-season release dissolves that assembly, because subscribers are now at different points in the same series at any moment. The single front page had also given the audience a common view of the catalogue; the personalised rail replaces it with as many catalogues as there are subscribers, so the audience fragments into micro-audiences that no longer share a sense of what is popular.	Move 4a. The audience-scale consequence, argued through what the old arrangement was doing rather than merely asserted.
At individual scale the influence runs the other way. The subscriber experiences more choice and less friction — the catalogue appears tailored, and the next thing is always ready. But the range on offer narrows towards what their history already indicates, and the eight-second autoplay converts stopping from something that happens by default into a decision that must be made against the interface. Control over *when* has increased; control over *what is offered* and over *when to stop* has decreased.	Move 4b. The individual-scale consequence, and the two scales explicitly pulling opposite ways. This contrast is where most of the marks live.
The consequences sort in two ways. Socially, the loss of a shared release time removes a small piece of common ground. Emotionally, an interface engineered so that stopping requires a decision shifts the burden of ending a viewing session onto the individual.	Move 5. The study design's own consequence categories, applied rather than listed.
Qualification: Bellcott has not abolished appointment viewing — live sport and finals still assemble simultaneous audiences — and the shift describes subscribers, not Australians generally, since a household without reliable unmetered data is not part of this change at all.	Move 6. A qualification naming a survival and a non-reached group. This is a mark, not a hedge.

Takeaway. One development, two scales, opposite directions: more control over timing, less control over range. Say both and the explanation is complete.

Example 2 — scaffolded

Discuss the social, emotional and ethical consequences for one individual of a phone camera that publishes directly to a public audience. *(6 marks)*

> **Stimulus.** Jesse is 16 and plays in a suburban football club. Every player's phone can record and publish a clip to a public feed in a single action. Jesse posts match clips; a montage of one match reaches an audience far larger than the club's own, and Jesse now receives replies from strangers, requests from other clubs, and comments about a teammate's error in the same match.

Working	Comment
The development is the collapse of capture, editing and distribution into one device and one action, so publication no longer requires equipment, a facility or anyone's permission.	Move 1–2 together. Naming what was removed — the gatekeeper and the gap between filming and publishing — is more analytical than naming the device.
Socially, Jesse's audience is no longer the people at the ground. It is anyone the clip reaches, which means the relationships formed through the club now extend to strangers with no connection to it, and contact arrives at any hour rather than at training.	Social consequence: relationships and reach, stated as a change from a bounded audience to an unbounded one.
Emotionally, Jesse's own performance now carries visible public numbers. A clip that does poorly is not simply unseen, as an unpublished video would be; it is measurably unseen, and the measurement is attached to Jesse personally.	Emotional consequence, tied to a specific affordance — the visible metric — rather than a general claim about "self-esteem".
Ethically, Jesse has become a publisher. The clip of a teammate's error was made and released without that teammate's agreement, and the resulting comments reach a person who chose to play football, not to be reviewed by strangers. The capability arrived without the editorial judgement an institution would have applied.	Ethical consequence, and the point of the whole example: obligations moved from institutions to an individual who was never trained in them.
The obligation is not only moral. Jesse is identifiable in the same feed, and the club has an interest in what is published under its name — so a capability that looks purely personal has consequences for a third party who never used it.	Extends the ethical strand outward. Good discussions show a consequence landing on someone other than the user.
Weighing it: the same development gives Jesse a genuine gain that no earlier generation of players had — reach, a record of their own play, contact with other clubs — obtained without permission from any institution. The costs are real, but so is the expansion, and a discussion that reports only harm has not discussed.	Move 5–6. "Discuss" requires a position that survives the strongest point against it.

Takeaway. Sort consequences as social, emotional and ethical, then find the person who did not choose to be involved — that is usually where the sharpest point is.

Example 3 — unscaffolded

Analyse the influence of the change described below on Hollowpine's audiences. *(8 marks)*

> **Stimulus.** Hollowpine is a short-video platform used widely in Australia. Until 2023 a user's feed showed only posts from accounts they had chosen to follow, in the order they were posted. From 2024 the feed shows mostly posts from accounts the user does not follow, selected by a recommendation system, and any post may be shown to any user regardless of the poster's follower count.

Hollowpine’s own published figures for its Australian users, before and after the change:

	2023	2025
Median posts seen per session from followed accounts	41	6
Median session length	9 min	24 min
Share of posts seen that were made by accounts with under 500 followers	4%	31%
Median posts published per user per month	2	7

Model response (8 marks).

The development is a change in how the feed is assembled: Hollowpine moved from a **subscription model**, where the audience for a post was the set of people who had chosen to follow its maker, to a **recommendation model**, where the audience for a post is whoever the system decides to show it to. The affordance is that reach has been detached from followers.

The most consequential change is to what an audience now *is* on this platform. Under the 2023 arrangement an audience was assembled by the audience itself — each user built theirs by following, and a creator’s audience was a stable, knowable group. Under the 2024 arrangement the audience is assembled for each post, by the system, from scratch. The figures show the scale of this: posts seen from followed accounts fell from a median of 41 per session to 6, so the followed set has gone from being the feed to being a small minority of it. The practical consequence is that audiences on Hollowpine are no longer communities that persist between posts. They are temporary aggregations that dissolve when the session ends, which makes audience loyalty far weaker and makes any given audience much harder for a creator to hold.

The second consequence is a redistribution of reach downward. The share of posts seen from accounts with under 500 followers rose from 4% to 31%. Under the subscription model, reach compounded — an account with a large following was seen because it was already large. Recommendation breaks that loop, so a new participant can reach a substantial audience on their first post. This is a real democratisation of access to an audience. It is also unstable: reach that is granted by a system can be withdrawn by the same system without notice, so participants have gained access to audiences and lost security of tenure over them.

Third, participation itself increased: median posts published per user rose from 2 to 7 a month. This is what an audience does when the cost of publishing falls and the possibility of reach rises — the audience becomes a supplier, and Hollowpine’s stock of material grows without Hollowpine commissioning any of it. The audience is simultaneously the consumer of the product and its producer.

Session length nearly tripled, from 9 to 24 minutes, and it is worth being careful about what that proves. It shows the feed retains attention more effectively once the system, rather than the user’s past following decisions, chooses what comes next. It does not by itself show that users are more satisfied, or that they value the extra fifteen minutes. Retention and satisfaction are different things, and only the first is measured here.

Two qualifications. These are Hollowpine’s own figures for its own users, published by a company with an interest in the appearance of growth, and a median reports the midpoint and nothing else: half of all sessions now run longer than 24 minutes, the figure cannot say how much longer, and the heaviest users — the group a claim about influence most needs to see — are therefore invisible in it. And the change describes Hollowpine’s users, not Australian audiences: people without the connectivity or the data allowance for continuous video are outside this account entirely.

Example 4 — unscaffolded

Two students disagree about the influence of technological development on the individual. Evaluate their positions and reach your own. *(8 marks)*

Stimulus.

> **Student A.** “Technology has taken control away from individuals. Feeds are designed by companies, autoplay decides what you watch next, and everything you do is recorded and sold. People don’t choose their media any more — their media chooses them.”
>
> **Student B.** “Individuals have never had more control. You can watch anything ever made, whenever you want, and you can publish to the whole world from your bedroom for nothing. Nobody has to wait for a broadcaster’s permission any more.”

Model response (8 marks).

Both positions are describing real changes, and both mistake one dimension of control for control in general.

Student A is right about the mechanisms and wrong about their force. Recommendation systems, autoplay and behavioural measurement are real, they are designed by parties whose interests are not the user’s, and their common feature is that they shift effort: continuing is now the default and stopping is the action that requires a decision. The claim that “media chooses them” overstates this into determinism. An interface that makes something easy has not removed choice; it has repriced it. The evidence against A’s strong version is that people constantly override these defaults — they close the app, follow a recommendation from a friend instead, or seek out something the system would never have offered. A system that reliably chose for people would not need to keep asking.

Student B is right about capability and wrong about what capability is worth. The expansion is genuine and it is the largest change of the last two decades for individuals: a person can now reach an audience without a broadcaster, a publisher or a licence, and can retrieve almost any catalogue title on demand. But B is describing an increase in the *range of the possible*, and treating it as an increase in the *actual*. Access to everything ever made is only useful with a way of finding things, and the finding is done by the systems A is complaining about. The freedom to publish to the world is also not the same as being read: on a recommendation-driven platform, the ability to post is universal and the reach is allocated by someone else. B has also left out access — a claim about what “you” can do assumes reliable, affordable connectivity, which is precisely what the digital divide describes some Australians as lacking.

The defensible position is that technological development has increased individual control over **timing, access and production**, and decreased it over **range, attention and information about oneself**. A person today decides when to watch, what to make and whether to publish, with a freedom no earlier audience had. The same person has less influence over what is presented to them as available, faces interfaces engineered so that continuing is easier than stopping, and has almost no practical control over the record of their behaviour that is generated as they use the service.

Two additions complete the answer. First, control is unevenly distributed: the individual with fast unmetered access, the skills to evaluate sources and the confidence to change their settings has most of B’s gains and few of A’s losses, while someone without those things may have neither. Second, some of the control B celebrates has been re-regulated rather than left to the individual — since 10 December 2025 the *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024* (Cth) has required age-restricted platforms to take reasonable steps to keep Australians under 16 off them, which is a society deciding that for one group, individual control was not the right settlement.

Takeaway. Ask *control over what*. Control is not one quantity that rose or fell — it is several, and technological development moved them in different directions.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. *(2 marks)* (a) Define technological development as the term is used in this Area of Study. *(1 mark)* (b) State one reason a media student must analyse influence at both the audience scale and the individual scale. *(1 mark)*

Q2. *(2 marks)* (a) Define affordance. *(1 mark)* (b) State why “autoplay makes people watch more” is a weaker claim than “autoplay makes continuing easier than stopping”. *(1 mark)*

Q3. *(3 marks)* Classify each consequence below as **social**, **emotional** or **ethical**, and give a one-line reason.

(a) A person receives messages from strangers at any hour because their account is public.

(b) A user posts a photograph of a bystander who did not agree to appear in it.
(c) A user feels compelled to check a like count on a photograph of themselves.

Q4. *(4 marks)* For each development, state the audience-scale consequence and the individual-scale consequence, in one sentence each.

(a) Automatic captions generated for every video a service carries, switched on by default. *(2 marks)*
(b) A program released worldwide in one catalogue on the same day, instead of reaching Australia by broadcast months after its overseas premiere. *(2 marks)*

Q5. *(4 marks)* Rewrite each claim so that it names a development, an affordance and a changed practice. Invent plausible specific detail.

(a) "The internet has completely changed audiences." *(2 marks)*
(b) "Phones have ruined how young people watch television." *(2 marks)*

Q6. *(5 marks) The Kerrindale Bulletin* is a regional weekly newspaper. Its circulation and practices changed as follows.

Year	Practice
2010	Print only; sold Thursday; letters to the editor printed the following week
2017	Print plus a website updated daily; comments enabled under each article
2024	Website plus a daily email; comments closed; readers submit photographs and tip-offs through a form, and around a third of published photographs come from readers

(a) Identify the technological development that changed the *Bulletin*'s relationship with its readers between 2010 and 2024. *(2 marks)*
(b) State one way the readership's role changed. *(1 mark)*
(c) Give one reason the *Bulletin* might have closed comments in 2024, expressed as a consequence for individuals rather than for the business. *(2 marks)*

Q7. *(5 marks)* A council plans to deliver all emergency information for a shire through a single social media account, discontinuing its printed newsletter and its arrangement with a local radio station.

(a) Identify two groups within the shire's audience for whom this development would reduce access, and state why for each. *(2 marks)*
(b) Explain why a claim that "everyone is online now" is not a sufficient basis for this decision. *(3 marks)*

Unscaffolded

Q8. Identify one way technological development changed how audiences are measured, and one consequence of that change for the individual. *(2 marks)*

Q9. Outline the difference between saying a technology *affords* a practice and saying it *causes* one, and what a determinist claim cannot explain. *(2 marks)*

Q10. Outline why the same technological development can widen the range of media available to an audience while narrowing the range presented to an individual. *(3 marks)*

Q11. Describe one emotional consequence for an individual of media that has no natural end point. Refer to a specific feature of an interface in your response. *(3 marks)*

Q12. A mass audience was organised by geography and timeslot. Describe what audiences are organised by now, and identify one thing they gained and one thing they lost in the change. *(4 marks)*

Q13. Describe how technological development turned individual audience members into producers, and identify one ethical obligation that came with that change. *(4 marks)*

Q14. Explain how algorithmic recommendation influences an individual's sense of what is popular. *(5 marks)*

Q15. *(Stimulus.)* Read the description below.

> **Stimulus.** A constructed illustrative survey of 400 people in one Victorian regional town, conducted online, reports: 88% watch some media on demand each week; 61% say they "watch less broadcast television than five years ago"; 12% say they publish media of their own at least weekly; and 9% report no home internet connection.

Discuss what can and cannot be concluded from this survey about the influence of technological development on Australian audiences. *(5 marks)*

Q16. *(Stimulus.)* Read the description below.

> **Stimulus.** Hollowpine announces a new feature: any user may now record and publish a reply video that appears attached to the original post, visible to everyone who sees that post. Replies cannot be disabled by the original poster, and a reply may be recommended to audiences far larger than the original.

Explain the likely influence of this change on Hollowpine's audiences and on an individual user. *(6 marks)*

Q17. Analyse the influence of one technological development on audiences and on the individual. In your response, refer to a media form or platform you use or have studied this year. *(8 marks)*

Q18. *(Stimulus.)* Read the description and the table below.

> **Stimulus.** Barrowfen is a live-streaming service available in Australia. A viewer opens a stream while its maker is broadcasting and sees a chat channel beside the video in which every viewer's message is visible to everyone else watching; a viewer may also pay to have their message displayed on screen in front of the maker. There is no schedule: a maker goes live when they choose and tells their followers shortly beforehand. Barrowfen's published figures for its Australian users:

	2021	2025
Australians watching Barrowfen in a typical week	310,000	1,900,000
Share of watch time spent on live broadcasts rather than on recordings of them	38%	81%
Share of viewers who post at least one chat message during a stream	9%	34%
Share of viewers who report watching the same maker "most days"	14%	46%
Share of viewers who have paid to have a message displayed on screen	3%	21%

Analyse the influence of this development on Barrowfen's audiences and on an individual viewer, using the evidence in the table. In your response, address whether the development supports or complicates the claim that technological development has dissolved the shared media moment. *(8 marks)*

Q19. *(Extended response.)* The study design observes that new media forms, products and processes "are often controversial and may be mistrusted or devalued by existing media institutions, some audiences and groups in society". Analyse why technological developments in the media attract this response from audiences and from groups in society, and reach a position on whether it is justified. *(10 marks)*

Answers

Q1. *(2 marks.)* (a) A specific, datable change in available technology that alters what media can be made, distributed, found, consumed or shared. (b) Because the same development often produces opposite consequences at the two scales, so an answer at one scale only is incomplete — accept also: the dot point names both.

Q2. *(2 marks.)* (a) What a technology makes easy, hard, possible or impossible, without determining which action a person takes. (b) The first is determinist and unprovable as stated; the second describes the design accurately and leaves the person's decision in the account.

Q3. *(3 marks.)* (a) Social — it concerns who can reach the person and the relationships that follow. (b) Ethical — it concerns responsibility to a person who did not consent. (c) Emotional — it concerns how media use feels and its effect on wellbeing.

Q4. *(4 marks.)* (a) Audience: the audience for audio-led media widens to include people it had excluded — deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers, viewers with limited English — and viewing spreads into places where sound cannot be used. Individual: a deaf or hard-of-hearing person gains access without having to ask anyone for it, and a hearing person increasingly reads a video rather than hears it. (b) Audience: Australians stop being a separate, delayed audience and join a single global one, so the conversation about a product is international and happens in one week rather than locally and months later. Individual: a viewer can take part in that conversation as it happens instead of avoiding it until the local release, but less of what is offered to them is made in or about their own country.

Q5. *(4 marks.)* Each rewrite must name a development, an affordance and a changed practice. (a) e.g. once a phone in the crowd could publish video during an event, people who had not bought a ticket to a country music festival began following it through the posts of people who had, and the promoter found itself negotiating with its own ticket-holders over what could be filmed. (b) e.g. once a broadcast-quality screen was in every pocket, viewing moved out of the lounge room, so households that once watched one program together now watch different programs in the same house.

Q6. *(5 marks.)* (a) The move from one-way periodical print distribution to continuous digital distribution with reader submission — accept a two-part answer naming daily online publication and the reader submission form. (b) Readers moved from receivers (and occasional letter writers) to suppliers of published material. (c) Any consequence framed on individuals: unmoderated comments exposed named locals to abuse in a small community where people are identifiable; the *Bulletin* could not moderate at the volume digital publication produced, so the harm fell on individuals.

Q7. *(5 marks.)* (a) Any two of: households without home internet or affordable data; older residents not on social media; residents with limited English or low digital literacy; people in areas with poor mobile coverage — each with a reason. (b) Must argue that "everyone is online" is an assumption, not evidence; that emergency information is exactly the case where excluding a minority is most dangerous; and that the excluded groups are not random but concentrated by age, income and location.

Q8. *(2 marks.)* Measurement moved from sampled estimates of a whole audience to continuous per-person behavioural records. Consequence: the individual's media is assembled from a record of themselves, which persists and which they do not control.

Q9. *(2 marks.) Affords* means the technology makes an action easy or possible while leaving the decision with the person; *causes* claims the technology produces the behaviour regardless of the person. The second cannot explain why the same technology produces different outcomes for different people.

Q10. *(3 marks.)* The audience-scale range grows because cheap distribution removes the need for mass appeal, so far more products exist. The individual-scale range narrows because a recommendation system selects from that catalogue using the person's own history. Abundance and personalisation are not the same thing.

Q11. *(3 marks.)* Must name a specific feature (autoplay, infinite scroll, refresh-on-open, notification) and tie it to an emotional consequence — the disappearance of the natural stopping point, so ending a session becomes a repeated decision the individual must make against the design.

Q12. *(4 marks.)* Audiences are now organised by **interest** rather than by the reach of a delivery system — a transmitter's footprint, a delivery run, an hour of broadcast — because digital distribution has neither a footprint nor an hour. This is **fragmentation**: one large general audience splitting into many small ones. Gained: products for minority interests that no general audience would have supported. Lost: the common reference points a general audience shared. Must not claim the mass audience was destroyed; it was divided and redistributed.

Q13. *(4 marks.)* Capture, editing and distribution collapsed into one connected device, removing the need for equipment, facilities and institutional permission. Obligation: consent from people depicted — accept also accuracy, or responsibility for harm caused by publication.

Q14. *(5 marks.)* Chain required: the system selects from the individual's own history → repeated exposure to similar material → the person's sample of "what everyone is watching" is actually a sample of themselves → popularity is inferred from a personalised feed → the person may over- or underestimate how widely a view or product is shared. Must note this is an argument, not a proven effect.

Q15. *(5 marks.)* Can conclude: on-demand viewing is common and self-reported broadcast viewing has fallen in this town. Cannot conclude: anything about Australia generally (one town, n = 400); anything causal; anything about the 9% without home internet, who are systematically under-sampled by an online survey. Must note the sampling flaw.

Q16. *(6 marks.)* Audiences: reply videos become a distribution route of their own, so an audience assembles around the exchange rather than the original post; audiences grow more participatory and more adversarial. Individual: an original poster loses control over the context of their own material, and a reply may reach a larger audience than the post it answers — a shift of both social and ethical weight onto someone who cannot opt out.

Q17. *(8 marks.)* Must contain: one specifically named and dated development; the affordance; the changed practice; a distinct audience-scale consequence and a distinct individual-scale consequence; a sorting of at least one consequence as social, emotional or ethical; one qualification. A named platform or form is required.

Q18. *(8 marks.)* Must contain: the development named as a practice rather than a platform — media watched at the moment it is made, with the audience visible to itself in chat and able to pay for the maker's attention; audience-scale consequences anchored to the figures (live share 38% → 81% against 310,000 → 1.9 million weekly viewers, so a simultaneous audience has been reassembled without a broadcaster; chat participation 9% → 34%, so the audience is part of the product; paid messages 3% → 21%, so visibility inside the audience is now partly purchasable); individual-scale consequences (the viewer is present to others rather than anonymous; "most days" 14% → 46% indicates habit and supports a **parasocial relationship**; payment puts money inside that relationship); a direct answer on the shared moment — **complicated, not restored**, because simultaneity returns but assembled by interest, small, self-selected and voluntary rather than national and unavoidable; one qualification (the service's own figures; its users, not Australian audiences; connectivity assumed). An answer that analyses Barrowfen as a business has answered 13B.

Q19. *(10 marks.)* See Fully-worked solutions for a full model, band descriptors and common errors.

Fully-worked solutions

Q1. (a) A **technological development** is a specific, datable change in the technology available to producers or audiences that alters what can be made, distributed, found, consumed or shared — for example, the release of a full season at once rather than weekly. (b) The dot point names audiences and the individual separately because the same development frequently pulls the two in opposite directions; recommendation fragments an audience while making an individual's feed feel more abundant, and an answer at one scale reports half the influence.

Q2. (a) An **affordance** is what a technology makes easy, hard, possible or impossible. It describes the range of actions invited, not the action taken. (b) "Autoplay makes people watch more" asserts a causal effect on behaviour that the sentence offers no evidence for, and it removes the viewer from the account. "Autoplay makes continuing easier than stopping" describes the design accurately, is verifiable from the interface itself, and still leaves room for the fact that many people do stop. *Marker's note:* determinist phrasing is the single most costly habit in this Area of Study.

Q3. (a) **Social** — the consequence is about who can contact the person and the relationships that follow from an unbounded audience. (b) **Ethical** — it concerns a responsibility owed to a third party who did not consent to being published. (c) **Emotional** — it concerns how the person feels and the effect of a visible metric attached to themselves.

Q4. (a) *Audience:* captioning by default adds to the audience the people audio-led media had excluded — deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers, and viewers who read a language faster than they follow it spoken — and it also allows viewing where sound cannot be used, so the audience for video extends into public transport, classrooms and waiting rooms. *Individual:* a deaf or hard-of-hearing person no longer has to request access as a special provision, which is a change in standing as much as in convenience; a hearing person, meanwhile, drifts towards reading video with the sound off. (b) *Audience:* Australians stop being a separate audience served late and become part of a single global audience served at once, so discussion of a product happens internationally and within a week rather than locally and months afterwards. *Individual:* the viewer can take part in that discussion while it is happening instead of avoiding it until the local release, and pays for it with a catalogue in which a smaller share of what is offered is made in, or about, Australia. *Marker's note:* two marks each, one for a genuinely collective consequence and one for a genuinely singular one. Two versions of the same sentence have not used the two scales.

Q5. (a) "Once a phone in the crowd could publish video while an event was still running, the audience for a country music festival stopped being the people who bought tickets and became everyone following the posts of people who had, so the promoter found itself negotiating with its own ticket-holders over what could be filmed." (b) "Once a broadcast-quality screen was in every pocket, viewing no longer had to happen where the set was, so households that once watched a program together in one room now watch different programs in four." *Marker's note:* both rewrites name a development, an affordance and a changed practice, and neither uses "destroyed", "ruined" or "made people".

Q6. (a) The *Bulletin* moved from one-way periodical print distribution — one edition a week, reader responses printed seven days later — to continuous digital distribution with a direct submission channel. The development is not "the internet"; it is the removal of the weekly cycle and the opening of a route by which readers supply publishable material. (b) The readership moved from receivers to suppliers: by 2024 roughly a third of published photographs are made by readers, so the audience is producing part of the product it consumes. (c) Comments were closed most plausibly because in a small town the people discussed in an article are identifiable and locally known, so unmoderated comment exposed named individuals to abuse from neighbours; a masthead that cannot moderate at digital volume leaves that harm sitting on individuals rather than on itself.

Q7. (a) Two of: households with no home internet connection or no affordable data, who would receive nothing; older residents who do not hold social media accounts, who lose the newsletter that reached them; residents with limited English or low digital literacy, for whom a feed is harder to use than a printed page or a broadcast; residents in poor-coverage parts of the shire, where a data-dependent channel fails exactly when the network is congested. (b) "Everyone is online now" is an assumption stated as a fact, and the people it is wrong about are not scattered at random — they are concentrated by age, income, language and location, which is what the **digital divide** describes. Emergency information is the worst possible case in which to be wrong, because the cost of exclusion is not inconvenience but risk to life. And the claim confuses having an account with receiving a message: a single social account reaches only those who follow it and only when the platform's system shows it to them, so even connected residents may not see the warning. A defensible plan keeps at least one channel that does not depend on either connectivity or an algorithm.

Q8. Measurement changed from a sampled estimate of a large anonymous audience to a continuous, individual record of what each person opened, how long they stayed and where they stopped. For the individual, the consequence is that the media presented to them is assembled from a record of their own past behaviour — a record that persists, that they did not negotiate, and that they cannot practically inspect or correct.

Q9. To say a technology **affords** a practice is to say it makes the practice easy, cheap or possible while leaving the decision with the person; to say it **causes** one is to say the technology produces the behaviour independently of the person. The affordance claim can be tested against the design itself, and it survives the obvious objection that people using the same technology behave very differently. The causal claim cannot explain that variation.

Q10. These are two different quantities. At audience scale, cheap distribution removed the requirement that a product be broadly acceptable before it could be made and delivered, so the total catalogue available to the audience is far larger than any broadcaster's schedule ever was. At individual scale, that catalogue is unusable without a way of finding things, and the finding is done by a recommendation system drawing on the person's own history, which selects towards what they have already chosen. So the audience gains range, while the individual is offered a narrowing slice of it. Abundance and personalisation are not the same thing, and personalisation is what an individual actually experiences.

Q11. Broadcast media had natural end points — a program finished, a newspaper ran out of pages. A feed with **infinite scroll** has no equivalent: there is no point at which the material is exhausted, so the session ends only when the user decides it does. The emotional consequence is that stopping becomes an act of will that must be repeated indefinitely, and each repetition is made against an interface designed to supply the next item before the decision arrives. The result reported by many users is not enjoyment but a sense of time having passed without a decision to spend it.

Q12. *"Describe" wants an account, four marks.* A mass audience was organised by the physical limits of its own delivery. A transmitter covered a licence area, a delivery van covered a set of suburbs, and a bulletin went to air at an hour someone else chose; whoever was inside that footprint at that time was the audience, whatever they happened to be interested in. A regional newspaper served farmers, teenagers and retired shopkeepers alike because it was the only paper there was. Digital distribution has neither a footprint nor an hour, so being nearby stopped being the thing an audience had in common and **interest** took its place. Audiences are now organised by what people want: a channel, a feed or a podcast gathers the people who care about one subject, wherever they live and whenever they are free. This is **fragmentation** — the splitting of a large general audience into many smaller ones defined by interest rather than by place or timeslot. What audiences gained is substantial: material for minority interests — a sport followed by a few thousand people, a musical form, a community language — that no general audience would have supported now exists and reaches exactly the people who want it. What they lost is the common reference point, because each audience shares less and less with the one beside it, and the claim that "everyone saw" something is now almost never true. *Marker's note:* the accurate verb is **divided**, not destroyed. The general audience was redistributed, not abolished, and most of the products that served it are still being made.

Q13. Producing and distributing media once required equipment, a facility, expertise and access to a licensed or capitalised distributor. Technological development collapsed capture, editing and publication into a single connected device, so an individual can now record, cut and release to a public audience in one action, with no institution's permission and at effectively no cost. The audience member became a producer without ceasing to be an audience member. The obligation that travelled with the capability is **consent**: an institution publishing a person's image applied editorial judgement and, usually, a release; an individual with a phone acquired the same publishing power without any of the training or the process. Accuracy and responsibility for foreseeable harm travelled with it too, and they now sit with a person who never agreed to carry them.

Q14. *Model response (5 marks).* A recommendation system selects the next item from signals about what the individual has already watched and what people with similar histories watched. Each selection narrows the sample the person sees, and the narrowing compounds: material similar to past choices is shown more, is therefore watched more, and is therefore shown more again.

The influence on the individual's sense of popularity follows from a mistake that is very easy to make. People estimate how widespread something is from how often they encounter it — and under a schedule or a front page, that estimate was reasonably sound, because everybody encountered the same schedule. On a personalised feed the estimate breaks, because frequency of encounter now measures the person's own history rather than the wider audience's behaviour. Something they have seen twenty times may have a small national audience; something enormously popular elsewhere may never appear.

The consequences run in both directions. A person may believe a view, product or performer is universal when it is confined to people like them, or believe something is marginal when it is mainstream. Because feeds are individual, they cannot correct this by comparison — two people disagreeing about what "everyone" is watching have no common front page to check against.

This should be argued as a claim with evidence and limits, not as an established fact. The **filter bubble** and **echo chamber** arguments make exactly this case, but research on them is contested: people also encounter media through friends, family, school, broadcast and news coverage, and those channels cut across the feed. The safe position is that personalised recommendation makes a distorted estimate of popularity much more likely, not that it makes an accurate one impossible. *Marker's note:* an answer that states "algorithms trap people in bubbles" as settled fact will be marked down; the study design asks for arguments and evidence, not slogans.

Q15. *Model response (5 marks).* The data support a narrow conclusion and cannot support a broad one.

What can be concluded, carefully: within this sample, on-demand viewing is close to universal (88%) and a clear majority (61%) believe they watch less broadcast television than five years ago. A minority — 12% — publish media of their own weekly, which is a useful corrective to the assumption that everyone is a producer. Together these are consistent with a shift in how this town's residents consume, and with the audience-supplier change being real but minority-sized.

What cannot be concluded is more important. The sample is 400 people in one Victorian regional town, so nothing here supports a claim about Australian audiences generally; metropolitan and remote patterns would differ, and one town cannot stand for either. The 61% figure is **self-reported recall** across five years, which is unreliable — people systematically misremember media use, and the question invites the answer it received. Nothing here is causal: the survey shows an association between a period of time and a set of behaviours, not that technological development produced them.

The sharpest flaw is the last figure combined with the method. The survey was conducted **online**, and 9% of respondents report no home internet connection — a proportion that must be an undercount, because people without a connection are the least likely to complete an online survey. The group most affected by the digital divide is the group least represented in the data, so the survey's picture of media access is biased towards the connected in exactly the way that matters. *Marker's note:* the sampling point is worth two of the five marks on its own; answers that only summarise the percentages do not reach the middle band.

Q16. *Model response (6 marks).* The development is a change in who controls the context of a post: reply video attaches other people's material to the original, permanently and without the original poster's agreement, and gives that reply its own independent path to an audience.

For Hollowpine's audiences, the first consequence is that the unit of consumption changes. An audience previously assembled around a post; it now assembles around an exchange, and the exchange can be more engaging than either part of it. Because a reply can be recommended to audiences far larger than the original, reach no longer flows from the original poster outwards — a reply can carry a post to people who would never have seen it, so audiences form around disagreement as readily as around content. The second consequence is a further increase in participation: the cheapest possible act of production is now responding to something already made, so the platform's volume of material rises again without commissioning any of it. The third is a shift in tone that follows from the incentive: if replies are recommended on engagement, the replies that spread will tend to be the sharpest ones, so audiences are progressively selected into more adversarial exchanges.

For an individual user, the influence is a loss of control over their own material. A poster can still choose what to publish, but can no longer choose what it appears alongside, and cannot switch the feature off. Socially, this means any post carries the risk of an unwanted co-author; emotionally, it means the response to a post is now visible to the same audience that saw the post, so criticism arrives publicly and attached. Ethically, the weight lands on the replier, who now holds a capability to redirect a large audience at a person who cannot decline it.

The gain should not be omitted: for a user with no following, replying is the most reliable route to an audience the platform offers, so the feature transfers reach from established accounts to new participants — the same redistribution seen in recommendation generally, with the same instability. *Marker's note:* six-mark items need both scales and at least one gain; a purely negative answer has explained one side of the influence.

Q17. *Model response (studied platform: a short-video social platform, 8 marks).* The development I will analyse is the arrival of vertical short video with in-app editing and a recommendation-driven feed — a capability that, from roughly 2018, let a person shoot, cut, caption and publish a finished video in a few minutes on the device they already carried, and have it distributed to strangers rather than to followers.

Three affordances follow, each removing a barrier: production without equipment or training, publication without permission, and reach without an existing audience. The practice that changed is evidenced in ordinary use — making media stopped being an activity a person planned and became something done in gaps, and watching became many short items rather than one long one, with the decision about what came next passing from the viewer to the system.

At audience scale the influence is a change in how audiences are constituted. Under earlier arrangements an audience was assembled by a broadcaster's schedule or, later, by users following accounts; here it is assembled per item by a recommendation system, from users who have never heard of the maker. Audiences are therefore enormous but temporary, and they do not persist between posts: audience loyalty is weak, and a creator with a million views on one video may have almost no audience for the next. Any shared sense of what is popular fragments with them, because no two feeds overlap much.

At individual scale the influence runs differently. The individual gains a genuine production capability and a real, if unreliable, chance of reach — an expansion earlier audience members simply did not have. What they lose is control over the shape of their own attention: the next item arrives before a decision to continue is made, so a session ends when the person interrupts it rather than when the material runs out.

Sorting the consequences: socially, the individual's media life is now conducted partly in public, with strangers as the default audience. Emotionally, publication attaches visible metrics to material about oneself, and those metrics are volatile in a way unrelated to the maker's effort — a system that grants reach can withdraw it without explanation. Ethically, the capability to publish other people arrived without the process an institution would have applied.

Two qualifications. This describes users of the form, not Australian audiences: participation assumes a capable device and unmetered data, and the digital divide places some Australians outside it entirely. And the audience for the form is now defined partly by law — since 10 December 2025, age-restricted platforms must take reasonable steps to keep Australians under 16 from holding accounts, so part of the audience this development created has been removed from it by statute.

Q18. *Model response (8 marks).* The development is not "live streaming" as a technology but a practice it made ordinary: watching media at the moment it is being made, in a space where the rest of the audience is visible in a chat channel and can be heard by the maker, with no schedule and no broadcaster involved. Three affordances follow — simultaneity without a transmitter, an audience visible to itself, and a direct payment from a viewer to a maker.

Influence on audiences. The first consequence runs against the usual account of technological development. Share of watch time on live broadcasts rose from 38% to 81% while weekly viewers rose from 310,000 to 1.9 million, so the simultaneous audience — the thing on-demand delivery is said to have dissolved — has been rebuilt, and rebuilt at a scale that matters. The second consequence is that the audience has become part of the product: the share of viewers posting at least one message rose from 9% to 34%, so what a newcomer arrives to is not a program but a program plus its audience reacting to it in view of everyone else. Note what that costs the audience. With 81% of watch time going to the live broadcast rather than the recording, the thing worth having cannot be time-shifted, so attendance rather than access is what this audience must supply — the scarcity a schedule used to impose has been reintroduced by the audience's own preference. The third consequence is that the audience has become stratified inside itself. The share of viewers who have paid to have a message displayed rose from 3% to 21%, so attention *within* the audience is now partly purchasable — a fifth of viewers have bought visibility to the maker and to everyone watching at least once, and the rest are visible only when the chat is slow enough to read. An audience that was uniformly anonymous now has ranks in it.

Influence on an individual viewer. The influence is a change in what watching is. A broadcast viewer was anonymous and unobservable; a Barrowfen viewer is present. Socially, this converts consumption into participation and is a genuine expansion — an individual can be recognised by someone they watch, which no earlier audience member could be. Emotionally, the rise from 14% to 46% in viewers who *say* they watch the same maker "most days" is the figure to handle carefully: it is self-reported, and it evidences habit rather than measuring it — but habit at that frequency is the condition a **parasocial relationship** needs, a one-sided sense of intimacy with someone who does not know the viewer exists, and the payment mechanism then puts a price on it. Ethically, the weight now falls on the individual in a new way, because money travels from a viewer to a person rather than to an institution, so a viewer who cannot afford to be noticed is audibly less present than one who can.

The shared moment. The development complicates the claim rather than supporting or refuting it, and the qualification is where the analysis lives. Simultaneity has returned, but it is not the same object. A broadcast shared moment was national, involuntary and assembled by an institution: everyone with a set was in it whether they cared or not. A Barrowfen shared moment is assembled by interest, small, self-selected, entirely optional, and one of thousands running at the same time. So the defensible statement is not that on-demand delivery ended the shared media moment but that it ended the **single, national, involuntary** one — and that audiences, handed cheap tools, promptly built a great many small voluntary ones in its place. That is the redistribution pattern again: audiences added rather than replaced.

Two qualifications. These are Barrowfen's own published figures for its own users, and a service has an interest in the appearance of both growth and engagement; the weekly-viewer figure in particular cannot be checked against anything. And this describes people with the connectivity and the data allowance for continuous live video, which is not all Australians. *Marker's note:* the two errors that cost most here are treating the figures as evidence about

Australian audiences rather than about Barrowfen's users, and answering the shared-moment question yes or no. Eight marks want the distinction — what kind of shared moment returned, and what kind did not. Analysing Barrowfen's revenue model instead of its audience answers **13B**.

Q19. *Command term — analyse:* break the response into its parts — what recurs with every new form, whose standing the form threatens, which objections are evidenced, and what can be known while a form is still new — then show how those parts combine to produce the mistrust, and only then take a position.

Model response (10 marks).

Mistrust of new media forms is real, it is patterned, and it is a mixture of two very different things: a recurring reaction to novelty, and a set of specific objections that have turned out to be correct. A position is only useful if it separates them.

Four reasons explain why the response arrives so reliably.

First, **it is the pattern, not the exception**. Cinema, comics, television and video games were each met, in their turn, with widely expressed public concern about their effect on the young — concern that was often expressed most confidently by people who did not use the form. That a reaction recurs with every new form is evidence that part of it is a response to unfamiliarity itself rather than to anything specific about the technology, and it is a reason to ask what is different about this case before accepting the alarm.

Second, **new forms redistribute authority**. A development that lets people publish without permission removes the standing of those whose position depended on the old arrangement — the gatekeeper who selected, the critic who ranked, the institution that certified. Devaluing the new form is a rational move for anyone holding the old position, so some of the criticism describes a threat to the critic rather than a harm to the audience. This does not make the criticism wrong; it means the source's interest is part of the evidence.

Third, **some of the objections are well founded**, and the strongest evidence for this is that Australian parliaments have legislated on them rather than left them to opinion — and have done so repeatedly, one named harm at a time. The *Enhancing Online Safety for Children Act 2015* (Cth) created the office now called the **eSafety Commissioner**, together with a complaints scheme for cyberbullying material targeted at an Australian child. The *Enhancing Online Safety (Non-consensual Sharing of Intimate Images) Act 2018* (Cth) added a scheme for image-based abuse. The *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth) then replaced that legislation, carried both schemes across and created a further scheme for **adult cyber abuse**. Since 10 December 2025 age-restricted platforms have had to take reasonable steps to keep Australians under 16 from holding accounts, and since 10 June 2025 individuals have had a statutory action for serious invasion of privacy. The staged history is itself the argument: each scheme was added *after* a particular affordance had produced a harm at scale, and each names the practice and the group it lands on. A parliament legislating this specifically, this many times over a decade, is not merely uneasy about novelty.

Fourth, **the evidence is hardest to obtain exactly when the concern is loudest**. Effects on wellbeing, attention and social development are slow, hard to isolate from everything else in a person's life, and mostly measured by correlation. So the period in which a form is newest and most alarming is the period in which the least can be demonstrated about it — which allows confident claims in both directions to outrun what is actually known.

My position is that mistrust is justified as a **demand**, and unjustified as a **verdict**. The useful test is whether a criticism can name a specific affordance and a specific group it lands on. "Recommendation feeds make stopping a repeated decision, and that falls hardest on people whose sleep and study it displaces" names both, and deserves the response it has had. "This generation has no attention span" names neither, has been said about every generation since the arrival of cheap print, and should be treated as a claim requiring evidence rather than a description of reality.

Two qualifications complete the position. Devaluing a form also devalues the people who use it: when a form is dismissed as trivial, the audiences who find genuine cultural and social value in it are dismissed with it, which is a consequence of the mistrust worth weighing alongside the consequences of the technology. And mistrust is not evenly distributed either — the people most likely to be protected by regulation are often the least consulted about it.

Band descriptors (out of 10):

- **High (8–10):** the response separated into a recurring reaction to novelty and a set of specific, evidenced objections, and the separation sustained throughout; at least three distinct reasons developed rather than listed, including the redistribution of authority and the evidence problem; the historical pattern used with named earlier forms; Australian instruments named accurately and dated, and used as evidence that harms were identified rather than as decoration; a position that survives its strongest counter-argument and states a test a reader could apply; the consequences of the mistrust itself weighed alongside the consequences of the technology; affordance language throughout, no determinism.

- **Mid (5–7):** reasons present but two or three of them asserted rather than developed; the historical pattern mentioned without named forms; legislation referred to loosely ("the government banned social media for under-16s") or undated; a position stated but not defended against the strongest objection to it; the distinction between a justified criticism and a generalised one gestured at rather than tested.
- **Low (1–4):** the question answered as an opinion about whether new media is good or bad; all concern treated as moral panic, or all of it treated as proven harm; no earlier form named; no instrument named, or one named incorrectly; determinist phrasing throughout ("phones have destroyed attention"); "society" used in place of a named audience or group.

Common errors: treating all concern about new media as moral panic, or all of it as justified — the mark is in the separation, and a one-sided answer caps around half marks; naming a law without its scope or its date, or describing the minimum-age obligation as a ban on young people rather than an obligation on platforms; asserting the historical pattern without naming a single earlier form that attracted the same reaction; arguing from "this generation" rather than from a named affordance and a named group it lands on; forgetting that devaluing a form devalues its audience, which is the consequence of mistrust most answers omit; and drifting into the industry's own structural response, which belongs to **13B**, or into a survey of current controversies, which belongs to **13C**.

Chapter 13 Media and change: influence and issues — 13B The influence of technological development on media industries and institutions

Theory

A new technology arrives as a device, an app or a workflow. It is felt as something else entirely: a masthead that stops printing on a Saturday, a regional newsroom that becomes one reporter with a phone, a film company that suddenly cannot get its release into a cinema because the money now comes from a service with no cinemas. The study design is blunt about the scale of this. Developments in technologies have transformed the media at a rapid pace and have **reworked** the settled meaning of the field's central ideas — audiences, forms and products, storytelling, influence, institutions and industries.

Chapter 12 established *what* the new technologies are and *how audiences use them*. Subtopic 13A takes the influence of those developments on audiences and on the individual. This subtopic takes the other half of the same dot point: what technological development does to the **organisations** — who makes media, who pays for it, who controls the path to an audience, who works in it, and which rules apply to whom. The unit of analysis here is never a person watching something. It is a business, a broadcaster, a publisher, a studio, an agency, a platform company, and the sector they collectively make up.

Two words that are not synonyms. The study design uses **industries** and **institutions** together in the same dot point, and they mean different things.

- A **media industry** is a whole field of organised activity built around making and distributing media products of a particular kind — the screen industry, the news industry, the music industry, the games industry, the advertising industry. An industry is described in the plural and in aggregate: its total revenue, its workforce, its supply chain, its number of firms, how concentrated it is.
- A **media institution** is a specific, organised and enduring body that creates, funds, distributes, hosts or oversees media — a broadcaster, a newspaper publisher, a production company, a streaming service, a platform company, a screen funding agency, a regulator. An institution has a name, a structure, roles, rules and a continuing identity that outlasts the individuals in it.

The word *institution* carries a second, looser sense — the settled practices and shared rules a sector runs on, such as the nightly news bulletin, the release window, the front page. That sense is useful and you may use it, but say which sense you mean. In this subtopic, unless a question signals otherwise, treat an institution as an **organisation**.

	Media industry	Media institution
What it is	a whole sector of activity	a single organisation within it
Measured by	revenue, employment, number of firms, concentration	audience, budget, staff, holdings, obligations
Changes look like	consolidation, new entrants, closures, shifts in where revenue sits	restructures, new divisions, mergers, paywalls, closures of parts
Example sentence	"the Australian news industry lost most of its classified advertising revenue"	"a metropolitan publisher closed its Monday-to-Friday print edition"

Strong answers move between the two deliberately: what one institution did, and what the sector looks like once enough institutions have done it.

What counts as a "technological development" here. Not every new device matters industrially. A technological development becomes significant to an industry when it changes at least one of three things:

1. **What it costs** to make, store or copy a media product;
2. **Who can reach** an audience, and by what path;
3. **Who collects the money** the audience's attention or payment generates.

A development that changes none of the three is a tool; one that changes all three restructures a sector. Digital capture, file-based editing, broadband distribution, mobile devices, recommendation systems and cloud production workflows all repay the test — and the test is what you apply before you write. Naming a technology proves nothing; naming what it changed is the whole answer.

The six pressure points. Technological development does not press on an institution evenly. It arrives at identifiable places, and almost every 13B question can be answered by locating the pressure point first.

Pressure point	What changes	What it looks like inside an institution
Production	the cost, skill, speed and scale of making the product	fewer crew on a shoot; edits done on a laptop; a studio that no longer owns a tape library; a newsroom filing to three forms at once
Distribution	how the product reaches audiences, and who controls the path	a broadcaster building an app; a publisher whose readers arrive through a search result; a film released to a service rather than a cinema
Revenue	where the money comes from and who captures it	classified advertising leaving a newspaper; subscription replacing cover price; a share of every sale taken by a storefront
Workforce and roles	which jobs exist, what skills they need, how people are engaged	subeditors cut; colourists, motion designers, data journalists and community managers added; staff positions replaced by freelance contracts
Ownership and structure	who owns what, how big firms are, how many there are	mergers; a platform buying a production company; the closure of a division; a two-person producer competing with a network
Regulation and obligation	which rules apply, and whether the technology has moved outside them	obligations attached to a broadcasting licence not following the audience to a service that holds no licence

Use the label. “Technology affected the industry” is worth nothing; “the development hit the **revenue** pressure point, and the institution answered at the **workforce** pressure point” is an analysis.

The economic engine underneath. Three structural facts explain most of what happens at those pressure points. They are not opinions about the media; they are properties of digital goods, and they apply to a newspaper, a drama series and a podcast alike.

1. First-copy cost, and the collapse of the cost of every copy after it. The **first-copy cost** is what it costs to make the first finished copy of a media product — the shoot, the edit, the reporting, the score, the design. It is large and it has not fallen nearly as far as people assume. The **marginal cost** is what it costs to make and deliver one additional copy. In print and broadcast that was real money: paper, ink, trucks, transmitters, spectrum. Digitally it is close to nothing.

The consequence is decisive. When the second copy is nearly free, **scale wins**: whoever can spread a large first-copy cost across the largest audience has the lowest cost per person reached. A service recovering the cost of a drama across a worldwide subscriber base and an Australian institution recovering the same cost across roughly 27 million people (as at 2025) are not competing on equal terms, and no amount of local skill closes that gap. This single fact sits under a great deal of what follows.

2. Unbundling. A **bundle** is a set of different things sold as one product because one delivery system carried them all. A metropolitan newspaper was a bundle: news, sport, court reporting, weather, television guide, death notices, real estate, cars and employment classifieds, all in one object, bought by people who wanted quite different parts of it. **Unbundling** is what happens when a new technology lets each part be supplied separately and better. Dedicated online marketplaces did classified advertising more precisely than a column of type ever could. Weather, sport results and listings became free services.

The damage was not that people stopped reading news. It was that the profitable parts of the bundle had been **cross-subsidising** the unprofitable ones. Classified and display advertising paid for the court reporter, the state political round and the sub-editors' desk, and when the profitable parts left, the subsidy left with them. Unbundling has since worked through every form: the album into the track, the broadcast schedule into the on-demand item, the magazine into the newsletter, the bundled subscription television package into a shelf of separate services.

3. Disintermediation, and then re-intermediation. An **intermediary** is an organisation that sits between a maker and an audience and controls the path — a distributor, a broadcaster, a record label, a retailer, a publisher. Where an intermediary can refuse to carry a product, it is a **gatekeeper**. **Disintermediation** is the removal of an intermediary: a musician can publish without a label, a journalist without a masthead, a filmmaker without a distributor.

The half-truth to avoid is that this removed gatekeeping. It did not; it **re-intermediated** — installed new intermediaries in place of the old ones. **Re-intermediation** is the arrival of a new organisation in the gap the old one left. App stores decide which applications may be installed. Search and recommendation systems decide which products are found. Digital storefronts take a share of every sale and set the terms on which a product may be listed. The number of gatekeepers did not rise; in several forms it fell sharply, and the surviving ones are larger, fewer and located outside Australia. An institution that once negotiated with three distributors may now depend on two platforms it cannot negotiate with at all.

How old and new institutions actually relate. The study design is careful here, and so should you be. It says traditional media **continues to have power and influence**, competing, cooperating and evolving alongside social media platforms, and that industries and institutions have **adopted and adapted** aspects of convergence to build and maintain audience share. That is not a story of replacement. Use these four modes and be prepared to find more than one in the same institution.

Mode	What the institution does	Recognise it by
Compete	builds its own version of the new thing and fights for the same audience	a broadcaster launching its own on-demand app; a publisher building a subscription product
Cooperate	supplies the competitor, licenses to it, or takes payment from it	a studio licensing a back catalogue to a streaming service; a newsroom publishing to a platform's feed
Evolve	changes its own structure, product or workflow so the new conditions suit it	print-first becomes digital-first; a daily edition becomes a continuous file plus a weekend print product
Contract or close	withdraws from a market, sheds a division, or ceases	a regional print edition ending; a division sold; a masthead moving online only

The uncomfortable truth for neat answers is that institutions do all four at once, and often with the same partner: a publisher may compete with a platform for advertising, cooperate by publishing into its feed, evolve its newsroom to feed both, and close its printing plant, all in one year. Noticing that is the work the command word "analyse" asks for.

The repertoire of institutional responses. When you are asked what an institution *did*, six moves cover almost everything: **redesign revenue** (paywalls, subscriptions, memberships, events, licensing); **redesign cost** (closing plants, outsourcing, multi-skilling, hiring capacity instead of owning it); **redesign the product** (vertical video, podcasts, newsletters, shorter episodes); **redesign the structure** (merge, acquire a new entrant, spin off or close a division); **partner with the competitor**; and **change the rules** — argue for legislation.

The Australian shape of all this. The mechanisms above are global. Their consequences here are specific, and a Victorian student should be able to say why.

Scale asymmetry. An hour of drama costs broadly what it costs anywhere; the domestic audience available to recover it is small. So Australian institutions carry structurally more co-production, more international pre-sales and more public subsidy than institutions in large markets. (The funding instruments themselves — agency investment, the Producer Offset — are taught as constraints in **7B**; here the point is only that scale asymmetry is what makes them structural rather than occasional.)

Regulation attached to a delivery technology. This is the sharpest Australian example of technology outrunning an institution's settings — and of Parliament eventually catching up with a rule of a different shape. Australian content obligations were built onto the **broadcasting licence**. Commercial free-to-air licensees operate under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth), and **s 121G of that Act itself** requires a licensee's primary channel to carry at least **55 per cent** Australian programming between 6 am and midnight across the year. A standard made under the Act — the *Broadcasting Services (Australian Content and Children's Television) Standards 2020* — adds a separate **first-release** requirement, met by earning at least 250 points a year from newly commissioned Australian drama, children's and documentary programs. Get the instruments the right way around: the airtime quota is in the Act, the first-release points are in the standard.

Both obligations attach to a *way of delivering*, not to the activity of showing programs to Australians. So when audiences moved to services that hold no broadcasting licence, neither obligation moved with them, and the gap stayed open for more than a decade. It was closed only by writing a new rule of a different kind. The *Communications Legislation Amendment (Australian Content Requirement for Subscription Video On Demand (Streaming) Services) Act 2025* (Cth) commenced on **1 January 2026**: a subscription streaming service with more than **one million** Australian subscribers must now invest at least **10 per cent** of its total program expenditure for Australia — or, if it elects the alternative, **7.5 per cent** of its Australian revenue — in **new** Australian drama, documentary, children's, arts and educational programs, and report annually to the ACMA.

The shape of that fix is the analytical point, and it is worth more than the numbers. The old rule regulates **airtime**; the new one regulates **spending**. A catalogue service has no 6 am-to-midnight schedule to fill, so a transmission quota could not simply be extended to it — the obligation had to be rebuilt around what the new technology actually does. Notice what remains unequal, too: the subscriber threshold means smaller services carry no obligation at all, and a spending floor says nothing about whether the resulting program is easy to find. Law in this area has moved repeatedly and will move again; date-check it rather than assume it.

Two further Australian legislative responses. Like the streaming content requirement above, both are examples of institutions using the last item in the repertoire — changing the rules.

- The *Treasury Laws Amendment (News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code) Act 2021* (Cth) inserted a bargaining code into the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010* (Cth). Its design answers the revenue pressure point directly: the Treasurer may **designate** a digital platform service, and a designated service must bargain with registered news businesses over payment for news content, with **final-offer arbitration** if the parties cannot agree. As at 2026 no service has ever been designated, and the commercial agreements negotiated in the Code's shadow have proved unstable since 2024. The government has instead consulted on a **News Bargaining Incentive** — a charge on large platforms that decline to do deals with news businesses, offset against the payments they do make — which was not law when this book went to press; date-check the position before relying on it.
- The *Communications Legislation Amendment (Prominence and Anti-siphoning) Act 2024* (Cth) answers the **distribution** pressure point. It requires suppliers of regulated internet-capable television devices to make Australian free-to-air broadcasters' apps readily available and findable on the device, and it extends the long-standing anti-siphoning arrangements so that rights to listed events cannot be taken exclusively by an online service ahead of free-to-air television. The logic is worth stating plainly: once the audience's first screen is a smart-television home page controlled by a device manufacturer, **the home page becomes the gatekeeper**, and the law followed the gate.

Public institutions. The ABC, under the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983* (Cth), and the SBS, under the *Special Broadcasting Service Act 1991* (Cth), hold statutory obligations written before the technologies now used to meet them existed, and have read those obligations across to digital delivery — apps, on-demand catalogues, podcasts, online-first publishing. That is the “evolve” mode operating on institutions that cannot simply exit a market.

Workforce. Cheaper tools and open distribution multiplied the number of people who can make publishable media and lowered the cost of engaging them one project at a time, so a larger share of media work now sits outside the employment relationship. That matters legally. The *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) sets the National Employment Standards and underpins modern awards — for much journalism the *Journalists Published Media Award 2020*, for much screen and broadcast work the *Broadcasting, Recorded Entertainment and Cinemas Award 2020* — and those instruments apply to **employees**, not to genuine independent contractors. The Act prohibits **sham contracting** (s 357), which is misrepresenting an employment relationship as an independent contracting arrangement, and since **26 August 2024** it has required the meaning of employee and employer to be worked out from the real substance and practical reality of the whole relationship rather than the written contract alone. The technology did not change the law; it changed how many workers stand near the line the law draws.

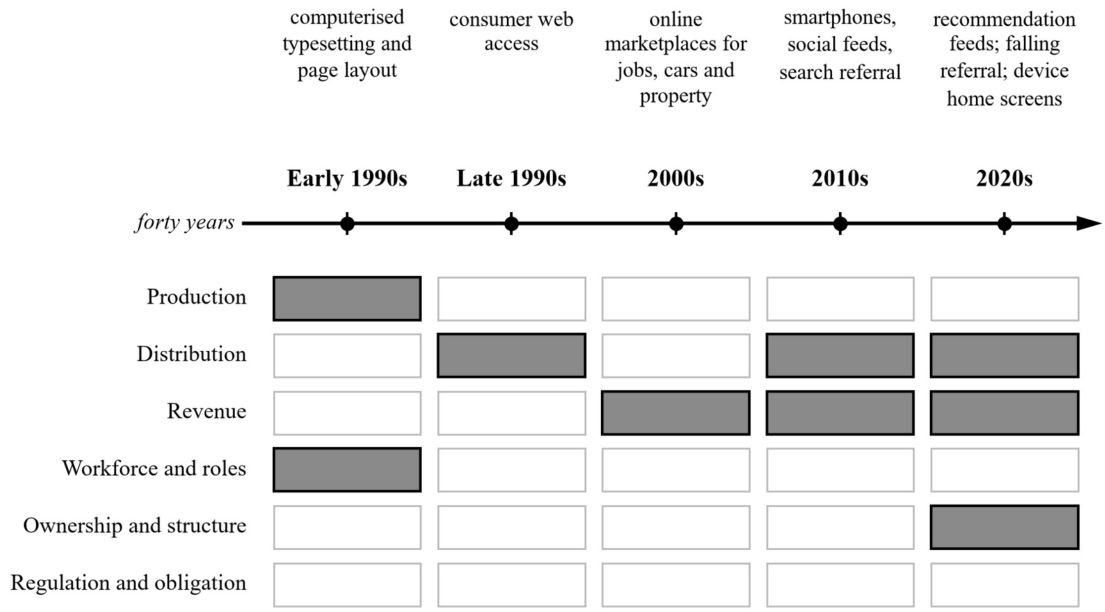
Ownership of the archive. Under the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth), copyright in a work made by an **employee** in the course of employment is generally owned by the **employer** (s 35(6)), with special provision for journalists employed by newspaper and magazine proprietors; a **freelancer** owns copyright in their own work unless it is assigned in writing (s 196(3)). An institution’s archive is the asset it can license indefinitely — so as staff positions became freelance commissions, ownership of that asset stopped being automatic and became a clause negotiated in every contract.

An annotated timeline: one institution, four decades. *The Brindlemoor Register* is a fictional Victorian metropolitan daily, published by Brindlemoor Media Group. Its path is invented, but every mechanism in it is one of the six pressure points.

Period	Technological development	Pressure point struck	What the institution did	What the industry looked like after
Early 1990s	computerised typesetting and page layout replace hot metal and paste-up	production, workforce	closed the composing room; moved layout to the editorial floor	fewer trade roles, faster deadlines, no change to revenue or reach
Late 1990s	consumer web access	distribution	published a free website carrying the day’s print stories	print revenue intact; the free site read as promotion, not as a business
2000s	dedicated online marketplaces for jobs, cars and property	revenue	cut section pages as classified volume fell; first redundancy rounds	the bundle broke; cross-subsidy of court, council and state political rounds ended
2010s	smartphones, social feeds, search referral	distribution, revenue	went digital-first; built an app; chased referral traffic; introduced a metered paywall	audience larger than in print history, revenue per reader far lower; a platform now stood between masthead and reader
2020s	recommendation-driven feeds; falling referral; device home screens	distribution, revenue, structure	ended Monday-to-Friday print; kept a weekend edition; sold the press; moved to subscriptions, newsletters and events	fewer, larger publishers; a smaller newsroom covering a wider brief; regional coverage thinned first

Read the last column, not the second. The technology is the occasion; the industry-level consequence is the answer.

Drawn against the six pressure points, the same forty years show something a table hides. Each development lands in more places at once than the one before it, so an institution that answered the first one comfortably was answering three at a time by the end.



= a pressure point that development struck. Read left to right: the later the development, the more it strikes at once.

Regulation and obligation is the row this masthead's history leaves empty. The obligations that failed to follow the audience were attached to broadcasting licences, not to newspapers.

The influence chain — how to write a 13B response. Five steps, in order, every time.

1. **Name the technological development precisely.** Not "the internet" and not "social media". *"Online classified marketplaces"*, *"file-based editing on standard laptops"*, *"algorithmic feed ranking"*, *"internet-capable televisions with their own home screens"*.
2. **Name the pressure point** it struck — production, distribution, revenue, workforce and roles, ownership and structure, or regulation and obligation.
3. **Name the institution and what it did** — compete, cooperate, evolve, contract or close — with the specific move, not the category.
4. **Name the industry-level consequence.** What does the sector look like once enough institutions have done the same thing? Concentration, new entrants, thinner regional coverage, a shift in where revenue sits.
5. **Name the counter-current.** What did *not* change, what the institution gained as well as lost, or what the change cost. This is the step that separates a top-band answer.

Step 5 matters because almost every development here is double-edged at industry level: cheap cameras destroyed the equipment-hire business and created a generation of independent producers; digital distribution removed a distributor's cut and installed a storefront's; audience data let institutions commission with more confidence and made them more cautious. Say both halves.

Four traps.

- **Technological determinism.** The commonest fault here is writing as though the technology were the actor — "streaming killed cinema", "the internet destroyed newspapers". Institutions choose: they adopt, adapt, resist, buy, partner and lobby. Influence also runs backwards, since a broadcaster that funds an app and a platform that changes what it will pay for both decide which technologies succeed.
- **Drifting into 13A.** If your answer is about what a viewer feels or how someone's habits changed, you have written 13A's subtopic. Bring it back to organisations, revenue, jobs and obligations.
- **Drifting into 13C.** A structural change is not automatically an **issue**. An issue is a contested harm or question of right and wrong, and the social, ethical and legal issues of the last two years belong to **13C**. A newsroom halving in size is a fact about industry structure; the argument about what that does to public accountability is 13C's.

- **“Old media is dead.”** It is not, and the study design says it is not: legacy institutions still hold most of the audience for news, sport and drama in this country and are frequently the suppliers to the platforms said to have replaced them. Write about competition, cooperation and evolution.

Looking ahead: in Units 3 & 4 this territory returns as the formal study of media agency, control and Australian regulation; here the focus stays on how technological development reshapes the organisations themselves.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Explain how one technological development has influenced the institution described below. *(4 marks)*

> **Stimulus.** Sedgefell Television is a regional commercial television broadcaster serving three inland licence areas. For thirty years its revenue came almost entirely from local advertisers — car dealerships, saleyards, furniture retailers — who bought spots in its 6 pm local news bulletin because it was the only way to reach households in those towns. Since internet-capable televisions became the standard set sold in Australia, a growing share of Sedgefell’s audience now begins viewing at a device home screen that lists national and international services first, and reaches Sedgefell’s channel only by scrolling or by opening a separate app. Sedgefell has built that app, kept the 6 pm bulletin, and moved two of its three studios to a single hub with reporters filing from the field.

Four marks and the command word “explain” mean a chain, not a list. Run the influence chain.

Working	Comment
The technological development is the **internet-capable television with its own home screen** — not “streaming” in general. The set is now itself an intermediary: it decides what a household sees first.	Step 1 — name the development precisely. The precision is what makes the rest of the answer possible.
It strikes the **distribution** pressure point. Sedgefell’s channel position, once fixed and equal to every other channel on the dial, has been replaced by a position on a menu the broadcaster does not control. This flows straight into **revenue**, because a local advertiser is buying access to households, and access has become uncertain.	Step 2 — name the pressure point, then follow it to a second. Showing distribution driving revenue is the analytical move.
Sedgefell’s response mixes two modes. It **competes** by building its own app so that it is reachable directly, and it **evolves** by moving two of its three studios into a single hub and putting reporters in the field — a cost redesign that protects the bulletin, which is the only product local advertisers are buying.	Step 3 — the institution’s response, named as a mode and described as a specific move.
The industry-level consequence is that a regional broadcaster’s competitive advantage — being the only way to reach those towns — has been removed by a technology that has nothing to do with programming. Regional broadcasters across the sector face the same loss, which is why discoverability on device home screens became a matter for legislation rather than negotiation.	Step 4 — lift from the single institution to the sector.
The counter-current is that Sedgefell’s local bulletin is the one thing on that home screen no national service supplies, so the same development that damaged its reach has also made local content the only defensible thing it sells.	Step 5 — the counter-current, and the mark that separates bands.

Working	Comment
Takeaway: the development never touched the programs. It changed where the audience starts, and that was enough to restructure the business.	Close on the mechanism.

Example 2 — scaffolded

Analyse how one technological development has influenced both a media institution and the wider industry in which it operates. *(6 marks)*

> **Stimulus.** Pennythorn Audio is a two-person podcast producer in Geelong. Its founders record in a treated spare room using two microphones and a laptop, edit on software costing a few hundred dollars a year, and publish through a hosting service that distributes each episode automatically to every major listening app. Their weekly interview program has 40,000 subscribers. Their revenue comes from a listener membership tier and from advertising sold by a network that aggregates small shows. Neither founder has ever pitched to a broadcaster, and neither owns a transmitter, a studio building or a distribution contract.

Six marks: the chain must be complete and both levels — institution and industry — must be developed.

Working	Comment
The technological development is a **cluster**: low-cost digital recording and editing, plus open podcast distribution through an RSS-based hosting service that any listening app can carry. Its significance is that it changed all three of the industrial tests at once — cost, reach and who collects the money.	Step 1. Naming a cluster is legitimate where the elements only matter together, but say why they belong together.
It struck the **production** pressure point first. The first-copy cost of a professional-sounding weekly audio program fell from a facility, an engineer and a studio booking to two microphones, a laptop and a treated room. The marginal cost of the ten-thousandth listener is effectively zero.	Step 2. Use the first-copy/marginal-cost distinction by name — it is the mechanism, not decoration.
It struck the **distribution** pressure point harder. Broadcast audio was gatekept by spectrum: a licence was required, licences were scarce, and an institution that held one decided what was aired. Podcast distribution is **disintermediated** — Pennythorn publishes a file and every app carries it — so the gate that made broadcasters powerful simply is not there.	Step 3, part one. This is the analytical centre of the answer.
But the industry **re-intermediated** around the gap. Pennythorn depends on a hosting service, on listening apps whose charts and recommendations decide what is found, and on an advertising network that aggregates small shows because a two-person producer cannot sell national advertising itself. The old gatekeeper was removed; three new intermediaries took its place.	Step 3, part two. Recognising re-intermediation is what stops this being a story about "anyone can make media now".
At **industry** level the sector has become barbelled. There are now a very large number of small producers of exactly Pennythorn's kind and a small number of very large audio institutions, with much less in between; established broadcasters have responded by **cooperating** — commissioning independent producers, buying successful shows outright, and running their own networks that sell advertising across shows they do not make.	Step 4. Describe the shape of the sector, not just the fact that it changed.

Working	Comment
The counter-current is that low barriers cut both ways: the same conditions that let Pennythorn reach 40,000 people let everyone else do so too, so attention, not production capacity, is now the scarce thing — and buying attention is precisely what a large institution can still afford to do.	Step 5. Note this returns some advantage to the incumbents.
Takeaway: the technology destroyed a gate and built new ones. The winners of a disintermediation are rarely the people it was supposed to liberate.	Close on the principle.

Example 3 — unscaffolded

Explain how technological development has influenced the regulatory obligations carried by Australian media institutions. *(4 marks)*

Australian content obligations were designed around a delivery technology rather than around an activity. A commercial free-to-air licensee operates under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth), and **s 121G** of that Act requires its primary channel to carry at least **55 per cent** Australian programming between 6 am and midnight. The obligation attaches to the **licence**, because when the scheme was built, holding a licence was the only way to show television programs to Australians at scale. Technological development removed that equivalence. Broadband delivery allowed subscription streaming services to show programs to millions of Australian households without holding a broadcasting licence, so the audience moved and the obligation stayed where it was. The influence on institutions was therefore uneven and structural: for more than a decade two organisations competing for the same viewers with the same kind of product carried different obligations, so a commissioning decision that was compulsory for one was optional for the other. The influence on the industry was that a rising share of viewing generated no Australian commissioning obligation at all — which is why institutions reached for the last item in the repertoire and argued for a change in the law. The *Communications Legislation Amendment (Australian Content Requirement for Subscription Video On Demand (Streaming) Services) Act 2025* (Cth), in force from 1 January 2026, now requires a service with more than one million Australian subscribers to invest at least 10 per cent of its total program expenditure for Australia (or 7.5 per cent of its Australian revenue) in new Australian drama, documentary, children's, arts and educational programs. The deepest influence is visible in the *shape* of that rule rather than its existence: an airtime quota cannot be imposed on a service that has no schedule, so the obligation had to be rebuilt as a spending floor, and it still reaches only services above a subscriber threshold. *Takeaway:* when a rule is written around a technology rather than an activity, a new technology does not break the rule; it walks around it — and the rule that eventually reaches it has to be built to a different design.

Example 4 — unscaffolded

Analyse the influence of technological development on media industries and institutions, referring to two industries. *(10 marks)*

The recorded music and book publishing industries were restructured by the same technological property — the collapse of the cost of delivering a copy — and ended up in very different places, because what each industry's institutions actually owned was different.

The **recorded music industry** was hit at every pressure point at once. Its **production** cost fell as recording moved from booked studio time to software; its **distribution** cost fell to nothing once a recording was a file. Unbundling then took the album apart. An album had been a bundle in the strict sense — twelve tracks sold together because one physical object carried them, bought by people who wanted three of them — and download stores let the three be bought alone before subscription services re-bundled everything ever recorded into a single monthly fee. **Disintermediation** followed: an artist could release a recording without a label, which had been unthinkable while releasing meant manufacturing, freighting and persuading retailers to stock a physical object.

The industry then **re-intermediated** hard. Streaming services, their editorial and algorithmic playlists, and the digital distributors who deliver recordings into them now decide what is heard, and each takes its share. Discovery, not manufacturing, became the scarce thing, and it is controlled by fewer organisations than the record retail sector ever contained. At the **revenue** pressure point the consequence is that income per play is very small, so for most artists recorded music now functions as promotion for live performance, licensing and merchandise rather than as the product itself — the revenue centre of the industry moved.

The institutions **evolved** rather than closed, and the direction is instructive. Record labels had been, in large part, manufacturers, financiers and distributors; those functions are now cheap or unnecessary, so labels reorganised around what remains scarce — rights ownership, marketing, playlist and radio relationships, and the capital to fund a career. The **counter-current** is striking: because a streaming catalogue earns continuously instead of for a release window, back catalogues that once earned little after their first year became durable income, and ownership of recorded-music rights became **more** valuable, not less. The Australian consequence is that minimum percentages of Australian music are required of commercial radio licensees by an industry code of practice registered under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth) — an obligation attached, once again, to a broadcasting licence. As listening moved to services that hold no licence, that guaranteed exposure for Australian artists did not move with it; what did arrive in exchange is genuine global reach at no distribution cost, which a market of roughly 27 million people had previously made very hard to buy.

Book publishing shows the same property producing an almost opposite restructure, because its costs sat somewhere else. A book's first-copy cost — commissioning, editing, design and typesetting — is moderate; its marginal costs were brutal. Printing had a minimum economic run, stock had to be warehoused and freighted, and under the trade's long-standing sale-or-return practice unsold copies came back to the publisher. Publishing was therefore an inventory-risk business, and that risk was the barrier to entry: only an institution with capital could gamble on a print run.

Print-on-demand and e-books removed the minimum run and the warehouse, which struck **ownership and structure** at its foundation. Self-publishing platforms **disintermediated** the publisher entirely; an author can now reach a global market without one. But online retail **re-intermediated** with unusual force, because a bookshop could only decline to stock a title in one suburb, while a dominant online retailer's search ranking and recommendation system decide whether a title is found anywhere, and it takes a share of every sale. Audiobooks then added a genuine new revenue line and, at the **workforce** pressure point, a production discipline — casting, direction, studio recording — that trade publishing had barely employed before.

The industry's shape is now barbelled: a small number of very large trade publishers, an enormous number of self-published and micro-press titles, and comparatively little in between. The Australian consequence is that publishing here has always depended on holding **territorial rights** for the Australian market, and territory is a concept that a single global digital catalogue sits awkwardly against; the counter-current is that print-on-demand allows an Australian publisher to keep a low-selling but culturally significant title permanently available, which the economics of a print run never permitted.

Read together, the two industries show that near-zero marginal cost does not produce one outcome. Music's institutions survived because they owned **rights**, which the new distribution made more valuable; publishing's institutions survived by shedding **inventory risk**, which the new production made unnecessary. In both, an old gatekeeper was removed and a smaller number of new, larger, largely foreign-owned ones installed. In both, the scarce resource became discovery. And in both, the Australian consequence turns on scale and on rules written for a physical or licensed world — a radio licence, a territory — that a file does not respect. *Takeaway:* the technology sets the arithmetic; the industry's shape is decided by what its institutions own, what they can still sell, and which rules reach them.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Define each of the following terms as they are used in this subtopic. *(3 marks)* (a) media industry; (b) media institution; (c) technological development, as the term is applied in this subtopic.

Q2. Technological development strikes institutions at identifiable pressure points. *(4 marks)* (a) Name four of the six pressure points. (b) Identify the pressure point most directly struck in each case: (i) a publisher closes its printing plant and sells the site; (ii) a broadcaster's subediting desk is replaced by two multi-skilled producers; (iii) a film company's title is bought by a service that also distributes and exhibits it. (c) Using case (i), explain why the pressure point where a development lands is often not the pressure point at which the institution answers.

Q3. The economics of digital media rest on two costs and one structural change. *(4 marks)* (a) Define first-copy cost and marginal cost. (b) Explain why near-zero marginal cost gives an advantage to institutions operating at large scale. (c) Using the example of a metropolitan newspaper, explain what unbundling is and what it removed.

Q4. New technologies change who stands between a maker and an audience. *(4 marks)* (a) Define intermediary and gatekeeper. (b) Define disintermediation and re-intermediation. (c) State why "digital technology removed the gatekeepers" is an inaccurate description of what happened, and name two re-intermediaries.

Q5. The relationship between established institutions and new technologies runs in four modes. *(4 marks)* (a) Name the four modes. (b) Classify each response: (i) a broadcaster launches its own on-demand app; (ii) a studio licenses its back catalogue to a streaming service; (iii) a publisher ends weekday print and keeps a weekend edition. (c) State why an institution may be operating in more than one mode at once, and give an example.

Q6. A reliable method for answering questions in this subtopic is the five-step influence chain. *(4 marks)* (a) List the five steps in order. (b) Complete steps 1 and 2 for a technological development that has affected a media institution you know of. (c) Complete steps 4 and 5 for the same development.

Q7. Australian institutions face conditions that institutions in large markets do not. *(4 marks)* (a) Explain what scale asymmetry is and why it affects the financing of Australian screen production. (b) Name the Act under which commercial free-to-air television licensees operate, and state the minimum proportion of Australian programming that Act requires on a licensee's primary channel between 6 am and midnight. (c) Explain why that obligation did not follow the audience to subscription streaming services, and name the Act that now requires large streaming services to invest in new Australian content.

Unscaffolded

Q8. A newspaper publisher closes its printing plant, ends home delivery and moves its remaining staff to a leased floor in the city. Identify **two** pressure points struck by this restructure. *(2 marks)*

Q9. Outline the difference between a media industry and a media institution. *(2 marks)*

Q10. Describe how the growth of dedicated online classified marketplaces changed where revenue sits in the Australian news industry. *(3 marks)*

Q11. *(Stimulus.)* Read the description below.

> **Stimulus.** Tanwith Broadcasting owns eleven commercial radio stations. Faced with falling advertising revenue, it has: kept its breakfast programs live and local; replaced its overnight announcers with a single networked feed; launched an app carrying all eleven stations plus twenty music-only streams; and begun producing podcasts that it sells to a national advertising network.

Identify which of the four modes — compete, cooperate, evolve, or contract — each of the four decisions represents, and justify one of your choices. *(3 marks)*

Q12. *(Stimulus.)* Read the description below.

> **Stimulus.** Culverstone Pictures is an independent production company that made television drama for twenty years with a staff of thirty-four, including an in-house edit suite, a grading suite and three permanent editors. It now employs nine people. Post-production is contracted to freelance editors, colourists and sound designers who work from their own systems; delivery specifications from commissioning services require formats and quality-control processes that did not exist ten years ago, and a new role — a delivery and compliance coordinator — has been created to manage them.

Explain how technological development has influenced the workforce and roles of the institution described. *(4 marks)*

Q13. *(Stimulus.)* Read the description below.

> **Stimulus.** Rillet is a global short-video platform. A metropolitan newsroom built a fourteen-person team producing vertical video for Rillet after the platform's recommendation system began favouring news explainers; within two years the team accounted for a quarter of the newsroom's total audience. Rillet then changed what its recommendation system favours. The newsroom's Rillet audience fell by 71 per cent in

eleven weeks. The newsroom was given no notice, has no contract with Rillet, and pays nothing to be carried on it.

Explain how this scenario demonstrates re-intermediation, and identify the pressure point at which the newsroom is exposed. *(4 marks)*

Q14. *(Stimulus.)* Read the description below.

> **Stimulus.** Quarrow Interactive is a Melbourne games studio of twelve people. Its first title sold through a single digital storefront, which takes 30 per cent of every sale, controls the store's search and featured placement, and requires titles to meet its technical and content standards before listing. Quarrow's second title was funded by an advance from a publisher that took worldwide rights. Its third was self-funded and released on three storefronts at once.

Explain how digital distribution has influenced both the ownership and structure of this institution and the wider games industry. *(4 marks)*

Q15. Explain why a single technological development can advantage new entrants and threaten established institutions in the same industry at the same time. Refer to the idea of a legacy cost base in your response. *(5 marks)*

Q16. *(Stimulus.)* Read the description below.

> **Stimulus.** The finals of the Halberry Cup, a national sporting competition, have been shown live on free-to-air television for forty years. The broadcaster that carries them charges its highest advertising rates against them and uses them to promote the rest of its schedule. Broadband delivery now lets a global subscription service that holds no Australian broadcasting licence deliver a live event to Australian households as easily as a broadcaster can, and at the next rights auction that service bids for the live finals exclusively. Its offer is larger than any Australian free-to-air broadcaster's.

Explain how technological development has changed who is able to compete for live sport rights in Australia and what that does to free-to-air institutions, and describe the legislative response. *(5 marks)*

Q17. *(Stimulus.)* Read the description below.

> **Stimulus.** Fenwold Play is a subscription streaming service. It commissions drama, produces some of it through a wholly owned production arm, distributes all of it on its own service, and reports that its recommendation system determines which title a subscriber opens 80 per cent of the time. An independent production company that once licensed a series to a broadcaster for five years — retaining the right to sell it again afterwards — is now offered a commissioning fee under which Fenwold Play holds the rights outright and the company keeps no interest in the finished program.

Analyse how technological development has influenced the structure of the industry described, and the position of independent production companies within it. *(6 marks)*

Q18. *(Stimulus.)* Larkmoor Regional Media publishes four regional newspapers in western Victoria. The table shows its position at three points.

	2005	2015	2025
Print copies sold weekly	46,000	21,000	6,500
Digital subscribers	0	1,900	11,400
Classified advertising, share of revenue	61%	22%	4%
Editorial staff	58	31	17
Rounds covered (council, court, sport, agriculture)	4	3	2

	2005	2015	2025
Change in total revenue on ten years earlier	—	−44%	−29%

Analyse the influence of technological development on this institution and on the regional news industry it belongs to, using the evidence in the table. *(8 marks)*

Q19. *(Extended response.)* Analyse the influence of technological development on media industries **and** media institutions, referring to **two institutions operating in different media forms**. *(10 marks)*

Your response must analyse:

- a specific technological development for each institution, and the pressure point it struck
- how each institution responded, named as one or more of compete, cooperate, evolve, contract or close
- the consequence for the wider industry each institution belongs to, including at least one Australian structural or regulatory consequence
- at least one counter-current — something the development gave an institution, or something that did not change

Institution 1 (name and media form): ___________________________

Institution 2 (name and media form): ___________________________

Answers

Q1. *(3 marks.)* (a) A whole field of organised activity built around making and distributing media products of a particular kind — the screen, news, music, games or advertising industry — described in aggregate by revenue, workforce, number of firms and concentration. (b) A specific, organised and enduring body that creates, funds, distributes, hosts or oversees media, with a name, structure, roles and a continuing identity: a broadcaster, publisher, production company, streaming service, platform company or funding agency. (c) A change in technology that alters what it costs to make or copy a media product, who can reach an audience, or who collects the money — not merely a new device.

Q2. *(4 marks.)* (a) Any four of: production; distribution; revenue; workforce and roles; ownership and structure; regulation and obligation. (b) (i) ownership and structure (accept production, since the plant is a production asset); (ii) workforce and roles; (iii) ownership and structure. (c) The damage in (i) landed at **revenue** — online marketplaces took the classified advertising the plant's output was being paid for — and the publisher cannot restore lost revenue by deciding to. It therefore answers where it does have control, at **ownership and structure**: sell the asset and shrink the cost base. An institution responds at the pressure point it can act on, not the one where it was hit.

Q3. *(4 marks.)* (a) First-copy cost is what it costs to produce the first finished copy — the shoot, the reporting, the edit; marginal cost is what it costs to make and deliver each additional copy. (b) Because a large first-copy cost spread over a larger audience gives a lower cost per person reached, and the extra copies are nearly free, so the biggest audience wins on cost regardless of quality. (c) Unbundling is the separation of a set of things previously sold together because one delivery system carried them all; the newspaper bundle lost classifieds, listings and weather to dedicated services, and with them the cross-subsidy that funded court, council and political rounds.

Q4. *(4 marks.)* (a) An intermediary sits between maker and audience and controls the path; a gatekeeper is an intermediary that can refuse to carry the product at all. (b) Disintermediation is the removal of an intermediary; re-intermediation is the arrival of a new one in the gap it left. (c) Because gatekeeping did not disappear — it relocated. Any two of: app stores; search and recommendation systems; digital storefronts; device home screens; hosting and aggregation services; advertising networks.

Q5. *(4 marks.)* (a) Compete; cooperate; evolve; contract or close. (b) (i) compete; (ii) cooperate; (iii) evolve (accept contract for the ending of weekday print, with justification). (c) Because the modes are responses to different pressure points and an institution faces several at once — a publisher may compete with a platform for advertising, cooperate by publishing into its feed, evolve to digital-first and close its plant in the same year.

Q6. *(4 marks.)* (a) 1 name the technological development precisely; 2 name the pressure point; 3 name the institution and its response; 4 name the industry-level consequence; 5 name the counter-current. (b)–(c) Any defensible development carried correctly through the steps. Step 1 must be specific ("algorithmic feed ranking", not "the internet") and step 5 must be present. See solution for a model.

Q7. *(4 marks.)* (a) The cost of making a media product is broadly the same everywhere but the domestic audience available to recover it from is small (roughly 27 million, as at 2025), so Australian institutions cannot recover large budgets domestically and carry structurally more co-production, pre-sale and public subsidy. (b) The *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth); at least **55 per cent** between 6 am and midnight on the primary channel, required by **s 121G of the Act itself**. (Do not require the standard: the *Broadcasting Services (Australian Content and Children's Television) Standards 2020* impose the separate first-release points requirement, not the 55 per cent quota.) (c) Because the obligation attaches to a **broadcasting licence** rather than to the activity of showing programs to Australians, and streaming services deliver without holding one. The *Communications Legislation Amendment (Australian Content Requirement for Subscription Video On Demand (Streaming) Services) Act 2025* (Cth), in force from 1 January 2026, now reaches those services — with an Australian **expenditure** obligation rather than an airtime quota.

Q8. *(2 marks.)* Any two of: production (the plant and the printing process); distribution (home delivery ends, so the path to the reader changes); ownership and structure (an asset sold, premises leased); workforce and roles (press and delivery roles removed). One mark each.

Q9. *(2 marks.)* An industry is the whole sector of activity of a given kind, measured in aggregate; an institution is one organisation within it. One mark each, with an example creditable in place of a definition only if the distinction is clear.

Q10. *(3 marks.)* Classified advertising was the most profitable part of the newspaper bundle; dedicated online marketplaces did that job better and took it; the revenue did not move to another news organisation but out of the news industry altogether, ending the cross-subsidy that paid for non-commercial rounds.

Q11. *(3 marks.)* Live and local breakfast = compete (defending the one thing a network feed cannot supply). Networked overnight feed = contract (a service withdrawn and centralised; accept evolve with justification). App with thirty-one streams = evolve (product and delivery redesigned for the new conditions). Podcasts sold to a national network = cooperate. Two marks for the classifications — both marks for all four correct, one mark for two or three correct — and one mark for a justification that names the mode's defining feature.

Q12. *(4 marks.)* Capability moved out of the building and into individual practitioners' own systems, so owning suites and employing editors stopped being an advantage: staff fall 34 → 9 and the same work is bought project by project. The same development *created* a role, since delivery and quality-control specifications now require a compliance coordinator. Net effect at the workforce pressure point: fewer employees, more contractors, skill mix shifting from craft to coordination. A one-directional "technology cost jobs" answer misses the new role placed in the stimulus.

Q13. *(4 marks.)* Rillet is a **re-intermediary** — it occupies the gap left when the newsroom escaped newsagents and trucks, and it controls discovery. The newsroom staffed a path it does not own, has no contract for and cannot appeal to; a ranking change removed 71 per cent of that audience in eleven weeks. Pressure point: distribution, flowing to revenue (a quarter of total audience) and workforce (fourteen staff). Discriminating point: an audience acquired at no cost can be withdrawn at no cost.

Q14. *(4 marks.)* Institution: twelve people can release worldwide, impossible under physical retail — but the storefront takes 30 per cent, controls placement and sets listing standards, so a new gatekeeper replaced the old. Title two trades rights for capital; title three diversifies across three storefronts to reduce dependence. Industry: near-zero barriers produce very many small studios competing for **discovery** rather than shelf space, with a few storefronts taking a share of nearly every sale.

Q15. *(5 marks.)* A **legacy cost base** is the assets, staff, premises and contracts an established institution carries because of how the work used to be done. A new entrant adopts the cheap method carrying none of it; an incumbent must run both systems at once and cannot shed the old quickly, because resale values are low, staff have entitlements and the old product still earns. The same development therefore lowers the entrant's costs and raises the incumbent's relative costs. Must reach a position, and should name the incumbent's countervailing assets — audience, brand, archive, advertiser relationships, capital.

Q16. *(5 marks.)* Development: **live sport delivered over broadband at broadcast scale**, which removed spectrum and a licence as the precondition for putting a live event in front of a mass Australian audience — so the change is in *who can bid*, not in how the audience watches. Pressure point: distribution, flowing to revenue, because live sport is the last content that reliably assembles a simultaneous mass audience and that audience is what a free-to-air broadcaster sells. Consequence for institutions: a bidder recovering the fee across a worldwide subscriber base can outbid one funded by Australian advertising alone (scale asymmetry applied to rights), and the loss compounds — less reach, lower advertising rates, a weaker bid next cycle. Industry: rights values rise, the sporting body gains a second class of buyer, and access to a national event becomes conditional on a subscription. Legislative response: the anti-siphoning limb of the *Communications Legislation Amendment (Prominence and Anti-siphoning) Act 2024* (Cth), which extended the anti-siphoning scheme in the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth) to online services, so a streaming service must not acquire the right to cover a **listed** event unless a free-to-air broadcaster already holds a right to televise it. Both halves must appear; credit an answer that states the limit — the scheme reserves the opportunity to acquire, it does not require anyone to buy the rights or show the event.

Q17. *(6 marks.)* Vertical integration — one institution commissions, produces, distributes, exhibits and, at 80 per cent of opens, decides what is found. Consequence for independents: the old licence-plus-retained-rights deal left a saleable asset and repeat revenue; a rights-out commissioning fee converts an owner of intellectual property into a supplier of production services. Must reach the industry level — fewer independently owned catalogues, dependence on few commissioners, less capacity to finance the next project from the last — and should note the counter-current (larger budgets, wider reach, more work commissioned).

Q18. *(8 marks.)* Three linked movements, each anchored to figures: classifieds 61% → 4% (unbundling; cross-subsidy gone); print 46,000 → 6,500 against digital 0 → 11,400 (the audience moved and pays differently, but does not replace print plus its advertising); staff 58 → 17 and rounds 4 → 2 (the cost response becoming a loss of coverage). Revenue −44% then −29% shows decline slowing, not reversing — which supports **evolve** with an element of **contract**, not collapse. Full marks need the industry level (regional consolidation, shared newsrooms, rounds lost region by region) and at least one counter-current.

Q19. *(10 marks.)* See Fully-worked solutions for a full model, band descriptors and common errors.

Fully-worked solutions

Q1. (a) A **media industry** is a whole field of organised activity built around making and distributing media products of a particular kind — the screen industry, the news industry, the music industry, the games industry — and it is described in aggregate: revenue, workforce, supply chain, number of firms, concentration. (b) A **media institution** is a specific, organised and enduring body that creates, funds, distributes, hosts or oversees media — a broadcaster, publisher, production company, streaming service, platform company, funding agency or regulator — with a structure, roles, rules and an identity that outlasts its staff. (c) A **technological development** counts in this subtopic when it changes what it costs to make or copy a media product, who can reach an audience, or who collects the money. A development that changes none of the three may still be interesting, but it will not support an industry-level answer, and choosing one is the commonest reason a 13B response goes nowhere. *Marker's note:* the common error in (b) is to define an institution as "a big media company". Size is not the criterion; organised and continuing existence is. A two-person production company is an institution.

Q2. (a) Any four of **production**, **distribution**, **revenue**, **workforce and roles**, **ownership and structure**, **regulation and obligation**. (b) (i) **Ownership and structure** — a capital asset is disposed of and the institution's shape changes; production is also creditable, since printing is a production process. (ii) **Workforce and roles** — the same work is redistributed to differently skilled staff. (iii) **Ownership and structure** — the buyer is also the distributor and exhibitor, which is vertical integration. (c) In (i) the development — dedicated online classified marketplaces — landed at the **revenue** pressure point, and revenue is the one thing an institution cannot simply decide to have back: the advertisers went to a better product and no editorial or commercial decision recalls them. So the publisher answers where it still has control, at **ownership and structure**, by selling the press and the site and taking a large fixed cost out of the business permanently. The general rule is worth memorising: institutions respond at the pressure point they can act on, which is usually cost, structure or workforce, not the one where the damage occurred. *Marker's note:* this is the move that turns a list into an analysis, and it recurs across the subtopic — a revenue shock answered at the workforce point, a distribution shock answered by building a product or by lobbying for a law.

Q3. (a) **First-copy cost** is what it costs to produce the first finished copy of a media product — the shoot, the reporting, the writing, the edit, the score. **Marginal cost** is what it costs to make and deliver each additional copy. (b) *"Explain" wants the mechanism.* Because the marginal copy is nearly free, total cost is almost entirely the first-copy cost, so cost **per person reached** falls as the audience grows. An institution amortising a drama across a worldwide subscriber base has a structurally lower cost per viewer than one amortising the same drama across a national audience, and that advantage exists before either has made a single creative decision. (c) **Unbundling** is the separation of things that were previously sold together because one delivery system carried them all. A metropolitan newspaper bundled news, sport, court reporting, listings, weather, death notices and classified advertising into one object. Once each part could be supplied separately and better, the bundle came apart — and what it removed was not readers but the **cross-subsidy**: classified and display revenue had paid for the court, council and state political rounds. *Marker's note:* the mark is for identifying the cross-subsidy. "People stopped buying newspapers" is a description, not a mechanism, and it is also the wrong mechanism.

Q4. (a) An **intermediary** is an organisation that stands between a maker and an audience and controls the path — a distributor, broadcaster, label, retailer or publisher. A **gatekeeper** is an intermediary with the power to refuse to carry the product at all. (b) **Disintermediation** is the removal of an intermediary from that path; **re-intermediation** is the arrival of a new intermediary in the gap. (c) The claim is inaccurate because gatekeeping relocated rather than disappeared: a product that is not surfaced by a recommendation system, listed by a storefront or reachable from a device home screen is, in practice, not distributed. Two re-intermediaries from: app stores, search and recommendation systems, digital storefronts, device home screens, hosting and aggregation services, advertising networks. *Marker's note:* the strongest answers notice that the new gatekeepers are fewer, larger and generally outside Australian jurisdiction, so an institution that once negotiated now often simply complies.

Q5. (a) **Compete**, **cooperate**, **evolve**, **contract or close**. (b) (i) **Compete** — the institution builds its own version of the new thing and fights for the same audience. (ii) **Cooperate** — it supplies the competitor and takes payment for doing so. (iii) **Evolve** — the institution's own product and workflow are restructured for the new conditions; an answer classifying the ending of weekday print as **contract** is equally correct if it explains that a market has been exited. (c) Because the modes answer different pressure points, and an institution faces several at once. A publisher may compete with a platform for advertising revenue, cooperate with the same platform by publishing into its feed, evolve its newsroom to digital-first, and close its printing plant — all in one year and all in response to the same development. *Marker's note:* the study design's own framing is that traditional media competes, cooperates and evolves alongside new platforms. An answer written as "new media replaced old media" contradicts the dot point it is answering.

Q6. (a) **1** Name the technological development precisely. **2** Name the pressure point. **3** Name the institution and its response, as one of the four modes, with the specific move. **4** Name the industry-level consequence. **5** Name the counter-current. (b)–(c) *Model response:* **1** The development is **algorithmic feed and search ranking as the primary route to a news article**, not "the internet". **2** It strikes **distribution** first and **revenue** second. **4** At industry level, publishers' audiences became mediated by organisations with which they had no commercial relationship, so audience size and revenue decoupled: a masthead could reach more people than at any time in its print history while earning far less per person, which is why the sector consolidated into fewer, larger publishers. **5** The counter-current is that the same development gave publishers a national and international readership that geography had previously made impossible, and gave them audience data precise enough to sell subscriptions directly — the mechanism that now funds much of what survived. *Marker's note:* step 1 is where most answers fail. "Social media" names a category, not a development, and a category cannot be traced to a pressure point.

Q7. (a) **Scale asymmetry** is the mismatch between a media product's cost, which is broadly the same wherever it is made, and the size of the domestic audience available to recover that cost from. Australia's market of roughly 27 million (as at 2025) cannot return a large drama budget on its own, so Australian screen production is financed structurally rather than exceptionally through co-production, international pre-sales and public support. (b) The ***Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth)**; at least **55 per cent** Australian programming between 6 am and midnight on a commercial licensee's primary channel, required by **s 121G of the Act itself**. Be careful which instrument you name: the *Broadcasting Services (Australian Content and Children's Television) Standards 2020*, made under the Act, impose the separate **first-release** requirement — at least 250 points a year from newly commissioned Australian drama, children's and documentary programs — not the 55 per cent transmission quota. (c) *"Explain" wants the design fault, not the outcome.* The obligation attaches to the **broadcasting licence**, because when the scheme was built, holding a licence was the only practical way to show television to Australians at scale. Broadband delivery broke that equivalence: a subscription streaming service shows programs to millions of Australian households without holding a licence, so the audience moved and the obligation stayed where it was. That gap is now closed, but by a differently designed rule: the *Communications Legislation Amendment (Australian Content Requirement for Subscription Video On Demand (Streaming) Services) Act 2025* (Cth) commenced on 1 January 2026 and requires a service with more than one million Australian subscribers to invest at least 10 per cent of its total program expenditure for Australia — or 7.5 per cent of its Australian revenue, at its election — in new Australian drama, documentary, children's, arts and educational programs. *Marker's note:* the analytical point is that the original rule was written around a **technology** rather than an **activity**, which is why it could not be stretched to cover a service with no schedule and had to be replaced by a **spending** obligation. State it in those terms, and date-stamp regulatory detail — this area has changed repeatedly.

Q8. *"Identify" wants two labelled pressure points, one mark each.* The restructure strikes **production** — the printing plant and the printing process are removed from the institution altogether — and **distribution**, because ending home delivery replaces the publisher's own controlled path to the reader with someone else's. **Ownership and structure** (a major asset sold, premises leased) and **workforce and roles** (press, packing and delivery roles removed) are equally creditable. *Marker's note:* do not accept "the publisher saved money". That is a consequence, not a pressure point, and the question asks where the change landed.

Q9. *"Outline" wants the distinction briefly and correctly.* A **media industry** is a whole sector of activity of a given kind, described in aggregate — the news industry's total revenue, its workforce, how many firms it contains. A **media institution** is one organised, continuing body within that sector — a particular publisher, broadcaster or production company. The relationship is one of level, not of size: the industry is the sum of institutions and the conditions they operate under. *Marker's note:* answers that define an institution as "a large or old media company" lose the mark. A two-person podcast producer is an institution; the podcast sector is the industry.

Q10. *"Describe" wants an account, three marks.* Classified advertising was the single most profitable component of the newspaper bundle, and it was profitable because a paper was the only practical place to advertise a job, a car or a house to a whole city. Dedicated online marketplaces did that one job far better — searchable, always current, national in reach and free or nearly free to list — and the advertising followed. The revenue did not move to a rival news organisation; it left the news industry entirely, which is the point. With it went the **cross-subsidy** that had paid for the parts of the paper that never made money on their own: the court round, the council round and the state political round. *Marker's note:* three marks want where the revenue went, not just that it fell.

Q11. *"Identify" then "justify" — the justification carries a mark of its own.* Live and local breakfast programs = **compete**: the institution defends the one product a networked feed cannot supply and fights for the same audience. Networked overnight feed = **contract**: a service is withdrawn from each market and centralised, though an answer calling it **evolve** is acceptable if it argues that the workflow, not the market, is what changed. The app carrying thirty-one streams = **evolve**: the product and its delivery are redesigned for the new conditions rather than defended or abandoned. Podcasts sold to a national advertising network = **cooperate**: the institution supplies a market it does not control and takes payment from it. *Justification (breakfast):* localness is the only attribute a national competitor cannot replicate at any price, so it is the point at which competing is still possible; every other part of the schedule can be supplied more cheaply from elsewhere, which is exactly why it was. *Marker's note:* Tanwith is doing all four things at once, and noticing that is the answer's real substance.

Q12. *"Explain" wants the chain from development to workforce shape.* The development is the fall in cost and rise in capability of **file-based post-production on standard computer systems**. Its effect at the **workforce and roles** pressure point runs in two directions at once.

First, it moved the capability out of the institution. When grading and editing required rooms full of dedicated hardware, an institution that wanted them had to own them and employ people to run them — hence thirty-four staff, three permanent editors and two suites. Once the same standard of work could be done by an individual on their own system, owning the room stopped being an advantage and became a cost, so Culverstone buys the same work project by project from freelance editors, colourists and sound designers. Permanent staff fall from thirty-four to nine, and the institution's fixed cost base falls with them.

Second, and less obviously, the same development **created** a role. When delivery meant a tape, checking it was straightforward. Commissioning services now specify formats, colour standards, audio levels, captioning, metadata and quality-control processes that did not exist a decade ago, and getting them wrong means rejection — so Culverstone now employs a delivery and compliance coordinator, a job that only exists because the technology made delivery complicated.

The net influence is a smaller permanent workforce, a larger contracted one, and a shift in the surviving skill mix away from craft execution and toward coordination and compliance. *Marker's note:* four marks reward the two-directional answer. A response that says only "technology cost people their jobs" has missed the new role sitting in the stimulus specifically to be found.

Q13. *"Explain" the mechanism, then locate the exposure.* Rillet is a textbook **re-intermediary**. The newsroom had been disintermediated years earlier — no newsagents, no trucks, no broadcast licence needed to reach a reader — and a new intermediary then occupied the gap. Rillet controls **discovery**: what its recommendation system favours determines what is seen, and the newsroom built a fourteen-person team on the strength of a ranking decision it neither negotiated nor was told about.

The exposure sits at the **distribution** pressure point and is unusually pure: no contract, no notice period, no appeal and no commercial relationship of any kind with the organisation supplying a quarter of the newsroom's audience. When the ranking changed, 71 per cent of that audience went in eleven weeks and there was nothing to enforce. It flows immediately to **revenue**, because audience is what a newsroom sells, and to **workforce**, because fourteen people were hired against it. The discriminating observation is the stimulus's last line: the newsroom pays nothing to be carried, and an audience acquired at no cost through a channel you do not own can be withdrawn at no cost too. *Marker's note:* the common error is to treat this as a story about an unfair algorithm. The analytical point is **who controls the**

path to the audience — the same point as the newsagent, the transmitter and the film distributor, arriving in a new form.

Q14. *"Explain" both levels — the institution and the industry.* Digital distribution made Quarrow possible at all: twelve people in Melbourne can release worldwide on the day a title is finished, which was unattainable when distribution meant manufacturing discs and negotiating shelf space territory by territory. But the storefront that made this possible is a **re-intermediary** with real power over the studio's structure — it takes 30 per cent of every sale, controls search and featured placement (which is to say discovery), and sets standards a title must meet before it may be listed at all. That is gatekeeping in the strict sense.

The three titles trace the structural response: the first accepts the storefront's terms because there is no alternative; the second trades **ownership** for capital, a publisher advance against worldwide rights that funds the work and leaves the studio without the asset; the third is self-funded across three storefronts, reducing dependence on any single gatekeeper. At **industry** level, near-zero barriers to entry produce very large numbers of small studios, and the scarce resource stops being distribution capacity and becomes **discovery** — while a few storefronts take a share of nearly every sale in the sector regardless of who made it, which is a more reliable position than making games. *Marker's note:* four marks need both levels. Describing the three titles without reaching the shape of the sector stops mid-band.

Q15. *"Explain" wants the mechanism, five marks, and a position.* A **legacy cost base** is the set of assets, staff, premises and contracts an established institution carries because of the way the work used to be done — presses and paper contracts, transmitters and towers, edit suites, buildings, permanent staff. It was not waste: it was the cost of doing something nobody else could do, and for decades it was the barrier that kept competitors out.

A development that makes the old method unnecessary converts that barrier into a burden, and it does so asymmetrically. A new entrant adopts the cheap method from a standing start carrying none of the old cost. The incumbent must run both systems at once — the printed edition still has to appear while the digital operation is built — and cannot shed the old one quickly, because the assets have low resale value, the staff have entitlements, and the remaining revenue still comes from the old product. The same development therefore lowers the entrant's costs and raises the incumbent's relative costs, at the same moment and for the same reason. The position worth reaching is that this does not make incumbents doomed, and most are still here: they hold assets no entrant can buy — an audience, a masthead or channel brand, an archive, advertiser and subscriber relationships, credibility, capital. The outcome depends on whether the institution converts those assets faster than the legacy cost base consumes them, which is exactly why the standard response is to close plants early and spend on product and audience. *Marker's note:* a five-mark "explain" wants both sides and a conclusion. "Old companies are slow" asserts the outcome without the mechanism.

Q16. *"Explain" then "describe" — two tasks, and the second is not optional.* The development is **live sport delivered over broadband at broadcast scale**, and its influence lands at the **distribution** pressure point — but not in the way distribution questions usually run. Nothing here changes how a household watches the event once it is on. What changed is **who is able to bid for it**. Covering a live national final used to require spectrum, transmitters, an outside-broadcast capability and a licence, so the only possible buyers were the handful of Australian institutions that held those things. Once a live stream can reach every connected household in the country, a service with no Australian licence and no Australian transmitter is a bidder like any other, and an auction once contested among three domestic broadcasters is open to organisations of an entirely different size.

That runs straight into **revenue**, and the mechanism is worth stating precisely. A free-to-air broadcaster does not really sell programs; it sells a large, reliable, simultaneous audience. Almost everything else in a schedule can now be watched later or somewhere else, so live sport is the last content that still assembles that audience on cue — which makes it load-bearing rather than one program among many. The bidding is unequal in a specifically Australian way: a global service recovers a rights fee across a worldwide subscriber base, while an Australian broadcaster must recover it from Australian advertising alone. That is **scale asymmetry** applied to rights instead of to production. And the loss compounds rather than settling: losing the event lowers reach, lower reach lowers advertising rates, and lower rates weaken the next bid, so one auction can move a broadcaster's position permanently. At **industry** level, rights values rise, the sporting body gains a second class of buyer and does better out of every cycle, and access to an event of national interest stops being universal and becomes conditional on a subscription.

The **legislative response** is the anti-siphoning limb of the *Communications Legislation Amendment (Prominence and Anti-siphoning) Act 2024* (Cth). Australia has long maintained a **list** of events whose televising should be available free to the general public, and the acquisition rule that had applied to subscription television was extended by the 2024 Act to **online services**: a streaming service must not acquire the right to cover a listed event unless a free-to-air broadcaster already holds a right to televise it. *Marker's note:* the "explain" half is marked for identifying that the technology changed **who could bid**, not how the audience watches; the "describe" half for naming the Act and stating what it does. The strongest answers also state the limit — the scheme reserves free-to-air's opportunity to acquire, it does not oblige anyone to buy the rights or to broadcast the event, so it slows the migration of live sport rather than preventing it.

Q17. *"Analyse" wants the structure broken into its parts, six marks.* Fenwold Play is **vertically integrated**: it commissions, produces through a wholly owned arm, distributes on its own service, and controls how the work is found. Every function once performed by separate organisations negotiating with one another — production company, distributor, broadcaster, exhibitor — now sits inside one institution, and technological development is what made that possible: when distribution required cinemas, transmitters or retail shelves, no single organisation could hold the whole chain. The **recommendation system** is the second structural fact, and the 80 per cent figure is what makes it structural. Discovery used to be performed outside any one institution's control — a schedule, a cinema's programming, a retailer's shelf, a reviewer. Fenwold Play performs it internally, so the institution deciding what is made also decides what is seen, a concentration no broadcaster ever had, because a broadcaster's audience could always change the channel.

For **independent production companies** the consequence is a change in what they are. Under a licensing model a company sold a defined term and **retained** the underlying rights, finishing each production owning an asset it could license again — other territories, other windows, five years later. A catalogue of such assets is what let a company develop its next project and ride out a year without a commission. A rights-out commissioning fee removes it: the company is paid once, keeps no interest in the finished program, and has been converted from an owner of intellectual property into a supplier of production services.

At **industry** level the effects compound — fewer independently owned catalogues, more dependence on a few commissioners who are also competitors, less capacity to self-finance, which increases the dependence further. The counter-current is real and must be stated: commissioning budgets from integrated services are frequently larger than a domestic broadcaster could offer, the work reaches dozens of countries at once, and more programs are being made than under the old model. The trade is volume and reach in exchange for ownership. *Marker's note:* six marks reward reaching the *ownership* point. Describing vertical integration accurately without explaining what retaining rights was worth analyses the buyer and not the seller.

Q18. *"Analyse" the evidence — every claim tied to a figure, eight marks.* The table records three connected movements, and their order is the argument.

The first is the **collapse of the bundle**: classified advertising falls from **61 per cent** of revenue to **4 per cent**. This is unbundling in its purest form — online marketplaces did classifieds better and took them — and because classifieds were the most profitable component, their departure removed the **cross-subsidy** that paid for the parts of a regional paper that never paid for themselves. The second is the **relocation, not the disappearance, of the audience**: print sales fall from 46,000 to 6,500, a collapse of nearly 86 per cent, while digital subscribers rise from zero to 11,400. Larkmoor's readers did not stop wanting regional news; they changed how they get it and how much of the cost they carry. But 11,400 digital subscribers do not replace 46,000 print buyers plus the advertising beside them, and the revenue line proves it: a decade at **−44 per cent** followed by a decade at **−29 per cent**. The third is the **cost response, at the point where it becomes a coverage decision**: editorial staff fall from 58 to 17 and rounds from four to two. Everything above that line is business restructuring; this is where technological development reaches what the community actually receives, and in a regional market there is usually no second newsroom to pick up the two lost rounds.

Read together the figures support a specific reading: this is **evolve** with a substantial element of **contract**. Larkmoor has not closed, its paying digital audience is growing from a standing start, and the rate of revenue decline has slowed from −44 to −29 per cent — but it bought that survival by narrowing what it does. At **industry** level the same arithmetic across every regional publisher produces consolidation into fewer titles, shared newsrooms serving several mastheads, and rounds disappearing region by region; regional publishing is more exposed than metropolitan publishing to this sequence, because its classified base was proportionally larger and its digital subscriber pool is bounded by the size of the district. Two counter-currents belong in a full answer: digital publication frees a regional masthead from printing and physically distributing across long distances, a severe cost in western Victoria; and 11,400 subscribers paying directly is a more durable revenue relationship than advertising sold against a print run, because it does not depend on a third party's marketplace. *Marker's note:* eight marks need every claim anchored to a figure, the institution and the industry distinguished explicitly, and at least one counter-current. Listing the rows in order without linking classifieds to rounds describes the table rather than analysing it.

Q19. *Command term — analyse:* break each institution's situation into its parts — the development, the pressure point, the response, the industry consequence — and show how they connect, with a counter-current in each case.

Institution 1: a metropolitan newspaper publisher — print and digital Institution 2: a national public broadcaster — radio and television

Model response (10 marks).

Technological development has not influenced media institutions by making them obsolete. It has influenced them by changing three things — what a copy costs to deliver, who controls the path to the audience, and who collects the money — and then leaving each institution to answer with whatever assets and rules it happens to hold. Two Australian institutions in different forms show the same mechanisms producing very different restructures.

A metropolitan newspaper publisher. The decisive development was not digital publishing but **dedicated online classified marketplaces**, and it struck the **revenue** pressure point. The publisher's product had been a bundle in which classified and display advertising cross-subsidised the court, council and state political rounds. Marketplaces did classifieds better on every dimension that mattered to the person placing the ad, so the revenue left the news industry altogether. A second development, **search and feed ranking as the route to an article**, then struck **distribution**: a publisher that had escaped newsagents and delivery trucks found itself dependent on organisations with which it had no contract — a clear **re-intermediation**, since the gate had not been removed, only relocated and enlarged.

The institution answered in every available mode. It **evolved** into a digital-first newsroom with a metered paywall, memberships and newsletters. It **redesigned cost**, closing its press, ending weekday print, outsourcing production and cutting the subediting desk while asking reporters to file to text, audio and video at once — the **workforce and roles** pressure point absorbing the shock created at the revenue one. It **cooperated** with the platforms competing for its advertising by publishing into their feeds. And it worked to **change the rules**: the *Treasury Laws Amendment (News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code) Act 2021* (Cth), which inserted a bargaining code into the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010* (Cth), exists because an industry that could not negotiate with intermediaries far larger than itself went to Parliament instead. Its machinery — designation by the Treasurer, compulsory bargaining, final-offer arbitration — aims directly at the revenue pressure point.

At **industry** level the result is fewer and larger publishers, a much smaller journalistic workforce, more work performed under freelance engagement than under the employment framework of the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) and its modern awards, and regional and suburban coverage thinning first — because that was the part of the bundle the classifieds had been paying for. The **counter-current** is substantial and must be said: the same developments gave mastheads a national and international readership that geography had made impossible, and audience data precise enough to sell subscriptions directly, which is the mechanism now funding most of what survived.

A national public broadcaster. Here the decisive development was **on-demand distribution through apps, catalogues and podcast feeds**, and it struck **distribution** first. A public broadcaster's audience had always been assembled by a schedule and a transmitter: a bulletin at seven, a program at eight, a state or regional radio service reaching a district because a tower stood in it. On-demand delivery dissolves the schedule into a catalogue of separately chosen items and dissolves the transmitter's geography into national — in fact global — reach. Nothing about the obligation to make the material changed. What changed is that the institution now has to be **found** rather than tuned to, and found on interfaces it does not own.

What makes this institution analytically different from a commercial one is that two moves in the repertoire are closed to it. It cannot redesign its revenue the way a publisher can, because most of its funding is appropriated rather than earned; and it cannot contract out of an unprofitable market, because its obligations are written into statute — the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983* (Cth), and for the multicultural broadcaster the *Special Broadcasting Service Act 1991* (Cth) — and a statutory charter has no market test in it to fail. So the response is overwhelmingly **evolve**: the charter obligations were read across to the new delivery, so running a radio network became also publishing an app, an on-demand catalogue, podcast feeds and an online news file, and the same appropriation had to fund programming commissioned for a schedule and for on-demand use at once. There is **cooperation** as well, since the broadcaster distributes its own material through the platforms that compete with it for the same attention, and there is real **contraction** — transmission services and production units closed, output centralised — but it is contraction inside a continuing obligation rather than withdrawal from a market.

The **regulation and obligation** pressure point completes the picture, and here the Australian consequence points the *opposite* way from the commercial case, which is why the pairing is instructive. A commercial licensee's Australian content obligation sits on its **broadcasting licence**: s 121G of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth) requires at least 55 per cent Australian programming between 6 am and midnight on a primary channel. Because that rule was written around a way of delivering rather than around the activity of showing programs to Australians, it stayed behind when viewing moved to unlicensed services, and Parliament had to build a differently shaped rule to reach them — the *Communications Legislation Amendment (Australian Content Requirement for Subscription Video On Demand (Streaming) Services) Act 2025* (Cth), in force from 1 January 2026, which sets an Australian **expenditure** floor for large streaming services instead of an airtime quota. A public broadcaster's obligations were never attached to a delivery technology in that way. They are attached to the institution itself, which is why they followed it onto every new platform without a word of amendment — and why technological development has made it carry more, not less.

At **industry** level the consequence is a structural transfer. As commercial newsrooms answered their own revenue shock by closing regional and suburban rounds, the public broadcaster became, in many districts, the only remaining source of local news, court reporting and emergency coverage — so a technological development working through the *commercial* half of the industry ended up enlarging the practical workload of a *publicly funded* institution whose funding is set independently of it. The **counter-current** is substantial and must be stated: on-demand and podcast distribution let a charter written in 1983 be met in ways a single schedule never permitted. A specialist program can now find a national audience too small to justify an hour of airtime, an archive earns attention continuously instead of once, and a public broadcaster's audio reaches listeners outside Australia at no distribution cost at all — reach that scale asymmetry had previously made unbuyable.

What the two cases show together. The same property — near-zero marginal cost of digital delivery — produced two different restructures because the institutions held different things and answered to different tests. The publisher's value sat in a **bundle**, and unbundling destroyed the cross-subsidy inside it; it could therefore save itself by shedding whatever no longer paid, and did. The public broadcaster's value sat in an **obligation**, which cannot be shed at all, so its only available move was to carry the same charter onto every new platform at once and absorb the cost of doing so. In both, an old gatekeeper was removed and a new, larger, foreign-owned one installed between the institution and its audience. In both, the institution answered at a different pressure point from the one where the damage occurred — cost and structure absorbing a revenue shock; product and platform answering a distribution shock. In both, the legislative response arrived years after the structural change, because Parliament can only regulate what is visible and structural change is visible only in hindsight: a bargaining code more than a decade after the classifieds left, a streaming content requirement more than a decade after streaming arrived. And in both, the institution is still here — competing, cooperating and evolving, which is exactly what the study design says traditional media does.

Band descriptors (out of 10):

- **High (8–10):** two institutions in genuinely different media forms; a **specific** technological development named for each and traced to a named pressure point; the response classified as compete, cooperate, evolve, contract or close and described as a concrete move; industry-level consequences reached for both, including at least one accurate Australian structural or regulatory consequence; at least one counter-current stated; precise, correct media and industry language throughout.
- **Mid (5–7):** both institutions discussed but one thinly; developments named at category level ("the internet", "social media") rather than specifically; responses described but not classified; industry-level consequence asserted rather than shown; Australian material present but imprecise; no counter-current.
- **Low (1–4):** one institution only, or two in the same media form; technological determinism throughout ("streaming killed television"); no pressure point identified; no distinction between institution and industry; no Australian material; discusses audiences rather than organisations.

Common errors: choosing two institutions in the **same** media form, which makes the comparison impossible; naming a technology without naming what it changed, so no mechanism appears; writing as though the technology were the actor, when the dot point is about what institutions **did**; drifting into audiences and individuals, which belongs to **13A**, or into contested social, ethical and legal questions, which belong to **13C**; asserting that traditional institutions have been replaced, which the study design's own wording contradicts; and stating Australian legal or regulatory detail loosely — name the instrument, get its scope right, and date-stamp anything that has been changing.

Theory

Every other subtopic in this chapter has asked what technological change *does* — to audiences, to individuals, to industries and institutions. This one asks a harder question: when a change is contested, how do you argue about it well? The study design's wording is exact, and every word of it does work: **social, ethical and legal issues in the media industry in the last two years.** Three kinds of issue. One industry. A window that moves.

What counts as "the media industry". For this dot point the industry is everyone whose work is the making, funding, distribution or hosting of media products: production companies and screen crews, newsrooms and publishers, broadcasters, streaming services, game studios, advertising and marketing businesses, the platforms that distribute and recommend content, and the individual creators who now publish directly. Audiences are affected by every issue below, but the issue itself is something the industry does, faces, argues about or is regulated over.

What counts as an "issue". An **issue** is a matter that is genuinely **contested** — parties who disagree, something real at stake, and no settled answer yet. That definition rules two things out.

- A **fact** is not an issue. "Most Australians watch video on a phone" is a fact. It becomes an issue only when someone argues about what should follow from it.
- A **constraint** is not an issue. Chapter 7 taught constraints — the fixed conditions a producer works inside. A constraint becomes an issue when the rule itself is what people are arguing about.

An issue therefore always has at least two defensible positions. If you cannot state the other side of your issue in a sentence that its supporters would accept, you have not found an issue; you have found an opinion.

The three lenses. The dot point names three, and they are not three words for the same thing.

Lens	The question it asks	Who decides	How it is settled
Social	Who is affected, and how — which groups gain, which lose, what happens to communities, work, participation and public trust?	Society, over time, through argument and evidence	Never finally; it shifts as the effects become visible
Ethical	What *should* a media practitioner or organisation do here, whether or not anyone can force them?	Practitioners, guided by professional codes, editorial policies and conscience	By judgement, defended in public and against a code
Legal	What does the law permit, require or forbid, and who can enforce it?	Parliaments and courts	By legislation, and by decisions in particular cases

A **social issue** concerns effects on groups and on society: employment in an industry, access to local news, the wellbeing of young audiences, whether a community sees itself represented. An **ethical issue** concerns what is right to do when the choice is left to the practitioner: whether to publish a name, whether to disclose that a tool generated an image, whether to keep filming. A **legal issue** concerns rules that can be enforced against you: what an Act requires, what a court will award, what a licence permits.

The four positions, and why "it's legal" is never an answer. The single most useful idea in this subtopic is that legality and ethics are separate axes. Every media decision sits in one of four boxes.

	Ethically defensible	**Ethically indefensible**
Lawful	The ordinary case: accurate reporting, licensed material,	The dangerous case: a lawful photograph of a grieving family, a

	Ethically defensible	Ethically indefensible
	consenting contributors	lawful but undisclosed AI re-creation, a lawful data practice buried in terms nobody reads
Unlawful	The rare case: publication that breaches an order or a licence but that the publisher argues serves a substantial public interest — still unlawful, and consequences follow	The clear case: unlicensed use of someone's work, defamatory publication, non-consensual intimate material

The top-right box is where almost all real industry argument happens, and it is the box students miss. A defence of "it wasn't illegal" answers the legal question and leaves the ethical one untouched. Get into the habit of asking both questions of every scenario, in that order, and saying so explicitly.

Why the gap exists in Australian media. In some areas the law deliberately steps back and leaves the field to ethics. Journalism is the clearest example: media organisations acting in the course of journalism are exempt from the Australian Privacy Principles under the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth), on the condition that the organisation is publicly committed to observing published privacy standards. The law's own design assumes that a professional code will do the work a statute is not doing. That is why the ethical instruments matter as much as the legal ones. Journalists who are members of the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance work to its **Journalist Code of Ethics**, built on honesty, fairness, independence and respect for the rights of others, which requires respect for private grief and personal privacy. Its guidance clause sets the override test, and it has **two** limbs: only substantial advancement of the public interest **or** risk of substantial harm to people allows any standard to be overridden. Quote both — the second limb is the one that lets a journalist withhold a name to keep someone safe, and an answer that knows only the public-interest limb has misstated the instrument. Publishers and broadcasters run their own editorial policies on top of that.

Two structural pressures sit under almost every current issue.

- **The law lags the technology.** A generative model, a recommendation system or a synthetic voice arrives years before the Act that addresses it, so for a period the only available standard is an ethical one. When Parliament does act, it usually acts on the harm rather than the technology.
- **The industry is global and the law is national.** Australian law binds conduct connected to Australia, but the largest distributors of media are companies headquartered elsewhere, serving hundreds of markets from one product. That is why Australian legal responses increasingly place obligations on *platforms* rather than on individual publishers, and why enforcement is a live question rather than a formality.

The currency rule. "In the last two years" is part of the dot point, not decoration. For a class working in **2026**, that window runs from roughly **2024** onward, and an example from 2019 does not satisfy it however good the analysis is. Two consequences for how you write.

1. **Date-stamp every claim.** Say *when* a law commenced, *when* a company announced a change, *when* you checked. "Since 10 December 2025" is evidence. "Recently" is not.
2. **Distinguish a proposal from a law.** Bills are introduced and then pass, lapse or are withdrawn, and a bill that never passed changes nothing. This distinction is worth marks on its own.

Refreshing your examples — a method you can repeat. A printed workbook cannot stay inside a rolling two-year window, so the examples below are written to public record **as at 2026** and each carries its date. To refresh one: (1) start from the **instrument**, not the headline — find the Act, code or policy and its commencement date; (2) check whether a proposal actually became law; (3) prefer sources that date themselves, and record the date you checked; (4) replace any example older than two years; (5) keep the *issue* even when the example ages — the argument about AI training data will outlast any particular case.

The issue bank, as at 2026. These are the live argument families in the Australian media industry across 2024–2026. Each is genuinely contested; none is settled.

Issue family (and when it moved)	What is contested	Where the law sits, as at 2026	The ethical question underneath
Generative AI and creators' work (continuous since 2023; exception proposed August 2025, ruled out 26 October 2025)	Not now whether to carve out a training exception, but who pays for training material, under what licensing scheme, and whether synthetic output should be labelled	The *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth) contains **no** general text and data mining exception, and Australia has narrow **fair dealing** exceptions rather than United States fair use; the Attorney-General ruled an exception out in October 2025 and sent the question of a statutory or collective **licence** to the Copyright and Artificial Intelligence Reference Group; no scheme legislated as at 2026	Should a producer use a tool trained on work its makers were never asked about, and must the audience be told a machine made it?
Synthetic likeness and voice (Commonwealth offence enacted 2024)	Consent to the use of a person's face and voice, and the reliability of the image as evidence of anything	The *Criminal Code Amendment (Deepfake Sexual Material) Act 2024* (Cth) criminalised sharing sexually explicit material of an adult without consent, including material created or altered by technology; the *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth) image-based abuse scheme allows removal notices. Outside that, Australia has **no** personality or voice right: a non-sexual voice or likeness clone is left to the tort of passing off and to s 18 of the Australian Consumer Law (Schedule 2 to the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010* (Cth))	Should a performer's replica ever be made without their specific, paid, revocable consent?
Young people and platforms (Act passed November 2024; obligations from 10 December 2025)	Whether removing under-16s from social media protects them or isolates them, and what age assurance costs everyone's privacy	The *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024* (Cth), amending the *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth), requires age-restricted social media platforms to take reasonable steps to prevent Australians under 16 holding accounts, with civil penalties running to tens of millions of dollars	How should a platform design for an audience it profits from and knows to be vulnerable?
Privacy and personal data (amending Act	How much of a person's life a media business may	The *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) and its Australian	When is intrusion justified by the public interest, and

Issue family (and when it moved)	What is contested	Where the law sits, as at 2026	The ethical question underneath
assented December 2024; new court action from 10 June 2025)	collect, infer, publish or sell	Privacy Principles, with the journalism exemption noted above; the *Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024* (Cth) created a statutory cause of action for **serious invasions of privacy** (with exemptions including for journalism) and criminal offences for **doxxing**	when is "public interest" just interest?
Misinformation and public trust (Commonwealth bill withdrawn November 2024)	Who, if anyone, should decide what is false, and what a publisher owes the record when it gets something wrong	No Commonwealth misinformation law: the *Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2024* was **withdrawn** in November 2024 without passing; verification remains a matter for editorial standards	Should a newsroom publish fast and correct later, or verify first and be second?
The economics of news (platform news deals ended from March 2024; Commonwealth response announced December 2024, draft legislation out for consultation in 2026)	Whether platforms that distribute journalism should pay for it, and who reports on a town when no one is paid to	The bargaining code inserted into the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010* (Cth) by the *Treasury Laws Amendment (News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code) Act 2021* (Cth) remains in force; after a major platform declined to renew Australian news deals from 2024, the Commonwealth announced in December 2024 that it would design a **News Bargaining Incentive**, and draft legislation was still in consultation in 2026 — announced, drafted, not passed	What does a newsroom owe a community it can no longer afford to cover?
Reputation and speech (serious harm from 1 July 2021; Victoria's digital intermediary reforms from 11 September 2024)	Who is a publisher of a comment written by someone else, and how much scrutiny a person must accept	Uniform defamation law, enacted in this state as the *Defamation Act 2005* (Vic): since reforms commencing 1 July 2021 a plaintiff must show **serious harm**, and a **public interest** defence is	Does moderating a comment thread make a publisher responsible for it, or does not moderating make them worse?

Issue family (and when it moved)	What is contested	Where the law sits, as at 2026	The ethical question underneath
		available. *Fairfax Media Publications Pty Ltd v Voller* (2021) held that operators of public pages can be publishers of third-party comments — and Victoria has since answered that case: from **11 September 2024**, **s 31A** gives a digital intermediary a defence if it maintains an accessible complaints mechanism and takes reasonable access-prevention steps within **seven days** of a written complaint	

You are not expected to hold all seven. You are expected to be able to analyse **one** properly.

The issue chain — the method for this subtopic. Five steps, in this order, every time. They convert a news story into an analysis, and they map onto the command term *analyse*: break the issue into parts, show how the parts work on each other, reach a position.

1. **Name and date it.** State the issue in one sentence and fix it in time. *“Since 10 December 2025, Australians under 16 have not been able to hold accounts on age-restricted social media platforms.”*
2. **Locate it.** Which part of the industry, which media form, which stage — production, distribution or consumption?
3. **Classify it.** Social, ethical, legal — usually more than one. Justify each label you apply, and name the instrument for anything you call legal.
4. **Map the stakeholders.** List the parties and give each one’s interest in a clause. The interests must genuinely conflict, or you have not found the issue.
5. **Weigh it and take a position.** State the strongest argument on each side, say which is stronger and why, and name what remains unresolved. A position that concedes nothing is not analysis.

Step 4 is what students leave out, and it is the step that makes the rest possible. Here is the map for one issue, as a model of the density expected.

Stakeholder	Interest in a minimum age of 16 for social media accounts
Young people	Connection, identity, information and community — including for those whose support networks are online rather than local
Parents and carers	A rule with force behind it, rather than a negotiation at home every night
Platforms	Compliance cost, loss of a growth audience, and reluctance to hold more identity data than they must
All other users	The privacy cost of age assurance, which is imposed on adults as well
Creators and youth media	Loss of a distribution channel to an audience they were built to serve
Government	A demonstrable response to public concern about harm, and enforceable obligations on companies outside its

Stakeholder	Interest in a minimum age of 16 for social media accounts
	jurisdiction
Researchers and clinicians	Evidence — which is contested, and thinner than either side's confidence suggests

Evidence discipline. An issue answer without evidence is an opinion piece. Acceptable evidence in this subtopic is: a named instrument with a date; a dated public announcement or decision; a published code and the clause relied on; a dated, sourced figure. Unacceptable: "studies show", "everyone knows", "the media is". Name the party. Date the claim. If a figure is contested, say so — noticing that the evidence is thin is itself an analytical move.

Where this subtopic stops. The *influence* of technological development on audiences and the individual belongs to **13A**, and its influence on media industries and institutions to **13B**; here the unit of analysis is a contested **issue**, not an effect. Ethical, legal and community constraints on **your own** production and distribution — clearances, consent forms, permissions, safety — belong to **11B**: that subtopic asks what you must do, this one asks what the industry is arguing about. Institutional, economic, social and political constraints on Australian narratives belong to **7B**. And the Australian system of media regulation as a system — who regulates, with what powers, and whether control of the media should be tighter or looser — is Unit 4 work, not Unit 2 work.

Four traps.

- **Using "illegal" and "unethical" as synonyms.** They are different claims with different evidence. Say which one you are making.
- **Choosing an example outside the window.** Two years, checked and dated. An excellent analysis of a 2018 controversy does not meet the dot point.
- **Retelling the controversy.** A summary of what happened is step 1 of five. The marks are in steps 3 to 5.
- **Treating a proposal as a law.** Announced, introduced, passed, commenced and enforced are five different things, and the difference between them is often the whole issue.

Looking ahead: Units 3 and 4 return to this ground and ask a bigger question — how the media should be regulated at all — so the habit of separating the legal question from the ethical one is the habit that will carry you there.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Classify the issue described below as social, ethical and/or legal, justifying each classification you apply. *(4 marks)*

> **Stimulus.** Ashmount Media, a metropolitan digital news publisher, builds a recommendation system for its app. To train it, the company uses eleven years of reader comments, saved article lists and reading times from accounts created long before the system existed. Readers were not told. The practice is discovered when a reader requests their own data and receives a file describing them as "high-conflict, politically reactive, retains well on crime". Ashmount says the data was collected lawfully under its terms of use and never left the company.

Work the three lenses in turn, then say how they interact.

Working	Comment
The issue is **legal** in part. How an Australian organisation may handle personal information is governed by the Australian Privacy Principles under the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth), which require openness about what is collected and limit use of information for a purpose other than the one it was collected for. Whether Ashmount's eleven-year-old terms of use covered	Name the instrument. Note what makes it an *issue* rather than a fact: reasonable people disagree about whether the old consent reaches the new use.

Working	Comment
training a system that did not then exist is exactly the contested question.	
Ashmount's own defence is a legal one — "collected lawfully, never disclosed". Note that the publisher's activity here is not journalism but audience analytics, so the journalism exemption is not obviously available to it.	Good answers test the defence rather than repeating it.
The issue is **ethical** independently of that. Even if the terms of use are held to cover it, readers were profiled in language they never saw and would not accept, for a purpose they were not told about. The ethical question — should we do this? — is not answered by the legal one, and Ashmount has answered only the legal one.	This is the top-right box of the four-position grid: possibly lawful, hard to defend. Saying so explicitly is worth a mark.
The issue is **social** in its effects. A publisher that sorts its readers by what retains them shapes what a community is shown about itself: a reader labelled "retains well on crime" is served more crime, and the version of the city they receive narrows. The effect falls on the readership as a group, not on the one person who asked for their file.	The social lens asks *who is affected as a group*. This is the step that lifts the answer above a privacy complaint.
Takeaway: one set of facts, three different questions. Answering the legal one does not dispose of the other two, and the publisher's own statement addresses only the narrowest of the three.	Close on the principle.

Example 2 — scaffolded

Analyse the competing interests at stake in the introduction of a minimum age of 16 for social media accounts in Australia, and reach a position on whether the measure is justified. *(6 marks)*

"Analyse" plus six marks means stakeholders, at least two sides argued properly, and a position that concedes something.

Working	Comment
Since **10 December 2025**, the *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024* (Cth) has required age-restricted social media platforms to take reasonable steps to prevent Australians under 16 holding accounts, with civil penalties for systemic failure running to tens of millions of dollars. The Act was passed in November 2024.	Step 1: name and date, with the instrument. Passed in one year, in force in the next — a distinction worth making.
The issue sits at **distribution and consumption**, not production: it does not change what may be made, only who may hold an account to receive it. It reaches every media business that used social platforms to reach a young audience.	Step 2: locate it. Precision here prevents the answer sprawling.
It is **legal** (an Act with commencement and penalties), **social** (it removes an age group from a communication channel, affecting young people unevenly — those whose support networks are online lose most) and **ethical** (it asks what platforms owe an audience they profit from and know to be vulnerable).	Step 3: all three lenses, each with a reason.
The interests conflict directly. Government gains an enforceable obligation on companies outside its	Step 4: the stakeholder map, compressed. Note the

Working	Comment
jurisdiction; parents gain a rule with force behind it; platforms carry compliance cost and lose a growth audience; young people lose connection and information; **all** users, including adults, carry the privacy cost of whatever age assurance is used; youth-focused creators lose a distribution channel.	interest that is easy to miss — the cost falling on adults.
For: the harms are real and platform design contributed to them; voluntary measures had years to work and did not; a rule with penalties is the only instrument that moves a global company. **Against:** the evidence connecting platform use to harm is contested; the ban displaces rather than removes use; it isolates young people who rely on online community; and age assurance requires more identity checking of everyone.	Step 5, first half: the strongest form of each side. Never argue against a weak version of the other position.
Position: the measure is justified as a floor but not as a solution. It shifts a burden that had been carried by individual families onto the companies whose design created it, which is the right allocation. But it treats an age threshold as though it were a safety standard, and unless it is paired with obligations about how platforms are built for the young people who will reach 16 anyway, it moves the problem rather than fixing it. What remains unresolved is enforcement against companies with no Australian presence, and the privacy cost of age assurance.	A position with a concession in it. "Unresolved" is a strength, not a hedge.
Takeaway: the marks are in the conflict between interests, not in the description of the law.	

Example 3 — unscaffolded

Explain why an Australian news organisation's obligations to a grieving family are largely ethical rather than legal. *(5 marks)*

The obligations are largely ethical because Australian law has deliberately left this ground to the industry. Media organisations acting **in the course of journalism** are exempt from the Australian Privacy Principles under the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth), provided the organisation is publicly committed to observing published privacy standards — so the general statute that governs how everyone else handles personal information does not reach the newsroom's decision to knock on the door. The new statutory cause of action for serious invasions of privacy created by the *Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024* (Cth), available since **10 June 2025**, is the most significant change to this area in years, but it too carries exemptions, including for journalism. Defamation law protects reputation, not feelings, and a true account of a death is not defamatory. The practical result is that a reporter standing outside a house the morning after a death is, in most cases, doing something lawful.

That is precisely why the ethical instruments carry the weight. Members of the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance work to its Journalist Code of Ethics, which requires respect for private grief and personal privacy and does not permit exploiting a person's vulnerability or their unfamiliarity with how media works. The Code's guidance clause allows any standard to be overridden only where substantial advancement of the public interest **or** risk of substantial harm to people justifies it — and neither limb assists here. A distressing image of a stranger's grief rarely advances the public interest substantially, and the harm limb operates the other way in this scenario: it is a reason for restraint, not a licence to intrude. Individual publishers and broadcasters layer their own editorial policies over that code, and both are enforced by complaint, employer and reputation rather than by a court.

The consequence for analysis is the point of this subtopic: "we were entitled to be there" answers the legal question and leaves the ethical one entirely open. *Takeaway:* where the law steps back on purpose, professional ethics is not a softer standard — it is the only standard operating.

Example 4 — unscaffolded

Analyse one legal issue in the media industry in the last two years, referring to the relevant instrument and to the interests of at least three parties. *(10 marks)*

The issue, dated. Whether copying published work to train a generative artificial-intelligence model requires the permission of, and payment to, the people who made that work is the most consequential unresolved legal question facing the Australian media industry, and it has been actively contested here since **2023–24**. The Attorney-General's Department convened a Copyright and Artificial Intelligence Reference Group (CAIRG) in **December 2023**. The Productivity Commission's interim report *Harnessing data and digital technology*, released in **August 2025**, put a text and data mining exception on the table; Australian creative-industry organisations opposed it strongly, and on **26 October 2025** the Commonwealth Attorney-General ruled it out, saying the government had no plans to weaken copyright protections when it comes to AI. CAIRG was directed instead to work through **licensing** models — a statutory licence, a collecting-society licence, or leaving parties to negotiate — together with how copyright applies to AI-generated material and a possible small-claims forum for enforcement. As at **2026** there is still no such exception, no licensing scheme has been legislated, and the argument has moved from *whether to carve out an exception* to *who pays, how much, and under what scheme*.

Where the law sits. The *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth) gives the owner of copyright the exclusive right to reproduce a work, and reproducing a **substantial part** without permission infringes unless an exception applies. Australia's exceptions are the narrow **fair dealing** exceptions — research or study, criticism or review, parody or satire, reporting news, and a few others — not the broad United States doctrine of fair use, and none of them was written with model training in mind. Training a large model ordinarily involves copying the work. That leaves a genuine legal question rather than a settled answer: an activity that the Act appears to reach, an exception regime that does not obviously accommodate it, and no Australian legislative decision either way. Separately, Part IX of the Act gives creators **moral rights** — attribution, protection against false attribution, and integrity of authorship — which are personal to the creator and are not transferred when copyright is sold. Be precise about their reach, because it is the point most often overstated. A moral right attaches to an act done in respect of a **work** — reproducing, publishing, communicating or adapting it, or a substantial part of it — so the attribution right rises and falls with the same substantial-part question as the economic right, and does not supply a second, easier answer where that question is disputed. Output that merely imitates a creator's *style* reproduces no particular work, and Australian copyright does not protect style at all. That gap is not a technicality to be argued around; it is one of the things creators say the Act now gets wrong.

The interests, and why they conflict.

Creators and performers — writers, photographers, illustrators, composers, voice artists — hold both the economic and the moral rights, and are the party whose work is copied and whose market may be displaced by the result. Their interest is consent and payment, and their argument is simple: an industry has been built on inputs it did not license.

Technology companies building models argue that training is not the kind of copying the Act was written to prevent, that models learn patterns rather than store works, and that an Australian rule stricter than that of other jurisdictions would push the work offshore without protecting anyone. Their interest is legal certainty at scale.

Media producers and publishers sit awkwardly in the middle, and this is the part students miss. They are rights **holders** — their archives are exactly the material being copied — and simultaneously heavy **users** of the tools for transcription, translation, editing, thumbnails and audience analysis. A publisher may be negotiating a licence for its archive on Monday and cutting production costs with a model trained on somebody else's archive on Tuesday.

Audiences have an interest they are rarely asked about: whether what they are looking at was made by a person, and whether they are told.

Weighing it. The strongest argument for requiring permission is that the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth) already draws the line at reproduction, and the scale of the copying does not change its character; an exception would have transferred value from many small creators to a few large firms, and would have done so retrospectively, over work published when no such use was foreseeable. That is substantially the argument that won in October 2025. The strongest argument the other way is practical and survives the decision: rights clearance work by work at the scale of a training corpus may be impossible, so a bare prohibition risks producing not payment but quiet non-compliance, and Australia is a small market that will not set the world's terms. The most defensible position is therefore that the burden should sit with the party that benefits, and that the argument now worth having is about the **scheme** — a collective or statutory licence that can actually be complied with, rather than either a carve-out or a right nobody can enforce work by work. **Attribution** should be a non-negotiable term of whatever scheme emerges, regardless of how the payment question resolves: it costs the technology almost nothing, it is what creators most consistently ask for, and — as the Part IX limits above show — it will not arrive on its own through the moral-rights provisions.

What is unresolved. Whether existing fair dealing exceptions reach model training has not been decided by an Australian court; whether Parliament will legislate a licensing scheme, and whether it will be statutory or voluntary, was undecided as at 2026 — and note that ruling an exception out is a government **policy** position, not an amendment, so a later government could revisit it; and disclosure of synthetic content remains an ethical practice rather than a legal duty. *Takeaway:* a ten-mark legal issue answer names the instrument, states what is genuinely undecided about it, sets at least three conflicting interests against each other, and finishes with a position that gives ground somewhere.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Define each of the following as used in this subtopic. *(3 marks)* (a) a social issue; (b) an ethical issue; (c) a legal issue.

Q2. The dot point limits you to issues "in the last two years". *(4 marks)* (a) State the window that applies to a class working in 2026. (b) Two of the following would satisfy the currency requirement in 2026 and one would not: (i) the commencement of the minimum-age obligations on social media platforms on 10 December 2025; (ii) the introduction of Australia's first classification system for films; (iii) the withdrawal of the Commonwealth misinformation bill in November 2024. Identify the one that would not, and say why. (c) State two things you should record about any example so that a reader can check it.

Q3. Legality and ethics are separate axes. *(4 marks)* (a) Name the four positions produced by combining lawful/unlawful with ethically defensible/indefensible. (b) Place each of the following: (i) a publisher licenses and pays for every photograph it runs; (ii) a broadcaster runs a lawfully obtained image of a stranger's grief across its bulletins; (iii) a creator uploads a film clip they do not own to a public account. (c) State why "it was legal" is an incomplete response to an ethical criticism.

Q4. A reliable method for this subtopic is the five-step issue chain. *(4 marks)* (a) List the five steps in order. (b) For an issue in the media industry that you have researched this year, complete steps 1 and 2. (c) Complete step 3 for the same issue, naming an instrument for any legal element.

Q5. Stakeholder mapping is step 4 of the chain. *(4 marks)* (a) Name five groups that commonly appear in a stakeholder map for a media industry issue. (b) For the ending of platform payments for Australian news from 2024, state the interest of three different stakeholders in a clause each. (c) State the test that tells you a stakeholder map has identified a genuine issue.

Q6. Match each issue to the Australian instrument most directly relevant to it. *(4 marks)* (a) A model is trained on a photographer's archive without permission. (b) A platform allows a 14-year-old to open an account after 10 December 2025. (c) Sexually explicit material of an adult, generated by software, is shared without consent. (d) An organisation uses personal information it collected for one purpose to build a profiling system for another.

Q7. Two structural pressures sit under most current issues. *(3 marks)* (a) Explain what is meant by "the law lags the technology". (b) Explain the difficulty created for Australian law by a global media industry. (c) State one way Australian legislation has responded to that difficulty.

Unscaffolded

Q8. Identify **two** legal issues facing the Australian media industry as at 2026, naming the instrument relevant to each. *(2 marks)*

Q9. Using one example, outline the difference between a legal issue and an ethical issue in the media industry. *(2 marks)*

Q10. Describe one social, ethical or legal issue in the media industry from the last two years that you have researched, and state which of the three lenses it engages and why. *(3 marks)*

Q11. *(Stimulus.)* Read the description below.

> **Stimulus.** Stannock Press publishes three regional Victorian mastheads. To keep its obituary column running after staff cuts, it uses a generative tool to draft each obituary from the funeral notice and any public information the tool can find. A published obituary describes a woman as a lifelong member of a service club she never joined and gives her the wrong number of children. No note anywhere in the paper says the column is machine-drafted. When the family complains, the editor replies that no law has been broken.

Explain the ethical issue raised, and state whether the editor's response answers the family's complaint. *(3 marks)*

Q12. *(Stimulus.)* Read the description below.

> **Stimulus.** Loomstack is a short-video platform that pays creators according to total watch minutes. A Melbourne creator's highest-earning clip is thirty seconds of footage filmed at the scene of a road crash, uploaded before the families involved had been contacted. The clip breaks no platform rule. Loomstack's recommendation system, which has no category for this kind of material, promotes it heavily because viewers watch it to the end.

Explain how the platform's payment and recommendation design creates an ethical issue, and identify one social consequence of that design. *(4 marks)*

Q13. Explain how the minimum-age obligations that commenced on 10 December 2025 changed practice for media businesses that had reached young audiences through social media, and give one social argument for and one against the measure. *(4 marks)*

Q14. *(Stimulus.)* Read the description below.

> **Stimulus.** The *Corrabin Advocate*, the only masthead covering a regional shire of 14,000 people, closes after its owner's advertising revenue falls for a fourth year and its remaining platform payments end. Council meetings, the magistrates' court list and the shire's planning decisions are now covered by nobody. A community-run social media page fills part of the gap; it has no editorial policy, no complaints process and no defamation insurance.

Discuss the social issue raised by the closure, and identify one legal risk carried by the page that replaces it. *(5 marks)*

Q15. Explain what is meant by the claim that "the law lags the technology", referring to **two** developments from the last two years and naming an instrument for each. *(5 marks)*

Q16. *(Stimulus.)* Read the description below.

> **Stimulus.** Tidewell Audio holds fourteen years of recordings of a presenter who retired in 2023. It proposes to train a voice model on those recordings so that new episodes can be produced in her voice, credited as "in the Tidewell voice". Her 2011 contract assigns copyright in the recordings to the company and says nothing about synthesis. She is alive, was not consulted, and objects.

Analyse the legal and ethical issues raised by the proposal. *(6 marks)*

Q17. *(Stimulus.)* Read the description below.

> **Stimulus.** Cobblewren Pictures is producing a six-part documentary series. Facing a shortfall, it replaces a licensed archival sequence with an AI-generated re-creation of a 1974 street scene, and uses a synthesised voice to read letters written by a subject who died in 2019, with permission from her family. The series carries a single line in the closing credits: "Some sequences have been digitally re-created." A broadcaster's compliance team asks whether that is sufficient.

Analyse the ethical issue raised by the disclosure practice described, and explain why the legal position alone does not resolve it. *(6 marks)*

Q18. *(Stimulus.)* Read the two positions below.

> **Position A — a platform submission.** "Verifying the age of every Australian user requires us to collect identity documents or biometric estimates from adults who have done nothing wrong, and to retain that data. A measure intended to protect children will create the largest new store of Australian identity data in a decade, held by companies that are themselves targets."
>
> **Position B — a parents' organisation submission.** "Age assurance is a solved engineering problem and the industry's objection is commercial, not technical. Every other age-restricted product in Australia manages verification. The privacy argument is being used by companies that already hold more data about our children than we do."

Analyse the competing interests in these two positions, including the interest each party does **not** disclose, and reach a defensible position of your own on how age assurance should be done. *(8 marks)*

Q19. *(Extended response.)* Analyse **one** issue in the media industry from the last two years, showing how it operates as a social issue, an ethical issue **and** a legal issue. *(10 marks)*

Your response must include:

- the issue named and dated, with the relevant Australian instrument identified accurately
- all three lenses applied, each justified rather than asserted
- a stakeholder map of at least four parties whose interests genuinely conflict
- a position of your own, including a concession and a statement of what remains unresolved

Issue chosen: ____________________________

Date it moved (and the date you checked): ____________________________

Answers

Q1. *(3 marks.)* (a) A matter concerning effects on groups and on society — work, access, participation, wellbeing, public trust — contested and settled only over time. (b) A matter about what a practitioner or organisation *should* do where the choice is left to them, judged against professional codes, editorial policy and conscience. (c) A matter about what the law permits, requires or forbids, decided by legislation and by courts, and enforceable.

Q2. *(4 marks.)* (a) Roughly 2024 onward. (b) (ii) — the introduction of Australia's first classification system is historical, not within the two-year window, however relevant the topic. (c) Any two of: the date the law commenced or the event occurred; the name of the instrument, code or party; the date you checked; whether a proposal actually became law.

Q3. *(4 marks.)* (a) Lawful and defensible; lawful but indefensible; unlawful but arguably defensible; unlawful and indefensible. (b) (i) lawful and defensible; (ii) lawful but ethically indefensible; (iii) unlawful and indefensible. (c) Because it answers only the legal question. The ethical question — should we have done this? — is separate, and in Australian journalism the law deliberately leaves parts of that field to professional codes.

Q4. *(4 marks.)* (a) 1 name and date it; 2 locate it in the industry; 3 classify it by lens; 4 map the stakeholders; 5 weigh it and take a position. (b)–(c) Own researched issue; the instrument must be named accurately for any legal element. See solutions for a model.

Q5. *(4 marks.)* (a) Any five of: creators and performers; media businesses and publishers; platforms; audiences; the people who are the subject of coverage; workers and their unions; government and regulators; advertisers. (b) Three of: news publishers — lost revenue that funded reporting; platforms — no obligation to pay for content they did not commission; audiences, particularly regional ones — reduced coverage; government — a policy response that does not push a platform to remove news entirely; journalists — jobs. (c) The interests must genuinely conflict; if every stakeholder wants the same thing there is no issue.

Q6. *(4 marks.)* (a) *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth) — reproduction of a substantial part, plus moral rights under Part IX. (b) *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024* (Cth). (c) *Criminal Code Amendment (Deepfake Sexual Material) Act 2024* (Cth) — accept also the *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth) image-based abuse scheme. (d) *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) and the Australian Privacy Principles.

Q7. *(3 marks.)* (a) A technology reaches the industry years before any law addresses it, so for a period the only operating standard is an ethical one; when Parliament acts it usually addresses the harm rather than the technology. (b) The largest distributors are companies based overseas serving many markets from one product, so Australian law reaches conduct connected to Australia but enforcement against a company with no local presence is difficult. (c) Placing obligations on platforms themselves with substantial civil penalties — as the minimum-age obligations in force since 10 December 2025 do.

Q8. *(2 marks.)* Any two, each with its instrument: AI training and copyright (*Copyright Act 1968* (Cth)); minimum age for social media accounts (*Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024* (Cth)); serious invasions of privacy and doxxing (*Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024* (Cth)); non-consensual synthetic sexual material (*Criminal Code Amendment (Deepfake Sexual Material) Act 2024* (Cth)); liability for third-party comments (*Defamation Act 2005* (Vic)). One mark each; the instrument must be named for the mark.

Q9. *(2 marks.)* A legal issue asks what the law permits or forbids and is enforceable; an ethical issue asks what should be done where the law leaves the choice open. One workable example — a streaming service deleting a finished Australian series it owns from its catalogue and releasing it nowhere else — with both questions distinguished.

Q10. *(3 marks.)* Own researched issue, dated within roughly two years, described accurately, with at least one lens named and justified. An undated example, or one where the lens is asserted without a reason, caps the mark at 2.

Q11. *(3 marks.)* The ethical issue is publication of unverified, machine-drafted material about a private person without disclosure — a failure of accuracy, of respect for private grief, and of transparency with the audience. No, the editor's response does not answer the complaint: it addresses legality, and the family's complaint is about accuracy and respect, which are governed by professional standards rather than statute.

Q12. *(4 marks.)* Payment by watch minutes makes distress profitable: the design rewards the creator for filming at a crash scene before families were contacted, and the recommendation system amplifies it because completion rate is its measure of quality. The ethical issue is that the platform has built an incentive that no rule of its own forbids, and has taken the revenue without the editorial responsibility a broadcaster would carry for the same footage. Social consequence: any of — harm to the families; normalising the filming of strangers in crisis; the displacement of slower reporting by material that performs; erosion of trust in what is recommended.

Q13. *(4 marks.)* Practice change: businesses that reached under-16 audiences through platform accounts lost that channel from 10 December 2025 and must reach them through school, family accounts, web, broadcast or other non-restricted channels; the obligation falls on the platform, not the media business, but the audience loss is the media business's. Social argument for: the harm was collective — a young person who wanted to opt out could not while everyone they knew was on the platform — and a rule binding everyone at once removes a social cost no single family could lift. Social argument against: it cuts off young people whose community is online rather than local, and it removes the cheapest channel by which youth media, health services and youth-led creators reached that audience at all.

Q14. *(5 marks.)* Social issue: the loss of the only accountability reporting on a shire of 14,000 — council decisions, court lists and planning now unwatched — which affects the community collectively, not just former readers, and falls hardest on people with least capacity to find information elsewhere. The replacement page carries the same legal exposure as any publisher: under the *Defamation Act 2005* (Vic) a post that causes serious harm to a reputation is actionable, and following *Voller* (2021) the page's operators may be publishers of comments left by others. Since **11 September 2024 s 31A** of that Act offers a digital intermediary a defence — but only one that maintains an accessible complaints mechanism and acts within seven days of a written complaint, and this page has no complaints process, so the one protection available to it is the one it has given up.

Q15. *(5 marks.)* Two developments, each dated and instrumented, plus the general point: the technology arrives first and the law addresses the harm afterwards. Acceptable pairs include synthetic sexual material (*Criminal Code Amendment (Deepfake Sexual Material) Act 2024* (Cth), enacted 2024, long after the technology) and AI training data (*Copyright Act 1968* (Cth), which contains no text and data mining exception and was written decades before the practice). Also creditable: the withdrawn misinformation bill of 2024 as a case where the law did **not** catch up.

Q16. *(6 marks.)* Legal: the company owns copyright in the **recordings** under the assignment, so copying them to build the model is within its own rights, and the 2011 contract is silent on synthesis. Her position under the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth) is weak rather than strong: there is no copyright in the sound of a voice, only in particular recordings, and her performer's moral rights under Part IX subsist in performances she actually gave, not in new episodes she never performed — so the false- attribution provisions are doubtful here, and "in the Tidewell voice" names no person as performer. The realistic avenues are **passing off** and misleading or deceptive conduct under **s 18 of the Australian Consumer Law** (Schedule 2 to the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010* (Cth)), if listeners would take the episodes to be her work or made with her blessing; both need her to establish a reputation in her voice. Australia has no personality or voice right, so this is a **gap** in the law, not a breach of it. Ethical: consent must be specific to the use, informed and revocable; she is alive, available and objecting, and proceeding over an objection because a silent contract permits it is the lawful-but-indefensible box. A strong answer notes that the industry precedent matters more than this one case.

Q17. *(6 marks.)* The ethical issue is whether disclosure adequate for a compliance team is adequate for an audience: a single closing-credit line is placed where almost no viewer will see it, does not distinguish the re-created street scene from the synthesised voice, and does not identify which sequences are affected. Consent from the family covers the family's interest, not the audience's. The legal position does not resolve it because no Australian law as at 2026 requires synthetic content in a documentary to be labelled, and the documentary form's authority rests on an audience's assumption that what they are shown is record — an assumption the law does not protect but the producer relies on.

Q18. *(8 marks.)* Both positions stated at their strongest; the genuine conflict identified (protecting children imposes a privacy cost on adults, and both parties are arguing partly from commercial or organisational interest); at least four stakeholders; recognition that A is right about the data risk while B is right that the objection is not disinterested; a position on the **method** of assurance — retention limits, on-device estimation, a verifier that returns only yes or no, no secondary use — with a concession, ideally that neither submission speaks for people without identity documents, and a statement of what is unresolved. An answer that simply picks a side and dismisses the other cannot reach the top band.

Q19. *(10 marks.)* See Fully-worked solutions for a full model, band descriptors and common errors.

Fully-worked solutions

Q1. (a) A **social issue** concerns the effects of a media practice or change on groups and on society — employment, access to information, participation, wellbeing, public trust — and is settled, if at all, slowly and by argument. (b) An **ethical issue** concerns what a practitioner or organisation *should* do where the decision is left to them; it is judged against professional codes such as the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance Journalist Code of Ethics, editorial policies and conscience, and enforced by complaint, employer and reputation. (c) A **legal issue** concerns what the law permits, requires or forbids; it is decided by Parliament and the courts and can be enforced against you. *Marker's note:* the definitions must not collapse into each other. A student who defines an ethical issue as "something against the rules" has lost the distinction the whole subtopic runs on.

Q2. (a) Roughly **2024 onward** for a class working in 2026. (b) **(ii)**. The introduction of Australia's first classification system is historical background, not an issue from the last two years; it may be mentioned as context but cannot be the example. (i) and (iii) are both inside the window and both are dated precisely, which is what makes them usable. (c) Any two of: the **date** the instrument commenced or the event occurred; the **name** of the Act, code or party involved; the date **you** checked the position; and whether a proposal actually became law. *Marker's note:* the withdrawn 2024 misinformation bill is a good example precisely because nothing passed — the outcome is part of the issue.

Q3. (a) **Lawful and ethically defensible**; **lawful but ethically indefensible**; **unlawful but arguably defensible**; **unlawful and indefensible**. (b) (i) lawful and defensible — the ordinary case. (ii) lawful but ethically indefensible — obtaining the image lawfully does not answer the question of whether broadcasting a stranger's grief repeatedly serves any public interest. (iii) unlawful and indefensible — uploading a clip you do not own reproduces a substantial part of a work without permission under the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth), and no fair dealing exception covers "I liked it". (c) Because legality and ethics are different axes. In Australian journalism this is by design: media organisations acting in the course of journalism are exempt from the Australian Privacy Principles under the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) on condition that they are publicly committed to published privacy standards, so the statute deliberately hands the field to a professional code. Saying "it was legal" in that context does not answer the criticism; it concedes it. *Marker's note:* the top-right box is the one that carries the marks.

Q4. (a) **1** Name and date the issue. **2** Locate it — which part of the industry, which media form, which stage. **3** Classify it by lens, naming an instrument for any legal element. **4** Map the stakeholders and their conflicting interests. **5** Weigh it and take a position. (b)–(c) *Model response (researched issue: the ending of platform payments for Australian news):* **1** From March 2024 a major global platform declined to renew the commercial deals it had struck with Australian news businesses; in December 2024 the Commonwealth announced it would design a News Bargaining Incentive in response; and draft legislation for that Incentive was still out for consultation in 2026, unpassed. Note how much of the dating that last clause does — announced in 2024, drafted by 2026, law in neither year. **2** The issue sits at **distribution** and at the **financing** of news production; it affects publishers of all sizes but bites hardest on regional mastheads with the thinnest advertising base. **3** It is **legal** — the bargaining code inserted into the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010* (Cth) by the *Treasury Laws Amendment (News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code) Act 2021* (Cth) remains in force, but its designation mechanism proved a blunt instrument against a platform willing to walk away from news; it is **economic and social** — the money paid for journalism funded reporting, so its withdrawal reduces coverage of communities rather than the profits of publishers alone; and it is **ethical** at the margins, in what a newsroom owes a community it can no longer afford to cover. *Marker's note:* step 1 must contain a date and step 3 must contain an instrument. Both are checkable, and both are where answers thin out.

Q5. (a) Any five of: **creators and performers**; **media businesses and publishers**; **platforms**; **audiences**; **the people who are the subject of coverage**; **workers and their unions**; **government**; **advertisers**. (b) *News publishers* — the payments funded reporting they cannot otherwise finance; *platforms* — no obligation to pay for material they did not commission and say they do not need; *regional audiences* — the coverage that disappears is the coverage of their own council and courts. Also creditable: journalists (employment), government (a policy response that does not prompt a platform to drop news altogether). (c) The interests must **genuinely conflict**. If every stakeholder wants the same outcome, what you have found is a problem to be solved, not an issue to be analysed. *Marker's note:* a stakeholder list with no conflict in it is the most common way an otherwise competent answer stalls at mid-band.

Q6. (a) The *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth): training ordinarily involves reproducing a substantial part of each photograph, and Australia has narrow **fair dealing** exceptions rather than fair use. The photographer's **moral rights** under Part IX are also in play, but only through the same acts — reproducing, publishing or communicating the photographs — so they give no separate answer where the substantial-part question is disputed, and output that merely imitates the photographer's style engages no moral right at all, because copyright does not protect style. (b) The *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024* (Cth), whose obligations on age-restricted platforms commenced **10 December 2025**. (c) The *Criminal Code Amendment (Deepfake Sexual Material) Act 2024* (Cth); the image-based abuse scheme under the *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth) is also correct, and an answer naming both is stronger. (d) The *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) and its Australian Privacy Principles, which govern collection, notice and use for a secondary purpose. *Marker's note:* accuracy in the citation is the mark. "Some privacy law" earns nothing; the Act, the year and the jurisdiction earn everything.

Q7. (a) A media technology reaches the industry and its audiences years before any law addresses it. During that gap the only standard operating is an ethical one — a code, an editorial policy, a decision by a producer — and when Parliament eventually legislates it usually targets a specific **harm** rather than the technology itself, which is why the resulting law can look narrow. (b) The industry is global and the law is national. Australian law can reach conduct connected to Australia, but the largest distributors of media are companies headquartered overseas that serve every market from one product, so an Australian rule may be met with a global product that does not accommodate it, and enforcement against an entity with no local presence is slow and uncertain. (c) By placing obligations directly on the **platforms** and backing them with substantial civil penalties, as the minimum-age obligations in force since 10 December 2025 do. *Marker's note:* the strongest answers note that placing the obligation on platforms is itself a contested choice, since it makes a private company the enforcer of a public rule.

Q8. *"Identify" wants two, named, one mark each.* Two legal issues facing the Australian industry as at 2026 are **whether training a generative model on published work infringes copyright**, under the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth), which contains no text and data mining exception; and **the minimum age of 16 for social media accounts**, imposed on platforms by the *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024* (Cth) from 10 December 2025. *Marker's note:* an issue named without an instrument is half an answer. Do not accept "AI" or "privacy" as an issue — name what is contested.

Q9. *"Outline" wants the distinction briefly, carried by one example.* A **legal issue** asks what the law permits or forbids and can be enforced by a court; an **ethical issue** asks what should be done where the law leaves the decision to the practitioner. Take a streaming service that removes a finished Australian series it commissioned from its catalogue and releases it nowhere else. The legal question — may we do this? — is answered yes: the service holds the rights it needs and no Australian law obliges a rights holder to keep a title available. The ethical question — should we? — is not answered at all: the crew and cast can no longer show work they were hired to make, the subscribers who paid for it lose it, and a piece of Australian production stops existing in public. *Marker's note:* two marks, two questions. An answer that gives only the example without the distinction cannot get both.

Q10. *(3 marks; own researched issue.) Model response (researched issue: doxxing offences, Commonwealth, December 2024):* Following a series of incidents in which lists of private individuals' names, addresses and workplaces were published online, the Commonwealth amended the Criminal Code in December 2024 to create offences of using a carriage service to make available another person's personal data in a way reasonable people would regard as menacing or harassing, with a higher maximum where the person is targeted because of a protected attribute such as race or religion. The issue is **legal**, because a new offence with a commencement date now applies to conduct that was previously addressed only patchily; it is also **ethical** for media organisations, because publishing identifying details is a routine editorial decision that now carries a criminal dimension as well as a professional one. *Marker's note:* three marks want the issue described accurately, dated within the window, and at least one lens **justified**. "It is a legal issue because it involves the law" is a restatement, not a justification.

Q11. *"Explain" wants the ethical issue and then a judgement on the response.* The ethical issue is that Stannock Press has published unverified claims about a private person, in a form the audience believes to be reported, without telling anyone that the column is machine-drafted. Three professional standards are engaged at once: **accuracy** — the club membership and the number of children are simply wrong, and no human checked either against the family; **respect for private grief** — an obituary is published at the moment a family is least able to absorb a public error; and **transparency** — readers are entitled to know the basis on which what they read was produced, and a masthead's authority rests on that assumption.

The editor's response does not answer the complaint. "No law has been broken" may well be correct: no Australian statute as at 2026 requires disclosure of machine-drafted copy, and an inaccurate obituary is not defamatory of a deceased person. But the family's complaint is not a legal complaint. It is that the paper was careless with a life and did not say how the words were made — and both of those are governed by professional standards rather than statute. This is the lawful-but-indefensible box, and the editor has answered the only question nobody asked. *Marker's note:* the mark for the second half is for identifying the mismatch between the complaint and the answer, not for saying the editor was rude.

Q12. *"Explain" the design, then name a consequence.* The ethical issue is created by the design rather than by any rule being broken. Paying creators by **total watch minutes** makes attention the only measure of value, and material filmed at the scene of a crash holds attention better than almost anything else — so Loomstack has built a direct financial incentive to film strangers at the worst moment of their lives and publish before anyone has been contacted. The **recommendation system** compounds it: having no category for this material, it treats high completion as evidence of quality and promotes the clip further, which raises the payment, which rewards the behaviour again. The platform has taken the revenue that flows from that footage while carrying none of the editorial responsibility a broadcaster would carry for the same thirty seconds — no duty to contact families first, no obligation to weigh public interest, no complaints process the families can use.

One social consequence: the families involved learn of a death, or see the scene, through a promoted clip. Equally creditable — the normalising of filming strangers in crisis; the displacement of slower and more careful reporting by material that simply performs better; or a general erosion of trust in what a recommendation system puts in front of an audience. *Marker's note:* "the platform should have rules" is not the answer. The point is that the **incentive**, not a gap in the rules, is doing the damage, and that a platform can design harm without prohibiting anything.

Q13. *"Explain" the change in practice, then one argument each way.* Since **10 December 2025** the *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024* (Cth) has required age-restricted social media platforms to take reasonable steps to prevent Australians under 16 holding accounts. The obligation falls on the platform, not on media businesses — but the consequence lands on any business whose route to a young audience ran through those accounts. A youth news service, a school-holiday campaign, a young-adult publisher or a creator whose following was built on a platform now reaches under-16s only through channels that are not age-restricted: the open web, broadcast, streaming, school-based distribution, or a parent's account. Audience strategies built over a decade had to be rebuilt in a year, and the businesses least able to absorb that are the smallest.

A social argument for. The harm the measure targets was **collective**, which is why individual choice had not fixed it. A fourteen-year-old who wanted no account could not realistically refuse one while every friendship, invitation and in-joke ran through the platform, and no single family could lift that cost by itself. A rule that binds everybody at the same moment removes the penalty for opting out — it changes the default for a cohort rather than asking each household to hold a line alone.

A social argument against. The young people who lose most are the ones whose community is online rather than local: those in small towns, those who cannot easily leave the house, and those whose sense of themselves was built somewhere other than the school ground. For them the account was not entertainment but the network. And the loss is not only theirs — the cheapest route by which youth media, health services and youth-led creators ever reached that audience closes with it, and the substitutes reach fewer of them at higher cost. *Marker's note:* four marks want the practice change *and* both arguments, and the arguments must be **social** — about groups and effects — not a restatement of the legal or privacy objection. An answer that only argues about whether the ban is good has answered half the question.

Q14. *"Discuss" wants the issue developed and a position reached, then the legal risk named.* The closure of the *Corrabin Advocate* is a social issue because the loss falls on the community as a whole, not on former readers as individuals. A shire's council decisions, planning determinations and court lists are the material a community uses to hold its institutions to account, and the only organisation being paid to attend them has stopped. Nobody's individual media diet is much poorer — national news is more available than ever — but the specific information about *this* place, which no national outlet has any reason to gather, simply ceases to exist. The effect is uneven: people with time, confidence and connections will still find out what council decided; people without them will not, and they are usually the people the decisions affect most. The economic cause is worth stating precisely, because it dates the issue — advertising revenue that moved to platforms over years, and platform payments for news that ended from 2024.

The community page that replaces it carries the legal exposure of a publisher without any of the apparatus. Under the *Defamation Act 2005* (Vic), a publication that causes **serious harm** to a person's reputation is actionable, and the volunteer who runs the page is a publisher of what they post. Following *Fairfax Media Publications Pty Ltd v Voller* (2021), the operator of a public page may also be a publisher of **comments left by others** — which for an unmoderated page about a council dispute is a substantial risk.

Note what has changed since *Voller*, because it dates the answer and sharpens it. Victoria's digital intermediary reforms commenced on **11 September 2024**, and **s 31A** of the *Defamation Act 2005* (Vic) now gives a digital intermediary — which the operator of a page hosting other people's comments will ordinarily be — a defence if it maintains an **accessible complaints mechanism** and takes reasonable access-prevention steps, such as removing or blocking the comment, within **seven days** of a written complaint. The stimulus states that the page has no complaints process. So the single protection Parliament built for exactly this situation is the one this page has forfeited, and with no editorial policy and no insurance behind it, one action could end both the page and the volunteer's finances. *Marker's note:* five marks want the social analysis to say **who** is affected and how unevenly, and the legal risk to be named with its instrument. "People won't know what's happening" is the start of the answer, not the answer. Citing *Voller* alone is now a half-current answer: the strongest responses reach s 31A and notice that the stimulus has been built so the defence fails.

Q15. *"Explain" the claim, then two dated developments with instruments.* The claim is that media technologies reach the industry and the public years before any law addresses them, so for a period the only standard governing their use is an ethical one, and the law that eventually arrives is written about a specific harm rather than about the technology.

Development one: synthetic sexual material. The tools for convincingly altering a person's image were in general use well before Australian law addressed the practice specifically; the *Criminal Code Amendment (Deepfake Sexual Material) Act 2024* (Cth) criminalised sharing sexually explicit material of an adult without consent, including material created or altered by technology. Note the shape of the response: Parliament legislated against a **harm**, not against synthesis, so a great deal of other synthetic content — including a synthesised voice in a documentary — remains outside it.

Development two: training data. Generative models trained on published work were in commercial use across the media industry before any Australian legislative decision was made about whether that training infringes copyright. The *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth) was written decades before the practice and contains no text and data mining exception; the Productivity Commission floated creating one in **August 2025**, the Attorney-General ruled it out on **26 October 2025**, and the question of a licensing scheme went to the Copyright and Artificial Intelligence Reference Group, where it sat unlegislated as at **2026**. Here the lag is undisguised: the Act has not been amended for the technology at all, no court has decided whether training infringes, and the industry has been operating on commercial judgement throughout.

Also creditable: the *Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2024*, withdrawn in November 2024, as a case where the law did not catch up at all. *Marker's note:* five marks need the general claim **and** two properly instrumented examples. A student who names two technologies without naming a law has described change, not lag.

Q16. *"Analyse" wants both lenses broken out and set against each other.* Tidewell Audio's proposal turns on a question its 2011 contract never contemplated, and the legal and ethical answers point in different directions.

Legally, the uncomfortable answer is that the company's position is the stronger one, and saying so is the analysis. The assignment gives Tidewell copyright in the **recordings**, so it owns the material it proposes to copy into a training set; the contract's silence on synthesis leaves a construction question about what the company may *do* with the model, but silence is not a prohibition either.

Two routes students reach for do less work than they expect. First, the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth) protects **recordings, not voices**: there is no copyright in the sound of a person's voice, so a convincing soundalike that reproduces no particular recording infringes nothing. Second, **moral rights** under Part IX are indeed personal and are **not** transferred with copyright — but a performer's moral rights subsist in performances the performer actually gave and in recordings of them. New episodes she never performed are not a recorded performance of hers, so no performer's moral right subsists in them; and the false-attribution provisions bite through *naming* a person as performer, which "in the Tidewell voice" pointedly avoids doing. Her Part IX position over the new episodes is therefore doubtful, not squarely engaged. Where Part IX does still reach is the archive itself: her rights of attribution and integrity in the fourteen years of actual recordings remain hers, whatever the assignment says about copyright.

What is genuinely available is outside the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth) altogether. The common law tort of **passing off**, and **s 18 of the Australian Consumer Law** (misleading or deceptive conduct, in Schedule 2 to the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010* (Cth)), may both be open if listeners would take the new episodes to be her work or made with her blessing — but each requires her to establish a reputation in the sound of her voice and damage to it, which is why the position is arguable rather than clear. Australia recognises no personality right and no right in a voice as such; some overseas jurisdictions have legislated one, and Australia had not as at **2026**. That is the honest legal picture: this is a **gap** in Australian law rather than a breach of it — this subtopic's "the law lags the technology" pressure operating inside a single contract.

Ethically, the case is clearer. Consent to a use of your voice must be **specific** to that use, **informed** about what it enables, and capable of being **withdrawn**. None of the three is satisfied here: the presenter is alive, was not asked, and objects. Proceeding because a fourteen-year-old contract fails to forbid it is a decision to rely on a technicality against a known objection — the lawful-but-indefensible position. There is also an industry dimension larger than this one presenter. If a company can synthesise a performer from an old archive without a fresh negotiation, then every performer's back catalogue becomes a permanent, unpaid supply of future work, and consent becomes something you gave once, long ago, to something you could not have imagined.

Position: Tidewell should not proceed without a fresh, specific, revocable and paid agreement, whatever the contract permits — and the weakness of her legal position is the reason, not the answer. Where the law has not caught up, the ethical standard is the only one operating, which is precisely the argument for negotiating a term now rather than waiting to be told to. *Marker's note:* six marks need **both** lenses and the tension between them, and the tension is sharpest when the legal limb is reported honestly. Two errors cost marks equally: arguing that the company owns the recordings and stopping, which answers the copyright question and ignores consent and precedent; and asserting that her moral rights are breached, which sounds authoritative and is not supportable — Part IX protects performances she gave, not episodes she never recorded.

Q17. *"Analyse" the disclosure practice, then explain why legality does not settle it.* The ethical issue is not that Cobblewren Pictures used synthetic material — a re-created street scene and a synthesised reading may both be legitimate documentary techniques — but that the **disclosure is calibrated to the producer's convenience rather than to the audience's understanding**. A single line in the closing credits fails on three counts. It is **placed** where the smallest possible number of viewers will encounter it, after most have stopped watching. It is **imprecise**: "some sequences" does not tell a viewer which ones, so a viewer who does read it must now distrust everything, which is a worse outcome than a specific admission. And it **conflates two different things** — an invented image of a 1974 street, which no camera recorded, and a synthesised voice performing words a real person actually wrote — which carry quite different claims on the audience's trust.

The family's permission is relevant but does not cover this. Their consent addresses the family's interest in their relative's words and voice; it says nothing about the audience's interest in knowing what they are hearing. Two parties are owed something here, and the producer has satisfied only one.

The legal position does not resolve the issue because there is very little legal position to rely on. As at 2026 no Australian law requires synthetic content in a documentary to be labelled, and the producer has permission from the family and, presumably, rights in the material it generated. That means the entire weight falls on professional judgement — and on the fact that the documentary form's authority rests on an audience assumption the law does not protect: that what they are shown is **record**. A producer who relies on that assumption while quietly weakening its basis is trading on credit built by the form, and the compliance team's instinct is right. The defensible practice is disclosure the audience will actually meet — an on-screen note at the point of use, distinguishing re-creation from synthesis — rather than a line that satisfies a lawyer. *Marker's note:* six marks want the disclosure analysed as *inadequate in a specific way*, not merely called inadequate, and want the "no law requires it" point turned into the reason ethics must decide it.

Q18. *"Analyse" both positions and reach a defensible position of your own.* Each submission is strongest where the other is silent, and each has an interest it does not disclose.

Position A is right about the mechanism. Enforcing an age rule requires verifying age, and verifying age at national scale means adults handing over identity documents or submitting to biometric estimation. That creates a store of Australian identity data that did not previously exist, held by companies that are prime targets, in a country that has had large data breaches in recent years. A measure aimed at protecting children therefore imposes a real cost on every adult user, and this is a genuine, not a rhetorical, objection. What A does not say is that platforms have a direct commercial interest in not losing a growth audience, and that the privacy argument is available to them regardless of whether they believe it.

Position B is right about interest but weak about engineering. Its strongest point is that the objection is not disinterested: companies that have built businesses on detailed behavioural data about young users are poorly placed to present themselves as defenders of privacy, and the comparison with other age-restricted products is fair as far as it goes. Its weakness is the claim that age assurance is "solved". Verifying the age of a person buying alcohol in a shop is a different problem from verifying the age of every account holder in a country continuously and without excluding people who have no documents — and B's confidence is doing work that evidence has not yet done.

Stakeholders: young people (connection and information against exposure to harm); adults (a privacy cost imposed on them for someone else's protection); platforms (compliance cost, audience loss, and reluctance to hold identity data); parents (a rule with force behind it); government (an enforceable obligation on a company outside its jurisdiction); people without identity documents (exclusion from services if verification becomes universal).

Position: both submissions argue about the wrong thing. Neither party is really disputing whether under-16s should hold accounts — A does not defend that and B does not need to — so the question worth answering is the one the stem asks: how assurance should be built. A's objection is answered by **design**, not by dismissal. Age can be estimated on the device and the estimate discarded; a third-party verifier can return a bare yes or no without the platform ever seeing a document; and reuse of assurance data for any other purpose can be prohibited outright. Each of those is a real engineering constraint that A's submission does not ask for and B's confidence assumes away. **The concession:** none of it helps the people A and B both leave out — Australians with no usable identity documents, for whom "verify or be excluded" is exclusion, and who appear in neither submission because neither party speaks for them. That is where a rule aimed at children starts deciding who gets to use the internet at all, and it should be answered before universal verification, not after. What remains unresolved is whether estimation is accurate enough at the 15-to-17 boundary to carry a legal obligation, and who audits a platform's assurance system when the platform is also the party marking its own work. *Marker's note:* eight marks require both positions stated at their strongest, the undisclosed interest of each identified, four or more stakeholders, and a position containing a concession. A response that picks a side and rubbishes the other cannot reach the top band however fluent it is. This item is **not** Worked Example 2: that one asks whether the measure is justified, this one asks how it should be implemented and what each advocate is not telling you. Recycling the Example 2 position here answers a question that was not asked.

Q19. *Command term — analyse:* break one issue into its social, ethical and legal dimensions, show how those dimensions act on each other, and reach a position.

Issue chosen: the media's exemption from Australia's new privacy action — what it demands of a newsroom, and which publishers are inside it Date it moved (and the date checked): action available from 10 June 2025; position as at 2026

Model response (10 marks).

The issue, named and dated. Since **10 June 2025** an Australian whose seclusion has been intruded upon, or whose private information has been misused, has been able to sue for a **serious invasion of privacy** under Schedule 2 of the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth), inserted by the *Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024* (Cth) (assented **10 December 2024**). Journalists, together with their employers and employees, are **exempt** where the invasion involved the collection, preparation or publication of journalistic material. So Australians now have a privacy remedy against nearly everybody except the media, and the industry is arguing about what that exemption asks of a newsroom in return and which publishers it actually covers. That is the issue: not privacy in general, but the media's carve-out from a right everyone else now has — a question about what practitioners must do, which is why it belongs here rather than in the Unit 4 argument about how the media should be regulated as a system.

Legal. The instrument is precise and the elements are the argument. Under Schedule 2 a plaintiff must show an intrusion on seclusion or a misuse of information, in circumstances where they had a **reasonable expectation of**

privacy; that the invasion was **serious**; that it was **intentional or reckless** — carelessness is not enough; and that the public interest in their privacy **outweighs** any countervailing public interest, which the Act says expressly includes freedom of expression and freedom of the media. Damages for non-economic loss are capped by reference to the defamation cap, and defamation-style defences are available where the invasion was a publication. This sits on top of the older architecture: the Australian Privacy Principles, from which media organisations acting in the course of journalism are already exempt under **s 7B(4)** of the same Act, on condition that the organisation is publicly committed to observing published privacy standards.

What is legally unresolved is the boundary. The exemption is drawn around *journalistic material*, and Australia licenses no journalists and keeps no register, so whether a one-person newsletter, a podcaster, an independent investigative site or a community page reporting on its council falls inside it is a question no Australian court had answered on Schedule 2 as at **2026**. Nor has any court applied the seriousness or recklessness thresholds to a media defendant, which means the practical size of the exemption is currently a matter of prediction rather than law.

Ethical. The exemption is a bargain, not a gift, and s 7B(4) says so on its face by conditioning the older exemption on a public commitment to published standards. Schedule 2 makes the same assumption silently: that journalism regulates itself. Where the statute steps back, the operating standard is the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance **Journalist Code of Ethics** — respect for private grief and personal privacy, no exploitation of a person's vulnerability, and an override available only for substantial advancement of the public interest **or** risk of substantial harm to people. The ethical question is therefore not *may we intrude* but *is this newsroom actually running the standard its exemption assumes*, and the honest test of that is the one the Code implies: can we name the substantial public interest before we knock, rather than after the story rates?

Social. Two effects fall on groups rather than individuals. First, an action you must fund is a protection distributed by means: a person with a lawyer can now vindicate their privacy, and the people most exposed to intrusive coverage — the bereaved, the accused, the poor, people in crisis — are usually the people least able to bring proceedings. A reform framed as protecting everyone protects some considerably more than others. Second, the exemption's uncertain edge falls hardest on the smallest publishers. A metropolitan masthead has counsel and insurance and can afford to be inside a grey area; a volunteer running the only page covering a shire cannot, and the rational response to uncertainty is to publish less. The chilling effect therefore lands on exactly the local scrutiny that is already thinnest, while the reporting most likely to attract a claim — filming inside an institution, doorstepping, using leaked documents — is the reporting that holds power to account.

Stakeholders. *People who are the subject of coverage* gained a remedy on 10 June 2025 that did not previously exist, and want it to reach media conduct too. *Established media businesses* want the exemption kept wide and certain, so that editorial judgement is not made in the shadow of a claim. *Independent journalists, freelancers and community publishers* need the exemption most and can least afford to litigate about whether they have it. *Platforms, influencers and non-journalist publishers* get no exemption at all, yet are frequently the parties actually doing the intruding — the asymmetry runs the opposite way to the harm. *Audiences* have an interest they are never asked about: that reporting which requires intrusion remains possible at all. *Parliament and the courts* had to draw a line around journalism without defining who a journalist is.

Position. The exemption should stay, and it should be **earned rather than assumed**. Its justification is that the law deliberately leaves this field to professional ethics, and that justification only holds while a professional standard is genuinely operating — so the Schedule 2 exemption should be conditioned the way s 7B(4) already conditions the older one: on the publisher being publicly committed to a published privacy standard and to a complaints process an ordinary member of the public can actually use. That is a real obligation, and it would put some current publishers outside the exemption. **The concession, and it is a serious one:** any conditional exemption hands somebody the power to decide who counts as a journalist, and a body deciding that in a country with no register is a worse thing than an exemption that is too wide. If the choice is between an over-broad carve-out and a licensing effect on journalism, the over-broad carve-out is the lesser harm, and my position is only defensible if the condition can be administered without becoming a gate. What remains unresolved is whether "journalistic material" reaches a one-person newsletter or a community page; whether the seriousness and recklessness thresholds will keep ordinary reporting out of court, which no Australian decision had tested as at 2026; and whether the ethical standard the exemption presumes is enforced by anything beyond reputation.

Band descriptors (out of 10):

- **High (8–10):** issue named and dated inside the window, with an Australian instrument cited accurately; all three lenses applied and each justified with evidence rather than asserted; four or more stakeholders whose interests genuinely conflict; a position containing a real concession and a statement of what is unresolved; precise media and legal language throughout.
- **Mid (5–7):** issue current and broadly accurate, but one lens thin or asserted; an instrument named loosely or without a date; stakeholders listed without conflict between them; a position stated but not defended, or defended without conceding anything.
- **Low (1–4):** retells a controversy; no instrument named, or one named incorrectly; example outside the two-year window; lenses conflated, particularly legal and ethical; opinion in place of analysis.

Common errors: choosing an issue outside the two-year window, or failing to date it at all; naming "AI" or "privacy" as the issue instead of naming what is **contested** about it; citing a bill as though it were law — announced, introduced, passed, commenced and enforced are five different things — and the matching error of treating a minister's announced policy, such as ruling a copyright exception out in October 2025, as though it had amended the Act; **overstating a legal conclusion**, which reads as confidence and marks as inaccuracy: claiming a moral right is breached where no work was reproduced, or that a performer's voice is protected when Australia has no voice right, when the accurate and better-rewarded answer is that the law has a gap here; treating "no law was broken" as a complete answer, which concedes the ethical question rather than answering it; listing stakeholders whose interests all point the same way, which shows there was no issue; and drifting into the general influence of technology on audiences and industries, which belongs to 13A and 13B, or into the regulation of the media as a system, which is Unit 4 work.

Topic 6 Test — Media and change (Unit 2, Area of Study 3)

*This test demonstrates **Unit 2 Outcome 3**: discuss the influence of new media technologies on society, audiences, the individual, media industries and institutions.*

Total 40 marks. Working time: 55 minutes. Answer all questions in the spaces provided. This is an in-class task completed within a limited timeframe. Materials: pen only, plus — at your teacher's discretion — a single A4 page of dated evidence notes for Question 9 (see the note below).

*This test is cumulative over **Chapters 12 and 13** only: the nature and forms of new media technologies; the characteristics of new media audiences; audience interaction and engagement across converging media forms; the influence of technological development on audiences, on the individual, and on media industries and institutions; and social, ethical and legal issues in the media industry.*

All assessment at Units 1 and 2 is school-based, and the procedures for determining levels of achievement are a matter for your school. There is no VCAA examination at Units 1 and 2, and this test is not reported to the VCAA.

> **Teacher note — currency.** Question 9 requires **current** evidence, because the key knowledge it draws on is dated by construction ("in the last two years"). The questions, model solutions and sources in this test are written to public record **as at July 2026**, and every real-world claim carries its date. Refresh the evidence each year using the method taught in 13C: start from the **instrument** rather than the headline; check whether a proposal actually became law; record the date you checked; replace anything older than two years. The *question* does not need to change — only the evidence does.

Part 1 — short responses

Part 1 is worth 7 marks.

Question 1 (2 marks)

Outline what the study design means by the term **new media**.

Question 2 (3 marks)

The study design states that audiences are media consumers, producers and products, often simultaneously.

Using **one** action by a single audience member, explain how all three roles can be occupied at once.

Question 3 (2 marks)

Explain the difference between audience **interaction** and audience **engagement**. In your response, state why a count of interactions is not a measurement of engagement.

Part 2 — a platform scenario

Part 2 is worth 16 marks. Use Stimulus A to answer Questions 4 to 7.

> **Stimulus A — Quillmarsh.** *Quillmarsh, Halverstone Media and Ilona Craddock are constructed for this test. They are not real services, organisations or people.*
>
> **Quillmarsh** is a convergent media platform. One application carries three things: short vertical video; **rooms**, which are scheduled live audio broadcasts a listener can ask to speak in; and a written notes feed. Anything published in any of the three can be lifted into either of the others by any account, using tools built into the application — forty seconds of a live room becomes a captioned video, a note becomes an image.
>
> A Quillmarsh feed is assembled by a recommendation system, so most of what an account is shown comes from accounts it does not follow. Quillmarsh sells advertising against the feed and pays a share of it to any account whose material is watched past a monthly threshold of minutes.

Until March 2025, a room left nothing behind. The lift tools worked only while a room was running, so only a listener who was present could take anything out of it, and once it ended nothing said in it could be found, replayed or quoted except from memory.

From April 2025, every room is recorded and transcribed by the application as it runs, and both the recording and the transcript are kept. They are searchable inside Quillmarsh and are indexed by search engines outside it, so a sentence spoken in a room can be found under a speaker's name months later — and any account may now lift forty seconds out of any room ever held, whether or not it was there.

Every publisher on Quillmarsh has a dashboard reporting, item by item, how many accounts opened it, how far each account got, where they stopped, and what they opened next. Audience members are given nothing equivalent about themselves.

Halverstone Media publishes one regional Victorian masthead. It closed its Wednesday print edition in 2024 and now publishes to its own website, to an email edition, and to Quillmarsh, where two staff make vertical clips of the paper's council and court reporting. By mid-2026, Quillmarsh accounts for about a third of the people who read a Halverstone story in a week. Since April 2025 the shire council, the district's state member and its largest employer have each begun holding their own Quillmarsh rooms, and the transcript of each one is public within minutes of it ending. For sixty years the masthead had been the only organisation with somebody in the council chamber and a notebook.

Ilona Craddock is 17 and lives in the same district. She joined Quillmarsh in 2024 as an audience member, sitting in rooms and clipping the moments that mattered as they happened. Since April 2025 she works from the recordings instead: she can search a two-hour meeting she never attended, find the forty seconds that matter and caption them. One of her clips has been shown to more accounts than the Halverstone masthead reaches in a month. She posts to a schedule to stay above the revenue-share threshold, moderates the replies to her own videos herself, and has twice been asked by Halverstone for permission to republish her footage.

Question 4 (3 marks)

a. Identify **three** new media technologies described in Stimulus A, and place each one in the chain of creation, production, distribution, engagement with, consumption or reception. 2 marks

b. Name the kind of convergence Quillmarsh itself demonstrates, and state what has come together. 1 mark

Question 5 (4 marks)

Explain how the change Quillmarsh made in April 2025 altered the ways its audience interacts with the platform. In your response, name the **affordance** the change created, and refer to at least **two** different modes of interaction.

Question 6 (5 marks)

Analyse the influence of the April 2025 change on Quillmarsh's **audiences** and on **Ilona Craddock as an individual**. In your response, state whether the influence runs the same way at the two scales.

Question 7 (4 marks)

Explain how the April 2025 change influenced **Halverstone Media as a media institution**, and state one consequence for the regional news **industry** it belongs to. Name the pressure point struck.

Part 3 — an issue in the media industry

Part 3 is worth 5 marks. Use Stimulus B to answer Question 8.

Stimulus B — the archive offer. *Constructed for this test.*

A company that builds generative models approaches **Halverstone Media**. It offers a single payment for a licence to use the masthead's complete photographic archive — sixty-one years, every frame from 1965 to now, about 240,000 images — as training material. The payment offered is larger than Halverstone's annual editorial budget, and the masthead's advertising revenue fell again last year.

Halverstone's editor checks the files. A little over half the archive by volume was made before 1998. Most of the images throughout are the work of staff photographers employed by the masthead. Roughly a third were commissioned from freelancers, who were paid a fee for each picture under agreements that say nothing about any use beyond the paper. Several of those freelancers still work in the district.

The company asks that the arrangement not be announced.

Question 8 (5 marks)

Analyse the issue facing Halverstone Media. In your response, classify the issue under at least **two** of the three lenses — social, ethical and legal — name an Australian instrument for anything you classify as legal, and reach a position.

Part 4 — extended discussion

Part 4 is worth 12 marks.

Question 9 (12 marks)

"New media technologies have given Australian audiences more, and Australian media institutions less."

Discuss this statement.

Your response must:

- name at least **two** specific new media technologies or technological developments — a capability or a practice, not "the internet" or "social media"
- discuss the influence on **audiences or the individual** *and* on **media industries or institutions**
- use at least **two** pieces of current evidence, each **dated** — an Act and when its obligations commenced, a dated government or regulator decision, or a dated published report — and state when you checked it
- include at least one **counter-current**: something a development gave an institution, something it took from an audience, or something that did not change
- reach a position.

Evidence 1 (what it is, and its date): ____

Evidence 2 (what it is, and its date): ____

Date I checked this evidence: ____

End of test

Topic 6 Test — Solutions

Command terms in this test

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority publishes a Glossary of command terms used across VCE study designs and examinations. Units 1 and 2 have no VCAA examination and therefore no examiners' report, so the definitions below are the working definitions used throughout this series, written to be consistent with that glossary. Every model response is built to the depth its term demands.

Term	Working definition	Used at
Outline	Give the main features or general principles briefly, leaving out the detail.	Q1 (2)
Identify	Name or recognise something accurately. Naming is the task; explanation is not required unless asked for.	Q4a (2), Q4b (1)
Explain	Account for **how** or **why** something occurs — make the process or the reason clear, not merely the features.	Q2 (3), Q3 (2), Q5 (4), Q7 (4)
Analyse	Identify the key components and the significance of the relationships between them; draw out and relate implications, and determine the logic and reasonableness of the information.	Q6 (5), Q8 (5)
Discuss	Present a clear, considered and balanced argument that identifies issues and shows the strengths and weaknesses of, or the points for and against, one or more arguments or positions. Weigh up the evidence before reaching a conclusion.	Q9 (12)

Mark allocation

Part	Question	Command term	Subtopic	Marks
1	1	Outline	12A	2
1	2	Explain	12B	3
1	3	Explain	12C	2
1	**Part 1 total**			**7**
2	4a	Identify	12A	2
2	4b	Identify	12A	1
2	5	Explain	12C	4
2	6	Analyse	13A	5
2	7	Explain	13B	4
2	**Part 2 total**			**16**
3	8	Analyse	13C	5
3	**Part 3 total**			**5**
4	9	Discuss	12A–13C	12
4	**Part 4 total**			**12**

Part	Question	Command term	Subtopic	Marks
	Test total			**40**

Part 1: 2 + 3 + 2 = 7. Part 2: (2 + 1) + 4 + 5 + 4 = 16. Part 3: 5. Part 4: 12. Test total: 7 + 16 + 5 + 12 = 40.

Coverage of the outcome's five targets: **society** — Q8, Q9; **audiences** — Q2, Q3, Q5, Q6, Q9; **the individual** — Q6, Q9; **media industries and institutions** — Q7, Q8, Q9.

Solutions

Question 1 (2 marks)

Command term — outline: the main features, briefly. There are two halves, and both are needed.

Model response. **New media** is a term that applies to **contemporary technology used by media producers and audiences**, and to the **social, cultural and economic practices that arise from these contemporary forms**. "Contemporary" is a claim about current use rather than about a launch date, and the second half is not decoration: the practices that grow up around a technology — what people do with it, and how money moves through it — are part of what the term names.

Marks: 1 — contemporary technology used by producers **and** audiences (both parties required). 1 — the practices clause, named as social, cultural and economic.

Common errors: giving only the technology half, which answers a third of the definition and is the most costly single error in this chapter; listing devices instead of defining the term; treating "new" as a date rather than as a relation to the pre-existing forms a technology arrived among; answering "new media" with "social media", which leaves out streaming, podcasting, games, on-demand apps, immersive products, generative tools and recommendation systems.

Question 2 (3 marks)

Command term — explain: a chain, not three labels. One action, and all three roles found inside it.

Model response. Take one action on Quillmarsh: an audience member watches a live room about restoring a stock fence, clips forty seconds of it into a captioned video, and posts it.

She is a **consumer**, because a media product made by somebody else was taken in and understood, and she settled the terms on which that happened — which room, which minute, which device. She is a **producer**, because a second media product now exists that did not exist before, made and issued by her — **user-generated content** — and issuing it is itself **distribution**, the function that once required a transmitter, a press or a truck. She is a **product** twice over: the watching and the posting are logged against her account, and that log is what makes her attention saleable against the advertising Quillmarsh runs beside the feed; and the clip itself is now stock Quillmarsh holds an audience with, having commissioned nothing and paid nobody for it.

Because all three descriptions are true of the same forty seconds, the roles are positions occupied at once rather than stages she moves through — which is exactly what "simultaneously" claims.

Marks: 1 — consumer, anchored to the named action. 1 — producer, including publication as distribution (credit the term *user-generated content*). 1 — product, covering both mechanisms: recorded behaviour sold as attention, and the upload as unpaid stock. All three must attach to **one** action; three roles described across three different actions caps at 2.

Common errors: describing three people, or three separate times of day, which answers the word "simultaneously" away; omitting the **product** role, which is the hardest of the three and therefore the most heavily rewarded; describing the platform's features instead of what the audience member is and does — the subject of every sentence should be the person; a general account of "using social media" instead of one concrete action.

Question 3 (2 marks)

Command term — explain: the difference, then the reason a count cannot stand in for the other thing.

Model response. **Audience interaction** is any audience action that a media product, producer, platform or other audience member can receive, register or respond to. It is observable and it travels somewhere: a comment appears, a share moves, a skip is logged. **Audience engagement** is what an audience invests in a product — attention, thought, emotion, time and identification — and the relationship that investment builds. It is internal, and it can only be inferred.

A count of interactions is therefore **evidence about** engagement rather than a measurement of it, and it is partial, self-selecting evidence. The two come apart in both directions. A listener who joins a Quillmarsh room only to post one dismissive line in the replies and leave has interacted without engaging: the action was registered and travelled, and nothing was invested. A listener who stays for the full ninety minutes, never speaks, never replies and is still turning the room over a week later has engaged as heavily as anyone in it while producing nothing a producer would count — the room's reply tally and share tally both record that listener as absent.

Marks: 1 — both terms defined, with observable-and-travelling distinguished from internal-and- inferred. 1 — the reason a count is not a measurement, supported by a case where the two come apart.

Common errors: treating the two words as synonyms, which answers half the dot point; defining engagement as "how much they interact", which is circular; giving both definitions and never showing them separate; offering a platform metric as though it were an engagement score.

Question 4 (3 marks)

Command term — identify: name accurately, and place accurately. No explanation is required.

Model response.

a. Three new media technologies described in Stimulus A, each placed in this area of study's own six-process chain:

- the **in-app clipping and captioning tools** — **production** (they are how a new product is made from existing material), and **engagement with**, since they are the route by which an audience member acts on somebody else's product;
- the **recommendation system** — **reception**: it assembles what each individual account is offered, so two accounts opening Quillmarsh receive materially different products;
- the **publisher dashboard** — **reception** as well, because it reports how the product was received; credit **creation** where a student argues that retention data shapes what is made next.

Also creditable, each with an accurate placement: the **automatic transcription and search index** (**distribution**, because it puts a room in front of people who were never in it, and **production**, since the transcript is the material a later clip is made from); the **live audio room** (distribution and consumption; engagement with, since a listener can ask to speak); the **notes feed** (distribution and consumption); the **advertising and revenue-share payment system**; the **vertical video capture and upload tools** (production and distribution).

Marks: 1 — three items named **as technologies** rather than as products or platform features. 1 — each placed accurately in the chain. Naming Quillmarsh's outputs instead — a room, a clip, the feed — caps part **a** at 1.

b. The convergence is **form convergence (hybridisation)**: Quillmarsh joins three of the study design's media forms — **moving image**, **audio** and **print** — into one product, delivered through the **digital** form, and the clipping tools mean material moves between the three, so the joining is the product rather than an addition to it. Credit **technological convergence** where the student argues it from the single handheld device serving as camera, microphone, radio receiver, press and shop; credit **community and commercial convergence** where the student argues it from the same place holding a community of interest and the market sold against it. Any of the three earns the mark provided the **sense** is named and what came together is stated.

Marks: 1 — a named sense of convergence, plus what came together.

Common errors: naming products where technologies were asked for; writing "convergence" without saying which of the four senses is meant, which is the commonest vague answer in Chapter 12; using Chapter 1's five-process list (created, produced, distributed, consumed, read) instead of this area of study's six, which add *engagement with* and replace *read* with *reception*; claiming a technology serves only one process when it plainly serves several.

Question 5 (4 marks)

Command term — explain: the chain — technology, then affordance, then the specific behaviour it produced. A list of features is not an explanation.

Model response. The change is precise and datable. Until March 2025 a Quillmarsh room was a **live event only**: it existed while it ran, it could be entered only by someone free at the hour it was held, and when it ended it left no object behind. From April 2025 every room is a **kept record** — recorded, transcribed as it runs, searchable inside the application and indexed outside it, and open to being clipped by anyone.

The **affordance** is that **spoken talk became retrievable by people who were not there**. What used to expire at the moment it was said can now be found under a name, opened at the minute that matters, read as text and taken away in forty-second pieces, at any distance in time from the event. That single change of what is possible, cheap and easy is what produced the behaviour below; the recording equipment by itself produced nothing.

Two modes of interaction changed as a result. **Selection and control** was the mode a live room barely permitted: attendance was the only way in, and there was nothing to pause, replay or skip. Audiences now search the district's rooms by name, open a two-hour council meeting at the eleven minutes that concern them, read the transcript instead of listening, and consume asynchronously a form that had been strictly synchronous. And **creation and co-creation** widened from a handful of people to everybody: making something out of a room used to require having sat in it with the lift tool open, and now the whole back record is raw material for any account at any time — which is precisely the route Ilona Craddock took from clipping what she attended to working meetings she never went to. Two further modes are creditable. **Participation in the text** became costlier: asking to speak in a room once cost nothing beyond the moment and now leaves a permanent, searchable, clippable statement under the speaker's name, so the audience willing to take the microphone narrows to those prepared to be quoted. And **circulation** changed character: a share used to point at an event that had already closed, and now moves forty seconds of somebody's speech to people with no access to what was said either side of it.

Marks: 1 — the change stated with a **before** and an **after**. 1 — the affordance named as what became possible, cheap or easy, not merely restated as the technology. 2 — two modes, each named and each carried to a specific behaviour in the scenario (1 mark each).

Common errors: "Quillmarsh added recording", with no affordance — the affordance is the sentence that turns a technology into an explanation; naming modes without saying what the audience does differently; technological determinism ("recording made people stop speaking in rooms"), where the accurate claim is that it made speaking costlier and left the choice with the speaker; answering with **engagement**, which is not what this question asked for; no before, so there is nothing for the change to be a change from.

Question 6 (5 marks)

Command term — analyse: identify the components — the development, the two scales, the direction of each — and show the relationship between them.

Model response. The development is the April 2025 decision to record, transcribe and keep every Quillmarsh room, and its affordance is that spoken talk became retrievable by people who were not there. It lands very differently on the two scales the dot point names.

At audience scale the change altered what the audience for a room *is*. Before April 2025 that audience was the room: a bounded set of people present at the same hour, who had chosen it, and who heard the whole of it. Since April 2025 most of the audience for any room arrives afterwards, through the feed, in a forty-second piece somebody else selected, and never hears what was said either side of it. The reach is far larger than a live audio form had ever produced and the audience receiving it knows far less — and those are not two findings but one, because the same record that lets a room travel is what lets it travel in fragments. A second audience-scale consequence runs off the same mechanism. A room used to be a place where people talked as they do at a meeting, on the understanding that it ended when it ended. Speaking now creates a permanent statement, searchable under a name, that any account may republish; so the part of the audience willing to ask for the microphone narrows to those prepared to be quoted for years, and the room drifts from a conversation towards a broadcast that the rest of the audience listens to.

At individual scale the direction reverses. Ilona Craddock has gained something no audience member of her age could previously have obtained: the district's public talk has become an open supply of material, and the thing she is good at — knowing which forty seconds of a two-hour meeting matter — is now the whole of a media practice. She no longer has to be in the room, which was the one barrier her age, her timetable and her lack of any institution behind her made hardest to clear, and a single clip has out-reached the masthead's month. Set against that, the permanence is not selective. Everything she publishes, and everything she says in a room herself, sits on the same searchable record under her name at 17; her clips are themselves liftable by anybody on the terms she uses on other people; and holding the revenue threshold means posting to a schedule she did not set and moderating her own replies, which is continuous unpaid work an institution would have employed somebody to do.

The two scales run opposite ways, and that is the analysis rather than a complication in it. At audience scale the change closed something — the unrecorded room where a district talked to itself freely — while at individual scale it opened something, handing one 17-year-old the entire record as working material. Both follow from a single affordance, because a record that lets anybody retrieve what was said is necessarily the same record that makes everybody careful about saying it.

Qualification. Ilona is a single case and proves nothing on her own, and a practice built out of other people's talk is only as secure as their willingness to keep talking. This also describes Quillmarsh's users rather than the district: a resident who has never opened the application is outside the change entirely while still being discussed, recorded and searchable inside it.

Marks: 1 — the development named, with a before and an after. 1 — an audience-scale consequence, argued rather than asserted. 1 — an individual-scale consequence anchored to Ilona. 1 — the two scales explicitly compared, with the direction of each stated. 1 — a qualification: a group the change did not reach, the limits of a single case, or a gain stated alongside a loss.

Band descriptors (out of 5):

- **High (4–5):** the development named specifically with a before and an after; **both** scales developed, each anchored to the scenario; the relationship between the two scales stated explicitly and correctly (they pull opposite ways, and both follow from one affordance); at least one qualification; affordance language throughout ("made possible", "made easy") rather than causal language.
- **Mid (2–3):** both scales present but one thin, or the two reported side by side with no relationship drawn between them; the development named at category level ("recording") rather than as a change; some determinist phrasing; no qualification.
- **Low (1):** one scale only; the scenario retold rather than analysed; "technology changed everything" with no before; the individual and the audience treated as the same claim written twice.

Common errors: answering at one scale only — the dot point names audiences **and** the individual, and a single-scale answer reports half the influence; determinism ("the transcripts silenced the rooms"), where the accurate claim is that they raised the cost of speaking and left the decision with the speaker; no before; a purely negative account that omits what Ilona gained, which is the largest change of the last decade for individuals; drifting into what the change did to Halverstone, which is Question 7's work.

Question 7 (4 marks)

Command term — explain: run the influence chain — development, pressure point, institutional response, industry-level consequence — and add the counter-current.

Model response. The development is the same one, seen from the other end: since April 2025 the district's public business records itself. For Halverstone Media it strikes the **production** pressure point first, and flows from there to **revenue** and **workforce**.

The scarce input of regional journalism was never the writing. It was **presence**, and the stimulus dates the monopoly on it at sixty years: what Halverstone sold was not a better account of the council meeting but the only one in existence. A room that transcribes itself and publishes the transcript within minutes of ending supplies that account to the whole district at once, free, and does it faster than a reporter can file. The masthead's core input has stopped being scarce. What Halverstone still supplies is a different and smaller product: knowing which eleven minutes of six hours mattered, checking a claim against the file, and setting a decision beside the last four. That is harder to sell than being the only version available, which is how the loss reaches **revenue**; and the two staff making vertical clips are now competing for the same forty seconds as every unpaid account in the district, which is how it reaches **workforce**.

Halverstone's own response mixes modes: it has **evolved** (print to website, email edition and vertical video, and now from attending meetings to working the transcripts), **cooperated** (supplying free material to a platform that competes with it for attention and advertising, and which now hands the masthead's raw material to everyone else as well), and **contracted** (the Wednesday edition ended in 2024).

At industry level, once the raw record of public business is free everywhere, what a regional masthead sells shifts from access to judgement — and judgement is bought by fewer people, less habitually, than the only account in town. The rounds most exposed are council and court, because those are precisely the rounds where a raw transcript looks like a substitute for reporting and is not: an unread transcript is not a covered meeting. Across the sector that accelerates consolidation and closure, and leaves districts in which the record exists in full and nobody reads any of it.

Counter-current. The same change hands Halverstone something no regional newsroom could previously afford: a searchable record of four meetings it had no one to send to, and the ability to check a disputed quote against a recording rather than a notebook. Quillmarsh also carries about a third of its weekly readership at no distribution cost, in a district where moving a paper across long distances was a severe expense.

Marks: 1 — the pressure point named (production), with the flow to a second point. 1 — the mechanism explained rather than labelled: the newsroom's scarce input was presence, and the change removed the scarcity. 1 — an industry-level consequence distinguished from the institution's own position. 1 — a counter-current.

Common errors: answering about readers' habits or feelings, which is 13A's material; naming a technology without naming what it changed, so no mechanism appears; treating the change as a story about a platform behaving badly rather than about **what a newsroom was actually selling** — a question the telegraph, the wire service and the council livestream each asked before it; assuming a public transcript is the same thing as journalism, which is the industry consequence stated backwards; stopping at the institution and never reaching the industry; "old media is dead", which the study design's own wording contradicts.

Question 8 (5 marks)

Command term — analyse: break the issue into its parts, show how the parts act on each other, and reach a position.

Model response.

The issue, stated as something contested. Whether a media institution may license an archive it did not wholly make and does not wholly own, to be copied as training material for a generative model, without asking the photographers who hold rights in a great deal of it and without telling the district whose record it is.

Legal. Two separate questions. Neither is as simple as it looks, and the first is the one the editor has probably already answered wrongly.

Ownership. The general rule in the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth) is that a work made by an **employee** in the course of employment belongs to the **employer** (s 35(6)) — but s 35(6) is the residual rule. It gives way to the two special provisions that precede it, and a newspaper's photographic archive engages both of them.

s 35(4) covers people employed by the proprietor of a newspaper or magazine. For staff photographs taken **on or after 30 July 1998** the proprietor owns copyright, the photographer keeping only narrow rights to reproduce the work in a book or as a hard-copy facsimile. For staff photographs taken between **1 May 1969**, when the Act commenced, and 30 July 1998, the proprietor owned copyright only so far as it related to publishing the photograph in a newspaper, magazine or similar periodical and to broadcasting it — and **the photographer owned every other right**, including the right to reproduce the image for any other purpose. Copying a print into a training set is exactly such a purpose, so Halverstone may license its post-1998 staff photographs and, for the staff work of the archive's first three decades, cannot. (The oldest frames of all, made before 1 May 1969, fall under the legislation this Act replaced — a further reason the archive cannot be treated as one thing.)

s 35(5) covers commissioned work, and it runs the other way. Where a photograph was commissioned for a fee **before 30 July 1998**, the commissioning client — Halverstone — owns the copyright by default, absent a contrary agreement; only for photographs commissioned on or after that date does the freelancer keep it, unless the commission was for a private or domestic purpose. The freelancer is not left with nothing: where the purpose of a commission was made known, and for a masthead's picture desk it plainly was, the photographer may **restrain use for any other purpose** — and a 1974 commission to photograph a grand final was not made known as a licence to train a model. A freelancer who does own copyright keeps it unless it has been assigned **in writing** (s 196(3)), and these agreements are silent, so nothing has been assigned.

The upshot is the reverse of what the editor is likely to assume, and it is the analytical centre of the legal lens. Ownership of this archive is **mixed, and it is mixed by date**: across the half made before 1998 most of the commissioned freelance images are Halverstone's and most of the staff images are not, and after 1998 the position reverses on both counts. Halverstone cannot know what it is selling without working the files by date and by how each photographer was engaged, and the one thing it certainly cannot do is license 240,000 images as though they were a single asset.

The use itself. Training a model ordinarily involves reproducing a **substantial part** of each work. Australia's exceptions are the narrow **fair dealing** exceptions — research or study, criticism or review, parody or satire, reporting news — not the broader United States doctrine of fair use, and Australia has **no text and data mining exception**: on **26 October 2025** the Attorney-General announced that the Government would not introduce one, and the Attorney-General's Department is instead consulting the Copyright and Artificial Intelligence Reference Group on licensing models. The lawful route is therefore a licence — which is precisely what is on offer, and precisely what the freelancers were not asked for. Separately, **moral rights** under Part IX of the Act are personal to the photographer and do **not** pass with copyright, so a licence from Halverstone cannot clear them even for the images Halverstone owns outright. Their reach is narrower than students usually assume. A moral right is engaged by an act done to the **work** itself — reproducing, publishing, communicating or adapting it, or a substantial part of it — so it turns on the same substantial-part question as the economic right rather than supplying an easier second answer where that question is contested. Copying the photographs into a training set is such an act, and so would be an output that reproduced a substantial part of one of them. An output that merely resembles a photographer's manner of working is not: no particular work has been reproduced, and Australian copyright does not protect style.

Ethical. Consent must be **specific** to the use, **informed** about what it enables, and capable of being **withdrawn**. None of the three is satisfied for the freelancers, who are contactable — several still work in the district — and were not contacted. Note that this question survives whatever the ownership answer turns out to be: a 1974 commission was priced for one picture in one newspaper, and the fact that the law of the day may have handed Halverstone the copyright does not tell the photographer's family anything about whether it should now be sold to be copied by a machine. The request that the arrangement not be announced is the sharper fact: an institution whose whole authority rests on telling its district what is happening is being asked to conceal a transaction about the district's own visual record. The size of the payment is not a justification; it is the pressure that makes the question hard, which is a different thing.

Social. The effect falls on a group rather than on one complainant. Freelance photography for regional mastheads is one of the rungs by which people enter media work, and the images being copied are the market for exactly that work. And if the arrangement is discovered later, what pays for it is the masthead's credibility — the one asset a regional publisher holds that a platform does not.

Position. Halverstone should not proceed without contacting the freelancers and obtaining fresh, specific, paid agreements for their images, and should disclose the arrangement whatever the buyer would prefer, and cannot honestly offer the buyer the whole archive until it knows which parts of it are its to sell. **The concession:** a substantial part of the archive genuinely is Halverstone's to license — its staff photographs since 1998, and on the face of it most of the freelance commissions before then; the payment may be the difference between the masthead continuing and closing, and a masthead that closes covers no council meetings at all; and a rule that made archive licensing impossible would remove one of the few assets regional publishing still owns. **What remains unresolved** is the central legal question — no Australian court has decided whether training on published work infringes, and Parliament has not answered it either, which is why an ethical decision has to be made now.

Marks: 1 — the issue named as something genuinely contested, not merely described. 2 — the legal lens: 1 for ownership handled as **mixed and not automatic** under the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth), supported by at least one accurate reason — employment and commissioning are treated differently, or employed press photographers sit under a special rule, or the rules changed during the life of the archive; 1 for the position on training and exceptions, dated. 1 — a second lens (ethical or social) justified rather than asserted. 1 — a position containing a real concession. *Marker's note:* a student who states the general employee rule and the general freelance rule and concludes that the archive is not a single asset has done what five marks can ask for. The dated pivots in the model response are there for you, not for them; award the mark for recognising mixed ownership, and do not require **30 July 1998**.

Band descriptors (out of 5):

- **High (4–5):** the issue named as contested; the Act cited accurately and ownership treated as mixed rather than settled by one rule; the training question dated; at least two lenses applied and each justified; a position with a genuine concession and a statement of what is unresolved.
- **Mid (2–3):** the scenario summarised accurately and one lens developed; the instrument named loosely, or ownership decided by a single rule applied to the whole archive; a second lens asserted rather than argued; a position stated but conceding nothing.
- **Low (1):** retells the stimulus; no instrument named, or one named incorrectly; legal and ethical used as synonyms; opinion in place of analysis.

Common errors: answering "no law was broken", which concedes the ethical question rather than answering it; naming "AI" or "copyright" as the issue instead of naming what is **contested** about it; assuming Halverstone owns the whole archive because it published it, or that it owns none of the freelance work because a freelancer is not an employee — employment and commissioning are governed by different provisions, and neither answer holds across sixty-one years; treating "who owns it" as settled at all, when the honest finding is that nobody yet knows and the files have to be worked through; citing a proposal or a review as though it were law; a stakeholder account in which every party wants the same thing, which shows no issue was found; a position with no concession in it.

Question 9 (12 marks)

Command term — discuss: build the case for and the case against, weigh them against dated evidence, and reach a conclusion. A response that only agrees, or only disagrees, cannot reach the top band.

Evidence 1: *Communications Legislation Amendment (Australian Content Requirement for Subscription Video On Demand (Streaming) Services) Act 2025* (Cth) — passed 27 November 2025; requirement operating from 1 January 2026.

Evidence 2: *Digital News Report: Australia 2026*, News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra — launched 16 June 2026.

Date checked: July 2026.

Model response (12 marks).

The statement describes two real movements and mis-states both, because it measures what audiences gained with the wrong instrument and it leaves out the party that received most of what the institutions lost. Two developments carry the argument: **recommendation-driven distribution**, in which a system rather than a schedule or an editor decides what each person is offered next; and **subscription video delivered over broadband**, which allowed programs to reach millions of Australian households without a broadcasting licence.

What audiences gained is real, and it is not "more". Recommendation-driven distribution arrived with on-demand delivery, and together they handed audiences control over the *conditions* of consumption — the time, place, device, order and speed — that no scheduled audience ever had. They also handed audiences a share of **distribution**, which had been the most tightly held function in the media, because it required a transmitter, a press or a truck. The *Digital News Report: Australia 2026*, launched by the University of Canberra's News and Media Research Centre on **16 June 2026**, shows how far that has gone: Australians now report social media as a source of news slightly ahead of online news websites and apps, a substantial minority get news from creators and influencers, and sixty per cent of 18-to-24-year-olds have never read a printed newspaper. A distribution system in which individual creators sit beside mastheads is a genuine expansion of what an audience is.

But "more" is the wrong measure, and the same report supplies the correction: it records that a large majority of Australians are concerned about telling real from fake content online, and that trust in news reaching people through social platforms and AI tools sits well below trust in news from established outlets. What audiences gained is a **capacity** and control over **conditions**. What they did not gain is control over **range**, because a recommendation feed is assembled from a record of the person receiving it, so two members of one audience never meet the same product and nobody has a shared front page against which to judge what is widely held. Nor did they gain participation evenly: contributors are a small minority of consumers in every media form, and the study design's own qualifier explains why — all engagement with media is creatively, culturally and economically situated, so skills, equipment, time, data cost and connection quality decide who can take any of this up. Audiences also lost something the statement never counts: they became continuously measured, and what they receive is now assembled from that measurement.

What institutions lost was specific, and it did not go to audiences. Three mechanisms did the damage. **Unbundling** took the profitable parts of the newspaper out of the bundle — classified and display advertising — and with them the **cross-subsidy** that had paid for the court, council and state political rounds. **Disintermediation** removed the old gatekeepers, and **re-intermediation** immediately installed new ones: recommendation systems, app stores, digital storefronts and device home screens now decide what is found, and they are fewer, larger and mostly outside Australian jurisdiction, so the terms an institution used to argue over with a distributor now arrive as a published policy it may accept or leave. And **regulation written around a delivery technology** stayed where it was put: Australian content obligations attach to the broadcasting licence under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth), so when viewing moved to services holding no licence, the obligation did not move with it. The third party in every one of these transactions is the **platform**, and that is where most of what the institutions lost actually went.

The most recent evidence, though, shows the direction being reversed by law rather than by technology. Since 2024 three dated movements matter. First, the *Communications Legislation Amendment (Australian Content Requirement for Subscription Video On Demand (Streaming) Services) Act 2025* (Cth) passed on **27 November 2025**, and from **1 January 2026** streaming services with at least one million Australian subscribers must invest at least ten per cent of their Australian program expenditure — or 7.5 per cent of Australian revenue — in new Australian drama, children's, documentary, arts and educational programs, with the ACMA administering the scheme and the first compliance reports due on 15 February 2027. That closes, for one kind of service, exactly the gap the licence-based obligation had opened. Second, the *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024* (Cth) imposed obligations on age-restricted platforms from **10 December 2025**; by mid-January 2026 more than **4.7 million** accounts held by Australians under 16 had been deactivated, removed or restricted, and eSafety's first compliance update in **March 2026** reported 23 information-gathering notices issued to ten platforms, active investigations into five of them, and a move from compliance monitoring to enforcement, with civil penalties reaching $49.5 million. Third, on **26 October 2025** the Attorney-General announced that the Government would not introduce a text and data mining exception to the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth), and would consult instead on licensing — a decision that preserved rights ownership, which is one of the few assets both institutions and individual creators still hold.

Two of those three cut directly against the statement's second half, and the middle one cuts against its first half. An audience was redefined by statute: Australians under 16 were removed from a whole class of product inside the **digital** form — social platforms are products, not a media form of their own — and the party that removed them was a parliament rather than a media institution.

Counter-currents. The same developments gave institutions things they had never had. A regional masthead can now reach a readership that geography made impossible and can measure, story by story, what is actually read rather than what was delivered. A broadcaster's on-demand service tells it who is watching what, which broadcasting never did. And the study design's own framing is the strongest counter-current available: traditional media **continues to have power and influence**, competing, cooperating and evolving alongside social platforms. Legacy institutions are frequently the suppliers to the platforms said to have replaced them, and the *Digital News Report* finding above — that established outlets are still the most trusted source of news — is evidence that the asset they hold is not one a distribution change can take.

Position. The statement should be rewritten. New media technologies gave Australian audiences **participation, and control over the conditions of their own consumption**, while taking from them a shared reference point and any practical control over the record of themselves. They took from Australian institutions **guaranteed distribution and the cross-subsidy inside the bundle** — but not their power, and not to the audience's benefit: most of it moved to a small number of very large intermediaries. Audiences and institutions now operate inside infrastructure owned, measured and monetised by someone else, and where value has moved back since 2024 it has moved because Parliament moved it, not because a technology did.

Band descriptors (out of 12):

- **High (10–12):** at least two developments named as **specific capabilities or practices**, each traced to a mechanism (affordance, unbundling, re-intermediation, licence-based regulation); both halves of the statement tested, not just one; **audience/individual scale and industry/institution scale both developed**; at least two pieces of current evidence, each dated precisely (an Act with a commencement date, a dated decision, a dated report) and used to make an argument rather than decorate one; at least one genuine counter-current; a position that rewrites rather than merely accepts or rejects the statement; precise and sustained media language.
- **Mid (5–9):** the statement discussed with some evidence, but developments named at category level ("streaming", "social media"); one scale developed and the other thin; evidence present but undated, or dated loosely ("recently", "last year"); the platform's role as the third party missing, so the gain and the loss are treated as a transfer from institutions to audiences; a counter-current gestured at; a position stated but not defended.
- **Low (1–4):** agrees or disagrees without testing the other half; no dated evidence, or an example outside the two-year window; technological determinism throughout ("streaming killed newspapers"); no distinction between an audience and an institution; retells what platforms do instead of arguing about influence.

Common errors: accepting the statement wholesale because audiences can now post — which confuses a **capacity** with a **behaviour** and ignores the participation gap; omitting the **platform**, so the answer describes a transfer from institutions to audiences that did not happen; naming "the internet" or "social media" as the development, which is a category rather than a capability and cannot be traced to a mechanism; undated evidence, or evidence outside the last two years, which fails the dot point regardless of how good the analysis is; citing a bill as though it were an Act — announced, introduced, passed, commenced and enforced are five different things; asserting that traditional institutions have been replaced, which the study design's own wording contradicts; and reaching no position, or a position with nothing conceded to the other side.

Sources for the real-world evidence used in this test

Quillmarsh, Halverstone Media, Ilona Craddock and the archive offer in Stimulus B are original constructed stimulus written for this test. They are not drawn from any real service, organisation or person, and carry no source. Every real-world claim in the questions and model responses is drawn from the public sources below.

Source: Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, "Glossary of command terms" — https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce/glossary-command-terms. Accurate as at July 2026.

Source: Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, VCE Media Study Design 2024–2028 (Unit 2 Outcome 3 and Area of Study 3; the requirement that all assessment at Units 1 and 2 is school-based, completed mainly in class and within a limited timeframe, and not reported to the VCAA) — https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce-curriculum/vce-study-designs/media. Accurate as at July 2026.

Source: Federal Register of Legislation, "Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024" (Cth) — https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2024A00127/asmade/text. Accurate as at July 2026.

Source: eSafety Commissioner, "Social media age restrictions" (platform obligations commenced 10 December 2025; the obligation falls on age-restricted platforms, not on young people or their parents) — https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-us/industry-regulation/social-media-age-restrictions. Accurate as at July 2026.

Source: eSafety Commissioner, "Platforms restrict access to 4.7 million under-16 accounts across Australia", January 2026 — https://www.esafety.gov.au/newsroom/media-releases/platforms-restrict-access-to-47-million-under-16-accounts-across-australia. Accurate as at July 2026.

Source: eSafety Commissioner, "Social Media Minimum Age: compliance update", March 2026 (23 legally enforceable information-gathering notices issued to 10 platforms; active investigations into five; a shift from *compliance monitoring to enforcement; civil penalties up to $49.5 million) — https://www.esafety.gov.au/newsroom/blogs/social-media-minimum-age-compliance-report. Accurate as at July 2026.*

Source: Office for the Arts (Australian Government), "Australian screen content requirement for streaming services" (Act passed 27 November 2025; requirement operating from 1 January 2026; services with at least one million Australian subscribers to invest at least 10 per cent of Australian program expenditure or 7.5 per cent of Australian revenue in new Australian drama, children's, documentary, arts and educational programs) — https://www.arts.gov.au/what-we-do/screen/australian-screen-content-requirement-streaming-services. Accurate as at July 2026.

Source: Federal Register of Legislation, "Communications Legislation Amendment (Australian Content Requirement for Subscription Video On Demand (Streaming) Services) Act 2025" (Cth), Act No. 71 of 2025 — https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2025A00071/asmade. Accurate as at July 2026.

Source: Australian Communications and Media Authority, "Subscription video on demand services" (ACMA administers the Australian content requirement; first annual compliance reports from regulated services due 15 February 2027, covering the 2026 calendar year) — https://www.acma.gov.au/subscription-video-demand-services. Accurate as at July 2026.

Source: Attorney-General's portfolio ministers, "Albanese Government to ensure Australia is prepared for future copyright challenges emerging from AI", 26 October 2025 (the Government will not introduce a text and data mining exception to the Copyright Act 1968; the Attorney-General's Department to consult the Copyright and Artificial Intelligence Reference Group on licensing models) — https://ministers.ag.gov.au/media-centre/albanese-government-ensure-australia-prepared-future-copyright-challenges-emerging-ai-26-10-2025. Accurate as at July 2026.

Source: University of Canberra News and Media Research Centre, "DNR 2026: Younger Australians are rewriting the rules of news consumption" — Digital News Report: Australia 2026, twelfth annual edition, launched 16 June 2026, produced with the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford (social media reported as a news source by 56 per cent against 52 per cent for online news websites and apps; 43 per cent for creators and influencers; 60 per cent of 18-to-24-year-olds have never read a printed newspaper; 77 per cent concerned about distinguishing real from fake content online) — https://www.canberra.edu.au/about-uc/media/newsroom/2026/june/dnr-2026-younger-australians-are-rewriting-the-rules-of-news-consumption. Accurate as at July 2026.

Source: Federal Register of Legislation, "Copyright Act 1968" (Cth) — s 35(4) works made by employees of newspaper, magazine and similar periodical proprietors; s 35(5) works commissioned for valuable consideration, including the commissioning party's right of restraint as to purpose; s 35(6) the general rule for works made by employees in the course of employment, which applies only where neither s 35(4) nor s 35(5) does; s 196(3) assignment of copyright must be in writing; Part IX moral rights of attribution, against false attribution, and of integrity of authorship; the fair dealing exceptions in Part III Division 3. The Act commenced on 1 May 1969 — https://www.legislation.gov.au/C1968A00063/latest/text. Accurate as at July 2026.

Source: Australian Copyright Council, information sheet "Photographers & Copyright" (ownership of commissioned photographs and of photographs made by employees, including employees of newspaper and magazine proprietors) — https://www.copyright.org.au/ACC_Prod/ACC/Information_Sheets/Photographers___Copyright.aspx. Accurate as at July 2026.

Source: National Library of Australia, "Rights and the pictures collection" (a photograph taken before 30 July 1998 and commissioned by someone other than the photographer belongs to the person who commissioned it; a photograph taken after that date belongs to the commissioning party only if it was taken for a private or domestic purpose; and a photograph made by an employee belongs to the employer except where the employer is the proprietor of a newspaper, magazine or similar periodical, in which case the photographer retains the right to control inclusion of the photograph in a book or in a hard-copy news clipping service) — https://www.library.gov.au/services/copyright-library-collections/rights-and-pictures-collection. Accurate as at July 2026.

Source: Federal Register of Legislation, "Broadcasting Services Act 1992" (Cth), under which commercial free-to-air television licensees operate and to which Australian content obligations attach — https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A04401/latest/text. Accurate as at July 2026.

Source: Office of the Australian Information Commissioner, "Statutory tort for serious invasions of privacy" (introduced by the Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024 (Cth); available from 10 June 2025) — https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/your-privacy-rights/more-privacy-rights/statutory-tort-for-serious-invasions-of-privacy. Accurate as at July 2026.