

**Poisoning
the debate:
HOW THE
MURDOCH
PRESS IS
CAMPAIGNING
AGAINST THE
VOICE TO
PARLIAMENT**

**Murdoch Referendum
Accountability Project**

INTERIM REPORT: 17 JULY - 27 AUGUST

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MURDOCH REFERENDUM ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT

Australians for a Murdoch Royal Commission commissioned this research to hold News Corp accountable for their coverage of the Voice referendum. As Australia's largest and most powerful media organisation in a highly concentrated industry, News Corp's Voice referendum coverage has important implications for how this democratic process unfolds.

News organisations have great power to give voice to different interests and ideas by facilitating a vibrant marketplace of ideas where diverse voices compete to provide audiences with valuable information they need to make sound democratic judgements in their interests, and in the interests of the country. News media also play an important democratic role as watchdogs by holding groups and interests to account and scrutinising their behaviour.

In relation to the Voice referendum, an ideal media system which was carrying out their democratic roles effectively would give equal opportunity to the referendum 'Yes' and 'No' advocates to make their case to the Australian people.

This does not just mean including different voices in equal proportion. It also means treating them equitably and holding them to the same standards.

This equitable treatment should also include fair and reasonable scrutiny of the 'Yes' and 'No' spokespeople to ensure they are not misleading the public about their case for or against Aboriginal constitutional recognition and a Voice to parliament. When misinformation is used to undermine public debates, democracy is damaged.

This interim report contains findings from this project for the first six weeks of analysis for News Corp articles mentioning 'the Voice' published by The Australian, Daily Telegraph and Herald Sun newspapers online or print, and videos posted on the Sky News YouTube channel between 17 July and 27 August, 2023.

We will continue this research until the referendum is held on October 14 2023, and will release the final report shortly thereafter.



METHODOLOGY

Over six weeks, from 17 July - 27 August 2023, the research team analysed a weekly sample of up to 126 pieces of content covering the Voice referendum from The Australian, The Daily Telegraph, The Herald Sun and Sky News. In total 731 pieces were analysed, which is 100% of articles from the print publications and 72% of Sky News videos. Video selection was randomised by prioritising the shortest videos for inclusion.

Each piece of content was then analysed using a multi-layered coding framework to determine the number of words used to represent views from different sources, arguments that align with the 'Yes' and 'No' campaigns, and the way that the 'Yes' and 'No' campaigns are characterised.

This intricate method provides quantification of the elements of coverage by number of words, delivering a full and meaningful picture of News Corp's coverage of the Voice referendum.

A detailed outline of the project methodology can be found in the appendix. Analysis of the volume of coverage and sample analysed per week, as well as the News Corp authors and hosts' contributions to this coverage, is also included in the appendix.

The number of media items published, and the sample analysed is shown in Table 1.

	PUBLISHED (EXCLUDING DUPLICATES)	SAMPLE ANALYSED
The Australian	250	250
Daily Telegraph	97	97
Herald Sun	74	74
Sky News	431	310
Total	852	731

Table 1: Content published, and sample analysed, 17 July - 27 August, 2023.



KEY FINDINGS

There are two types of media content about the Voice being published at News Corp: reporting and commentary.

The reporting is for the most part, balanced and accurate. It includes both 'Yes' and 'No' voices, and provides information about the referendum, the spokespeople, and campaign events which is useful to audiences. It is in this reporting content where 'Yes' voices have an opportunity to have their voices heard, and 'No' voices present counter-arguments about the Voice.

The commentary, on the other hand, is almost entirely one-sided in support of 'No' arguments. The vast majority of commentators at News Corp are conservative, whether they be columnists in newspapers, Sky News hosts, or both.

Our data shows that the majority of content being produced about the Voice is commentary rather than reporting, and as such when arguments are included, 'No' arguments dominate News Corp's coverage at a proportion of 70% (Figure 1).

Percentage of content containing arguments - yes versus no.

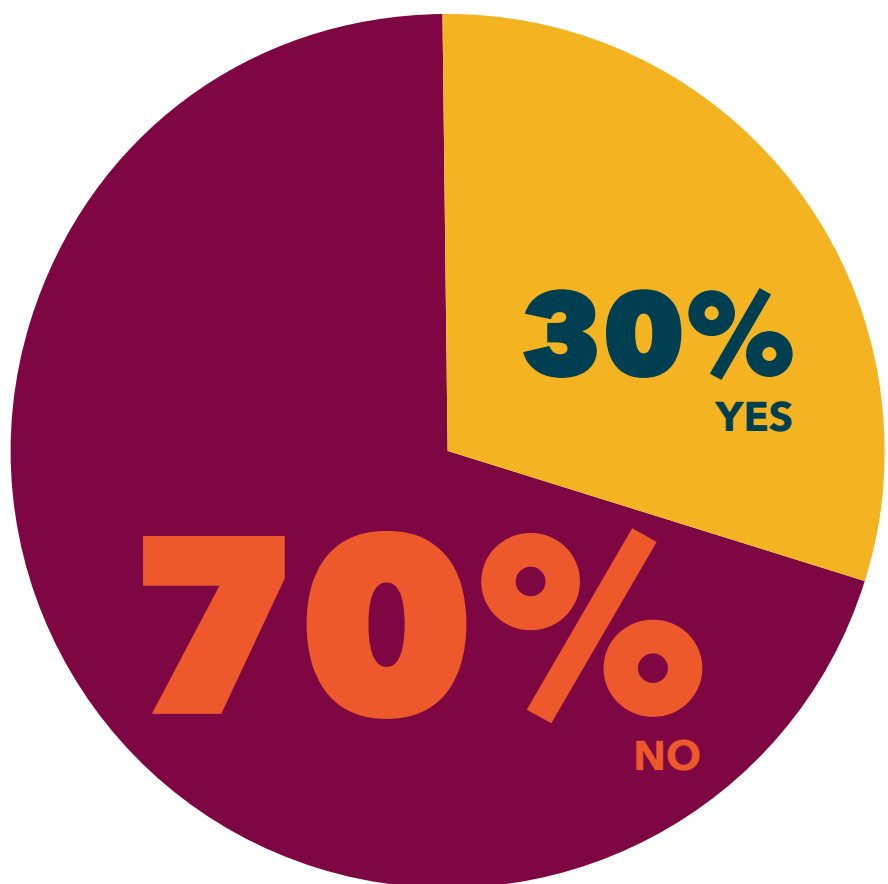


Figure 1: Percentage of words used to argue 'Yes' and 'No' in content containing an argument, 17 July - 27 August 2023, across all outlets, newspaper articles from Australian (250), Herald Sun (74) and Daily Telegraph (97) and 310 Sky News videos.

The one-sided commentary is not only advocating for 'No' in an overt political campaign against the Voice, but is also doing so using misinformation, which is undermining the public's access to accurate information about the Voice referendum.

Even though 'Yes' and 'No' voices are provided balanced opportunity to be included, there is no such balance when it comes to holding the opposing campaigns to account. There is very little scrutiny of the 'No' campaign's position and actions during the referendum debate, particularly when it comes to key 'No' advocates Peter Dutton, Jacinta Price, and Warren Mundine.

This is in stark contrast to the 'Yes' campaign, which - throughout reporting and commentary - is subject to extensive criticism. This criticism is overwhelmingly directed at the role played by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

This report begins with an overview of the coverage for each of the six weeks of analysis. The proportion of 'Yes' and 'No' voices and arguments are then discussed, which shows that despite external 'Yes' and 'No' advocates' inclusion in approximate balance, overall voices internal to News Corp are in the vast majority advocating for the 'No' position. Thus, overall the arguments across the coverage are biased towards the 'No' campaign.

Subsequent sections provide more detail about the different features of reporting and commentary, and describe the most prominently used 'No' arguments, including those which rely on misrepresentations of the Voice.

The final section presents analysis of the framing of 'Yes' and 'No' people and arguments, to again show that the 'Yes' campaign are characterised negatively in the majority of coverage, particularly in commentary.

COVERAGE SUMMARY

The dominant theme of News Corp's Voice coverage throughout the first six weeks is that the Voice referendum is going to fail, and that this failure is a political problem for Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

This statement by Sky News host Sharri Markson on 25 July, 2023 encapsulates this theme:



“The prime minister's political standing and this referendum are inseparable....when Albanese fights, as he is tonight for the yes campaign he's also fighting for his own political fortune. If this referendum fails, he personally has a lot to lose too”

As shown in subsequent sections of this report, 'No' arguments were used in seventy percent of content which contained an argument, and the 'Yes' campaign were consistently framed as 'villains' of the Voice referendum with the Prime Minister Anthony Albanese the key antagonist.

A large number of 'No' arguments were used to present the 'Yes' campaign in a negative light. Amongst these diverse 'No' arguments, dominant themes emerged each week across News Corp outlets, demonstrating consistency amongst outlets and voices within outlets.

The key themes amongst the 'No' arguments are depicted in Figure 2, which includes only those 'No' arguments by number of words, with the most used or the second most used 'No' argument across each week.

Top 'no' argument tracking - number of words per week.

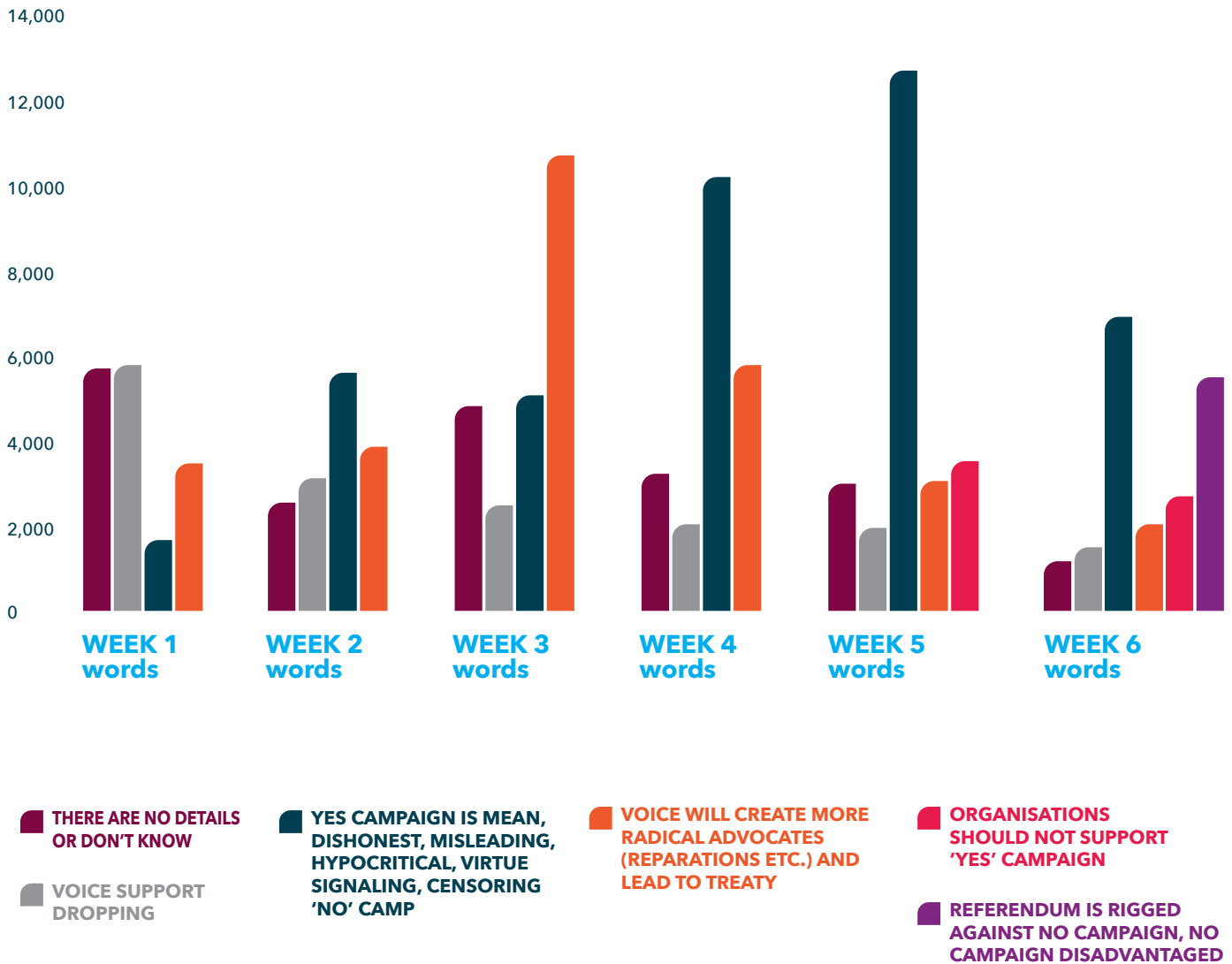


Figure 2: Top 'No' arguments traced across six weeks of coverage, by number of words, 17 July - 27 August 2023, across all outlets, newspaper articles from Australian (250), Herald Sun (74) and Daily Telegraph (97) and 310 Sky News videos.

WEEK 1: 17 July - 23 July

During week one, coverage focused on the apparent 'falling support' (grey in Figure 2) for the Voice based on polling, and suggested this showed Australians had realised the Voice is not worth supporting particularly because of lack of details (maroon).

This lack of support and the lack of details was implied to be Albanese's fault (navy), with much coverage dedicated to framing the Voice as a political problem for the Prime Minister which is going to 'end his political honeymoon'.

The lack of support was also tied to the Western Australian government's Aboriginal heritage laws, which although unrelated to the Voice, were framed as a 'threat' and an example of the type of radical Aboriginal activism which would supposedly spring from the Voice (orange).

WEEK 2: 24 July - 30 July

Week two's dominant theme continued to present the Voice referendum as a political problem for Albanese. Albanese was criticised for falling public support for the Voice (grey) and the public division the referendum had supposedly caused (navy).

Albanese was also blamed for the apparent lack of detail about how the Voice would work (maroon), with suggestions Albanese was hiding these plans from the public (navy).

In week two, coverage continued to focus on accusations that Albanese was hiding his true intentions of trying to use Voice to push for more radical policy changes such as reparations and a treaty for Aboriginal people (orange). This argument continued to be tied to Western Australian heritage laws (orange).

WEEK 3: 31 July - 6 August

Week three included coverage of Albanese attending the Garma Festival which provided him an opportunity to be included in coverage speaking about the 'Yes' case.

Beside this more positive coverage, week three included negative coverage of Linda Burney in relation to her advocacy for the Voice (navy). The key topic of this negative coverage was accusations that the Voice would lead to a Treaty, and that the outcomes of this Treaty would be negative for non-Indigenous Australians (orange).

Peta Credlin authored articles and talked extensively on Sky News about apparent secret pages of the Uluru Statement from the Heart. In a Daily Telegraph article headlined *Peta Credlin: Anthony Albanese has deceived the Australian public on the Uluru Statement from the Heart (August 5, 2023)*, she claimed that "the Uluru Statement from the Heart is not a one-page document. It is actually 26 pages in all, including diagrams."

Sky News host Chris Kenny debunked these claims in a Sky News video titled '*Simply untrue: Chris Kenny breaks down 26-page Uluru statement claim (Sky News, August 8 2023)*'.



WEEK 4: 7 August - 13 August

In week four, the dominant negative coverage about the Voice focused on continued discussion of Sky News' apparent exposure of extra or hidden pages of the Uluru Statement from the Heart (orange), which underpinned accusations that the government and 'yes' advocates were hiding their true agenda about the Voice (navy).

Week four saw continued criticism of the 'yes' campaign for supposedly hiding their true 'Voice' agenda from the Australian people, including plans for a Treaty.

Both the 'yes' and 'no' voices also became increasingly critical of each other, accusing each other of misbehavior in the referendum debate.



“

“Credlin and others want to pretend there’s been some bizarre conspiracy to hide the full Uluru Statement... Everyone is allowed to have their opinion but we’ve got to deal in reality...All this focus on conspiracies instead of actual arguments is the very definition of a fear campaign.”

*Chris Kenny, Sky News,
August 8, 2023*

WEEK 5: 14 August - 20 August

During the fifth week of analysis, the National Labor Conference was held, which gave Albanese a chance to be included advocating for the Voice.

Despite these inclusions, week five was a particularly one-sided representation of the Voice, favouring 'No' arguments, which in their vast majority focused on various allegations that the 'Yes' campaign were behaving badly (navy).

These accusations ranged from suggestions the 'Yes' campaign were hiding their Voice agenda, misleading the public, being unkind or unfair to the 'No' campaign, being hypocritical, virtue signaling, or trying to censor the 'No' campaign.

The censorship argument was particularly tied to criticism of the Prime Minister and others for their criticism of Peta Credlin's claims about the length of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Credlin continued in week five to defend her coverage of the length of the Uluru Statement, and complained about being fact-checked by RMIT Factcheck and on Facebook. In an op-ed titled *Big Tech, Yes camp censors will only reinforce No vote* (*The*

***Australian, August 18, 2023*) Credlin wrote that "the Big Tech censors blanked it [her claims about the length of the Uluru Statement] out, plastering this statement where the video used to be - "False information. Checked by independent fact-checkers" - and a link to a document from a hardly unbiased partnership between the RMIT and the ABC."**

In week 5, 'No' arguments against the Voice were complicated because Lidia Thorpe put forward progressive 'No' arguments in her National Press Club speech on Wednesday 16 August. Thorpe's progressive 'No' arguments were used by News Corp to argue against the Voice, despite Thorpe's position representing a clear rejection of both the 'Yes' and conservative 'No' campaigns.

Another key topic of conversation was Qantas' involvement in the 'Yes' campaign, with Qantas and other organisations who support the 'Yes' campaign criticised for taking this position (red).

WEEK 6: 21 August - 27 August

In week 6, alongside continued accusations that the 'Yes' campaign were misbehaving in a range of ways (navy), another argument arose in response to discussion of the Australian Electoral Commission confirming in line with previous referendums that crosses would not be counted as valid votes, but that ticks would.

This reporting in the majority framed the 'No' campaigns as victims of a 'rigged' referendum process and was tied to other suggestions that the 'No' campaign were disadvantaged, such as because the 'Yes' campaign had more campaign funds (purple).

It is noteworthy that arguments that were dominant across the first five weeks, such as there being no details about the voice, and the threat of radical activism and treaties, substantially reduced in week six.

Instead, the main focus was on other accusations of wrongdoing amongst the 'Yes' campaign.

ARGUMENTS BY OUTLET

The balance or imbalance between 'Yes' and 'No' arguments across all outlets, and by outlet by number of words across the six weeks of analysis is shown in Figure 3.

When interpreting this graph, it's important to note that this is not a percentage of all content, but a percentage of any content that presents an argument for or against the Voice.

Overall, 70% of words using arguments are 'No' arguments, and 30% are 'Yes' arguments.

Across the six weeks, The Australian is the most balanced with

61% NO
and
39% YES

Sky News is the second most imbalanced, with

76% NO
and
24% YES

Daily Telegraph is the second most balanced, with

72% NO
arguments and
28% YES

Herald Sun is the least balanced, with

80% NO
arguments and
20% YES



Another way to view the balance across the outlets is by week. Figure 4 shows there is some variability across the six weeks. The most imbalanced week is the fifth week (81% 'No' and 19% 'Yes'), which was the week of the Labor National Conference. Week 3 was the most balanced (60% 'No' and 40% 'Yes'), which was the week of the Garma Festival.

Percentage of words for yes and no arguments by outlets.

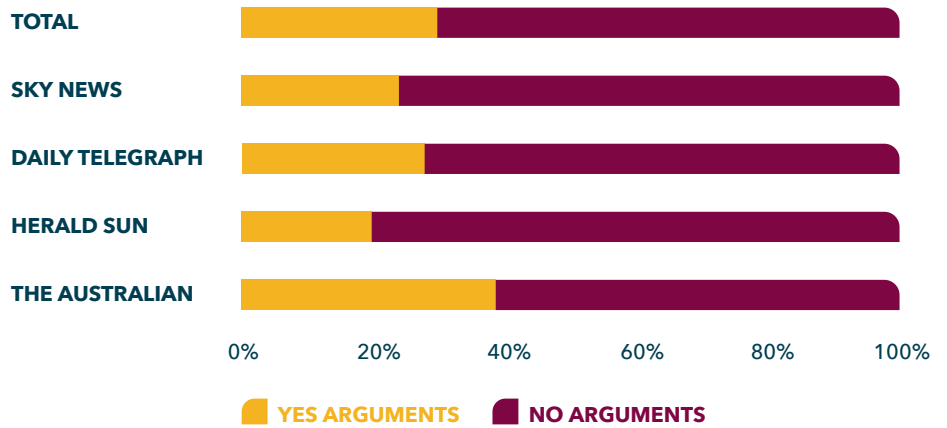


Figure 3: Percentage of arguments aligning with 'Yes' and 'No' campaigns by number of words, 17 July - 27 August 2023, by outlet, newspaper articles from Australian (250), Herald Sun (74) and Daily Telegraph (97) and 310 Sky News videos.

Percentage of words for yes and no arguments per week.

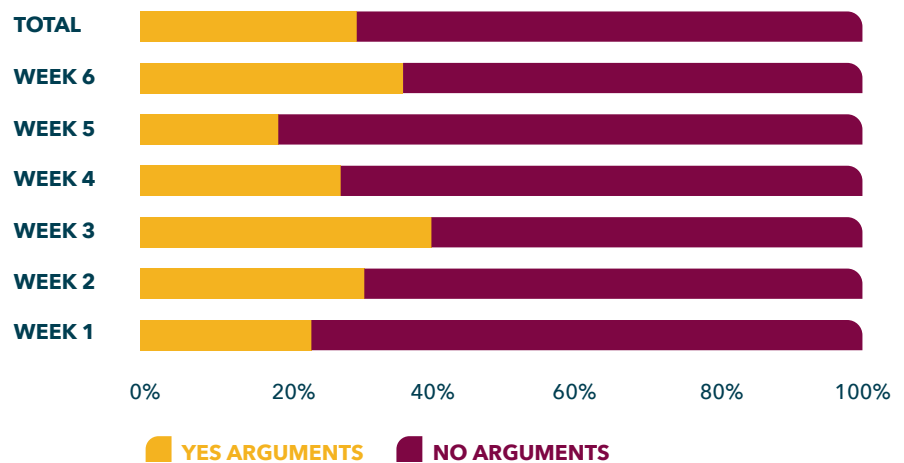


Figure 4: Percentage of arguments aligning with 'Yes' and 'No' campaigns by number of words, 17 July - 27 August 2023, by week, newspaper articles from Australian (250), Herald Sun (74) and Daily Telegraph (97) and 310 Sky News videos.

VOICES INCLUDED AND MENTIONED

'Yes' advocate Megan Davis, was quoted by *The Australian's* Sophie Elsworth on July 30 complaining Voice media coverage was too focused on politicians:

“

“All (people) are hearing is Albo, Jacinta, Dutton, politician, politician, politician,”

*Megan Davis,
The Australian, July 30, 2023*

Davis' observation accords with the findings for this research.

Across the six weeks, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese was the most included voice, and the most mentioned by a large margin. Albanese was included in 23% of analysed content, three times more often than second placed Dutton. He was also mentioned in an additional 36% of content, so overall the Prime Minister was either included and/or mentioned in 59% of coverage. (See appendix for more detail).

This demonstrates that much of News Corp's coverage frames the Voice referendum as all about the Prime Minister. He was included and mentioned in News Corp's Voice coverage more than Megan Davis, Noel Pearson, Thomas Mayo and Dean Parkin combined.

Many of Albanese's inclusions were quotations or interviews at events such as the Garma Festival, the Labor National Conference, or other interviews and press conferences. These inclusions gave Albanese an opportunity to advocate for the benefits of a Voice to parliament and thus to contribute 'Yes' arguments to the News Corp coverage. Overall, Albanese's inclusion is 27% of all the 'Yes' voices included, by number of words.

There were also elements of coverage where Albanese's inclusions were used to frame him negatively. For instance, in week 5 there was harsh criticism of Albanese, particularly on Sky News, for his admission on a radio show that he had not read the so-called 'extra pages' of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, in line with Peta Credlin's campaign of claims about these supposed extra hidden pages.

The most included voices for the 'No' camp are the second, third and fourth most included voices overall: Jacinta Price, Warren Mundine and Peter Dutton.

'Yes' voices Noel Pearson and Minister Linda Burney were placed fifth and sixth overall. Like Albanese, Burney's inclusions were often framed negatively, particularly her parliamentary speeches.

When you combine the words included for the top 'No' voices versus the top 'Yes' voices, not including the Prime Minister, 'No' voices lead:

- Peter Dutton, Warren Mundine, Jacinta Price and Lidia Thorpe - 24,447 words
- Noel Pearson, Linda Burney, Megan Davis and Dean Parkin - 15,725 words

'No' advocates Barnaby Joyce and Tony Abbott were included more often than key 'Yes' Voices Megan Davis, Dean Parkin, and Thomas Mayo. Progressive 'No' voice Lidia Thorpe also had more inclusions than these leading 'Yes' voices.

David Littleproud is more included than Malarndirri McCarthy. Pauline Hanson is more included than Noel Pearson. Sky News includes a higher percentage of 'No' voices than 'Yes' voices with 42% 'Yes' and 58% 'No' across the six weeks.

For voices included at Sky News, Anthony Albanese is the most included, and 'No' voices make up the next seven positions, including Jacinta Price, Barnaby Joyce, Lidia Thorpe, Warren Mundine, Peter Dutton, Tony Abbott and Sussan Ley. The next five voices are 'Yes' advocates Dean Parkin, Sam Crosby, Thomas Mayo, Julian Leeser and Pat Farmer.

Across all four outlets, 54% of words included from voices external to News Corp are 'Yes' advocates, and 46% are 'No'. Despite this even balance between 'Yes' and 'No' voices, 'No' arguments dominate the coverage, and the 'Yes' camp is in the majority framed negatively, particularly when they are mentioned and not given a chance to be included. This one-sidedness is due to the one-sided coverage from News Corp's own voices, particularly commentators advocating for the 'No' campaign, as further discussed below.

The overwhelming negative framing of the Yes campaign, and in particular Prime Minister Albanese, is explored in more detail in the *Characterisations and Narratives* section of this report.



NUMBER OF WORDS FOR OUTSIDE VOICES COMPARED TO YES AND NO ARGUMENTS

Despite 'Yes' voices being included in slightly higher proportion to 'No' voices, 'No' arguments dominate reporting. The reason for this is that News Corp's own voices, particularly commentators, in their vast majority present 'No' arguments.

This can be seen in Figure 5, which compares the number of words used to argue 'Yes' (navy) and 'No' (grey) to a Voice by people from outside of News Corp, compared to the total number of words used to argue 'Yes' (yellow) and 'No' (maroon) across all coverage.

The words from outside sources are those who are included in newspaper reports or *Sky News* videos (quoted, paraphrased and speaking), as well op-ed authors who are external to News Corp.

From this graph, it is clear to see that 'Yes' voices from outside of News Corp are contributing almost all the 'Yes' arguments by number of words. Contrastingly, 'No' arguments are used by 'No' advocates external to News Corp, as well as by News Corp voices themselves.

This finding aligns with the below discussion of the one-sidedness of News Corp commentators who in their vast majority advocate for 'No' positions, as compared to reporters, who tend in their majority to include both 'Yes' and 'No' voices in their Voice coverage.

It also shows that it is the enormous platform given to News Corp commentators that is the driving force behind the unbalanced coverage.

Comparing yes and no sources/authors with total arguments.

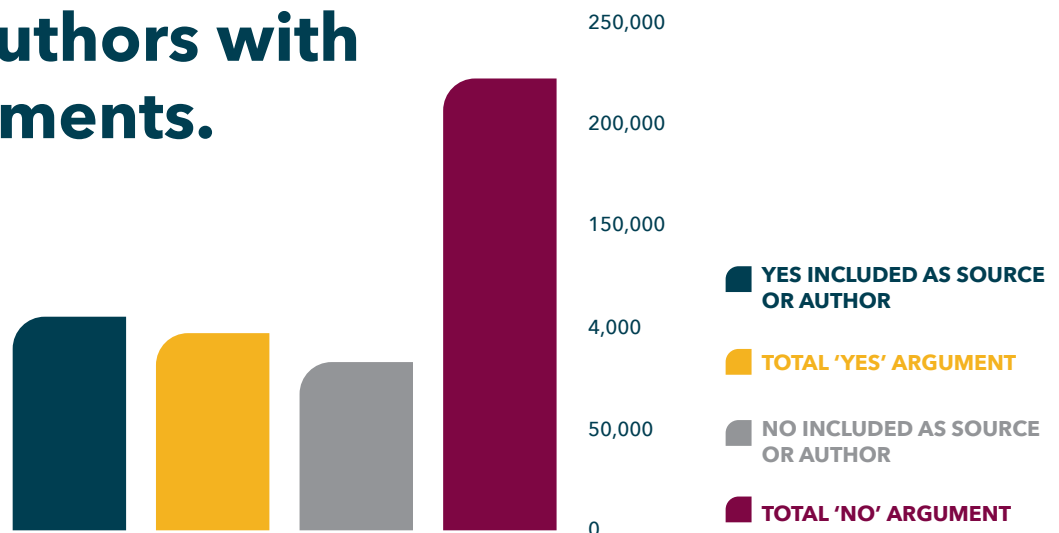


Figure 5: Compares words using 'Yes' and 'No' arguments from outside News Corp (including sources and op-ed writers) to total number of words for 'Yes' and 'No' arguments, 17 July - 27 August 2023, across all outlets, newspaper articles from *Australian* (250), *Herald Sun* (74) and *Daily Telegraph* (97) and 310 *Sky News* videos.

BALANCE OF PROLIFIC AUTHORS AND HOSTS

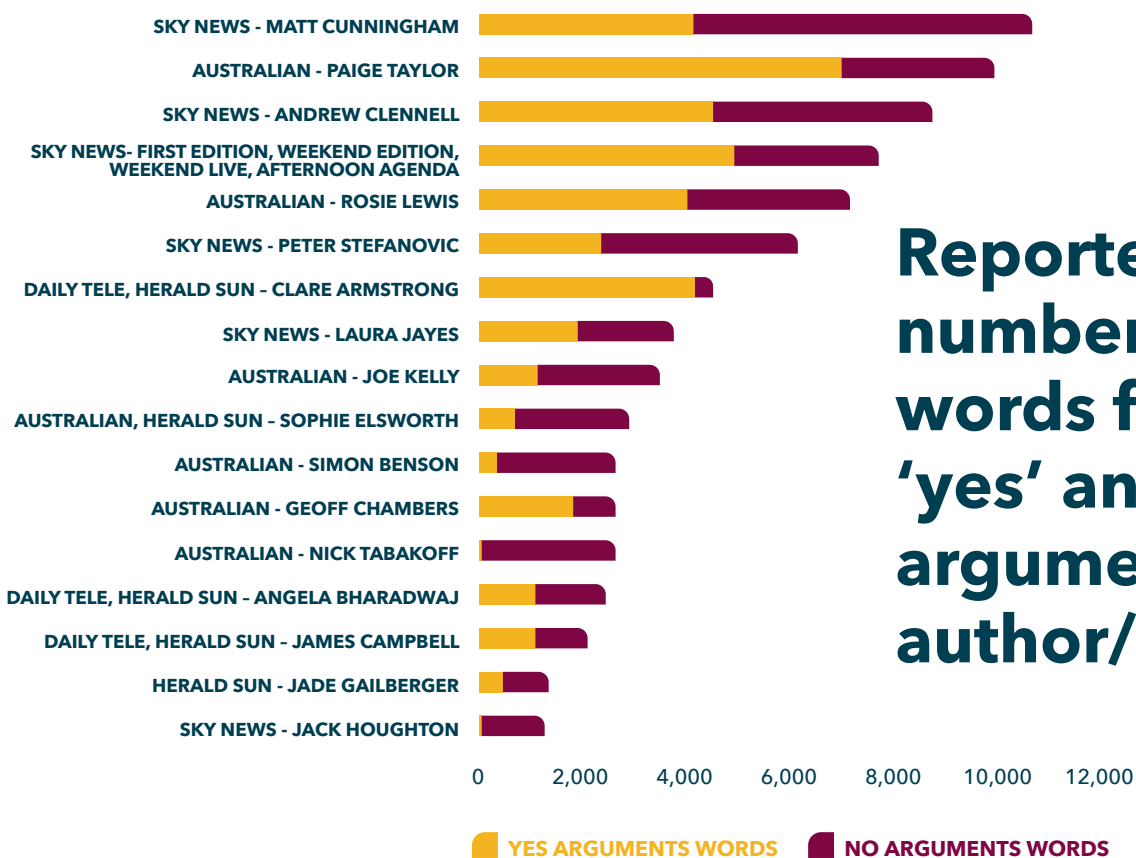
A key finding of this research is that there is a clear difference between the balance of 'Yes' and 'No' arguments amongst News Corp's reporters as opposed to commentators.

This contrast is shown by comparing the balance between 'Yes' and 'No' arguments used

by the most prolific reporters (Figure 6) and the imbalance of commentators (Figure 7).

Reporters such as Matt Cunningham, Andrew Clennell and Laura Jayes at *Sky News*, Paige Taylor and Rosie Lewis at *The Australian* and Clare Armstrong at the *Herald Sun* and the *Daily Telegraph*, have included a fair balance of 'Yes' and 'No' arguments.

In some cases, 'Yes' arguments are dominating coverage, which represents reporting about particular 'Yes' focused events, such as the Garma Festival, or interviews with 'Yes' advocates, such as the Prime Minister.



Reporters - number of words for 'yes' and 'no' arguments per author/host.

Figure 6: Words reflecting 'Yes' and 'No' arguments, per the most prolific reporters (authors and hosts) from 17 July - 27 August 2023, across all outlets, newspaper articles from *Australian* (250), *Herald Sun* (74) and *Daily Telegraph* (97) and 310 *Sky News* videos.

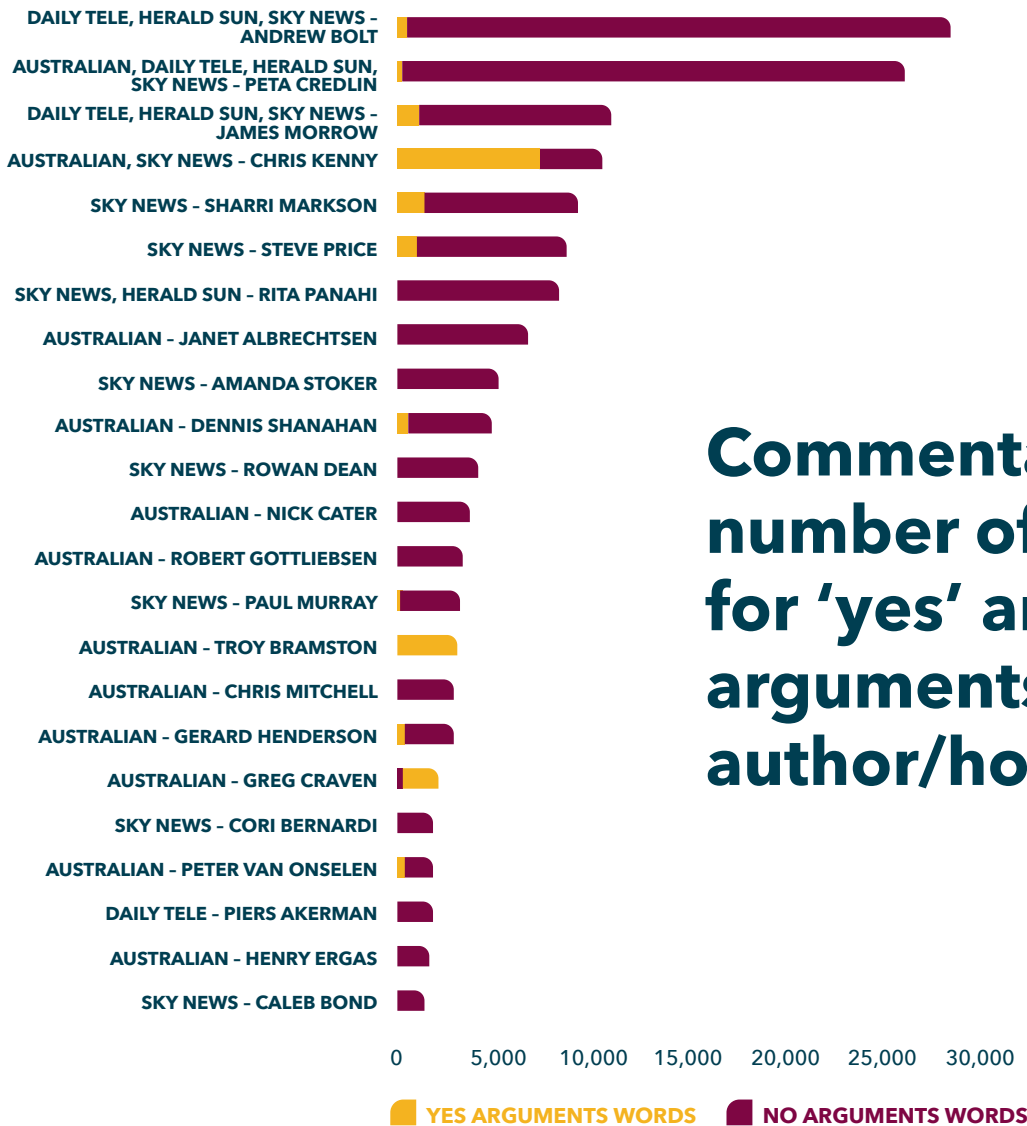
Commentators, on the other hand, as shown in Figure 7, are almost all one-sided in their representation of 'No' arguments.

The most prolific Voice commentators by a long margin are Andrew Bolt and Peta Credlin. Most of Bolt and Credlin's content is on their Sky News shows, but they also author commentary pieces for The Australian, Daily Telegraph or Herald Sun.

Bolt and Credlin are both clearly advocating for their audiences to vote 'No'. Their content is made up of their own arguments against the 'Yes' campaign, as well as those of their guests who are typically 'No' advocates.

Other commentators such as James Morrow, Rita Panahi, Janet Albrechtsen, Amanda Stoker, Sharri Markson, Dennis Shanahan, Rowan Dean, Nick Cater, Robert

Gottliebsen, Paul Murray, Chris Mitchell and Gerard Henderson and Cory Bernardi, are advocating for their readers and viewers to vote 'No', and their discussions of the Voice are closer to political campaigning than they are to news reporting.



Commentators - number of words for 'yes' and 'no' arguments per author/host.

Figure 7: Words reflecting 'Yes' and 'No' arguments, per the most prolific commentators (authors and hosts) from 17 July - 27 August 2023, across all outlets, newspaper articles from Australian (250), Herald Sun (74) and Daily Telegraph (97) and 310 Sky News videos.

Examples of commentators advocating for the 'No' campaign and persuading their audience to vote 'No' include:



“

“Australians are being lied to by their prime minister and their government. It’s a disgrace. Vote no.”

Rowan Dean, Sky News, July 30, 2023



“

“Now I want it [the Voice] to be put up I want it to fail and fail badly so it’s put away hopefully forever and a day.”

Peta Credlin, Sky News, July 24, 2023



“

“So please vote no for the sake of the children if not for yourself.”

Andrew Bolt, Sky News, August 23, 2023

There is a small minority of News Corp commentators advocating 'Yes' to a Voice. These hosts and authors include Chris Kenny, Troy Bramston and Greg Craven. It is noteworthy that these three 'Yes' advocates have used their opportunities to discuss the Voice to criticise 'No' campaigners for contradictory arguments and for misinformation. **These 'Yes' voices are in such a minority, however, that they are drowned out by the vast majority of commentators advocating against the Voice.**

When you compare the volume of 'Yes' and 'No' argument content produced by prolific reporters as opposed to commentators, it is clear why, despite the balanced coverage of reporters, overall the News Corp coverage is one-sided in support of the 'No' campaign, with 70% of all argument words representing 'No' and 30% 'Yes'.

Figure 8 groups the content by the prolific reporters and commentators in the two figures above. This shows where there

is approximately balanced representation of 'Yes' and 'No' arguments amongst the reporters (51% 'Yes', 49% 'No'), their argumentative content by number of words overall is much smaller than the content containing arguments amongst the commentators. The commentators' coverage is also extremely one-sided, with 12% 'Yes' and 88% 'No'.

Comparing number of words for 'yes' and 'no' arguments. Commentators versus reporters.

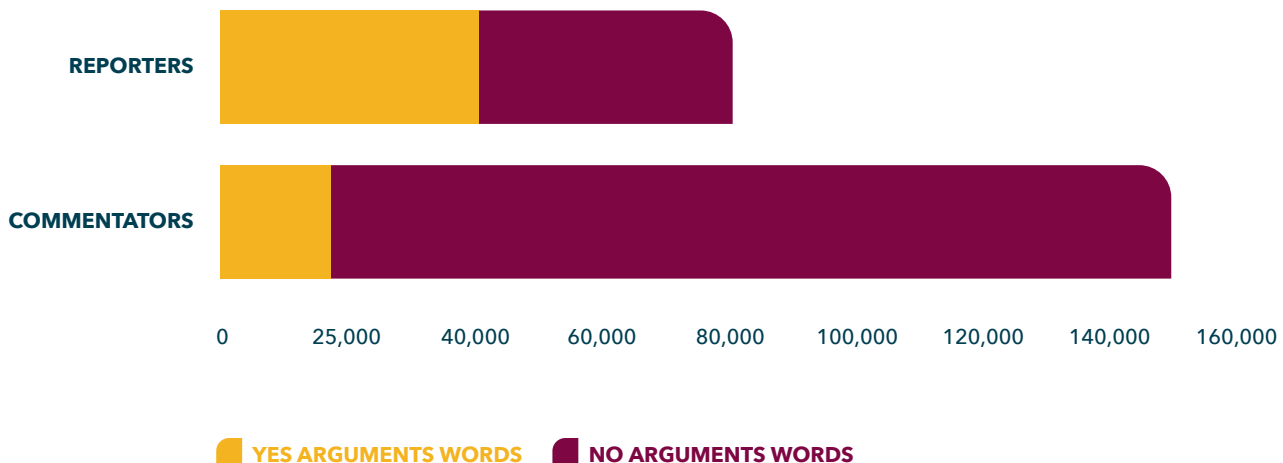


Figure 8: Words reflecting 'Yes' and 'No' arguments, across all prolific commentators versus reporters (authors and hosts) from 17 July - 27 August 2023, across all outlets, newspaper articles from Australian (250), Herald Sun (74) and Daily Telegraph (97) and 310 Sky News videos.

**NUMBER OF SKY NEWS
YOUTUBE VIEWERS -
COMMENTARY VERSUS
REPORTING**

As well as there being more commentary about the Voice than reporting, commentary also receives more YouTube views on *Sky News* videos, than reporting.

To demonstrate this, Figure 9 depicts the average views for ten *Sky News* YouTube videos hosted by commentators Andrew Bolt and Peta Credlin, as compared to the average views for ten reporters' videos hosted by Andrew Clennell and Laura Jayes. As shown, *Sky News* commentary is far more viewed, and thus has a much larger influence on the audience, than reporting.

Average number of views for 10 Sky News videos.

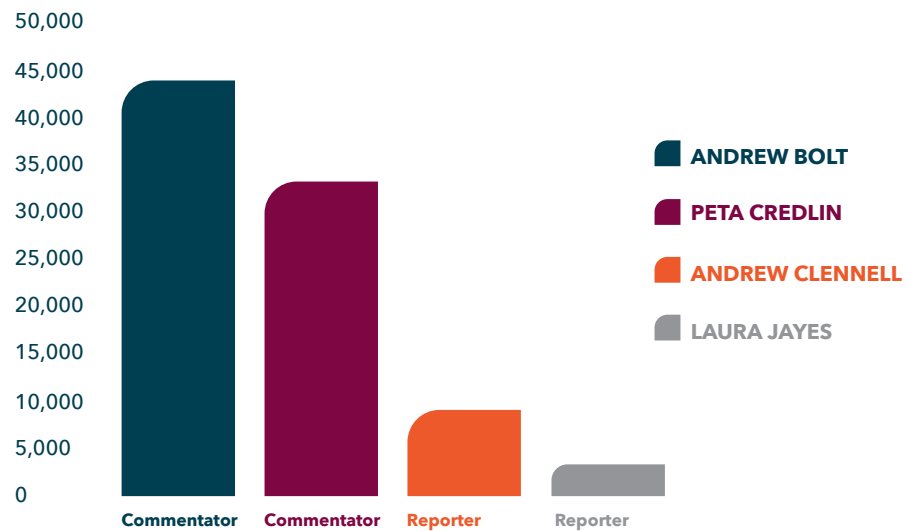


Figure 9: Average number of views for 10 Sky News YouTube videos randomly selected from sample from 17 July - 27 August 2023.



TOP 'NO' ARGUMENTS

The most used 'No' argument on News Corp, which has grown in use across the six weeks of analysis, is that the 'Yes' campaign is acting badly by being mean to the no campaign, dishonest and misleading about the true agenda behind the Voice, hypocritical in their complaints about the 'No' campaign, are using the Voice to virtue signal, and, more recently, are censoring the 'No' campaign.

The second most used argument against the Voice is that it will create more radical advocacy amongst Aboriginal activists, furthering their apparent agenda to gain reparations, and will lead to a Treaty. Although the Treaty was always part of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, much focus has been on the apparent hidden threat of a Treaty should the Voice to parliament referendum succeed.

An example of this argument is Andrew Bolt's suggestion that Lidia Thorpe's progressive 'No' opposition to the Voice for not going far enough, is actually a preview of what the Voice will be in reality:



For Thorpe the problem with Labor's plan for a kind of Aboriginal only parliament called the Voice, it's not that it goes too far, it doesn't go far enough... Now Thorpe has actually done us a favour by making clear what Labor won't... Labor's Voice to parliament is a con.

Andrew Bolt, Sky News, August 25, 2023.

The third most used argument was prominent in the first two weeks of analysis, and tied discussions of polling to 'No' arguments about voter support dropping for the 'Voice'. These 'No' arguments suggested this reflected the public supposedly 'waking up' to the threat of the Voice.

Over week 5 and 6 two new 'No' arguments became prominent in coverage. When Qantas held an event to mark their support for the 'Yes' campaign, there was much criticism of Qantas and other organisations for taking sides in the referendum.

There was also much discussion in week 6 of the apparent 'rigging' of the referendum after the Australian Electoral Commission confirmed in line with previous referendums that ticks would be accepted as 'Yes' votes, but crosses would not be accepted as 'No' votes. This discussion was linked to other apparent ways the 'No' campaign was disadvantaged, such as having less campaign funding than the 'Yes' campaign.

Other key 'No' arguments platformed included the concern that the Voice would advise parliament on too many issues, including those that do not impact only on Aboriginal people.

There were also 'No' arguments put forward suggesting that the Voice won't help Aboriginal people overcome problems in their communities. For example:



The thing that I worry about with the referendum is that we're going to go to the vote would you say October the 14th, yeah that's fine we get to October the 17th and there's still people in Alice Springs you know involved in domestic violence and overuse of alcohol and kids are roaming the streets. I mean if someone including Linda here could convince me that voting yes on the 14th of October would change those people's lives, I might even think about it, but I don't believe it will.

Steve Price, Sky News, 20 August, 2023.

'NO' ARGUMENTS AND MISINFORMATION

Many of the most used 'No' campaign arguments are premised on misinformation, and this misinformation is also used by News Corp voices to campaign against the Voice.

The second most used 'No' argument on News Corp across the six weeks is about the threat of unknown consequences from the Voice such as radical advocacy by Aboriginal activists, including treaties and reparations. This threat is tied to two key discussions which rely on demonstrably false information:



MISINFORMATION CASE STUDY 1

The Western Australian Indigenous heritage laws are represented as the possible outcomes of the Voice, despite being unrelated to the Voice.

For example:

Ms Price added that growing concerns in Western Australia, where a new Aboriginal Heritage Act means that any property larger than 1100 square metres will be forced to pay for Aboriginal Heritage Surveys before doing any work on their land, was a taste of things to come. "WA is what is coming (nationally)," Ms Price said. "The Voice is the foot in the door and the Prime Minister cannot deny that there will be a continuation of demands on the rest of Australia by activists and individuals seeking to make the most of the opportunity."

James Morrow and Angira Bharadwaj, Daily Telegraph, July 19, 2023

MISINFORMATION CASE STUDY 2

The one-page Uluru Statement from the Heart is represented as having additional pages which reveal the true agenda of the referendum. As fact-checked by RMIT ABC Fact Check The Uluru Statement is a one page document.

Credlin said:

I suspect many Australians aren't even aware that the Uluru Statement isn't the simple one-pager that has been widely circulated but a far more comprehensive document that runs to 26 pages, and it's an eye-opener because the whole tenor of the Statement from the Heart, and of the 13 meetings leading up to it, is of anger, grievance, separatism and the need to undo, as far as possible, the past 240 years of Australian history.

Peta Credlin, The Australian, August 3 2023

And that the extra pages contained: "plenty of stuff in there about treaties, compensation and a whole lot of stuff that they're not being upfront about" which "just leads voters to think it feels more and more tricky as the days go on".

Peta Credlin, Sky News, August 2 2023

The third most used 'No' argument is that there are no details about the constitutional change. There is almost no discussion of the fact that parliament will decide details if the referendum is successful, as discussed further below.

The fifth ranked 'No' argument is an accusation that the Voice divides or segregates Australia. This argument includes claims the constitutional change embeds race in the constitution for the first time. Race is already in the constitution. For example:

The case for the Yes vote in the referendum for racial heritage privilege to be installed in the constitution is not only weak but it's full of misinformation.

Piers Akerman, Daily Telegraph, July 23, 2023

The next most used 'No' argument is a claim that the Voice is not a grassroots campaign, but rather it is run by 'Canberra' or Aboriginal 'elites' who do not care about or understand disadvantaged communities in regional areas.

Somewhat related to the 'No' argument about the Voice segregating Australia is the seventh most used 'No' argument - the assertion that the Voice gives Aboriginal people special rights and more power than non-Aboriginal people.

MISREPRESENTING THE VOICE'S POWER

All of these elements of misinformation in the 'No' arguments, which are put forward by 'No' campaigners and News Corp voices, are related to a much larger tenet of misinformation relating to the power the Voice advisory group would have.

Within News Corp's coverage the Voice is regularly misrepresented as being powerful enough to dictate which laws and policies are implemented by the government. This apparent nefarious power is characterised as a "power grab" by Aboriginal activists which will be used for radical change and to privilege Aboriginal people. Here is an example of this misrepresentation:

Many Australians as the polls show are worried about the power the Voice could have to legally challenge laws set by Parliament.

Sharri Markson, Sky News, July 25, 2023

In this vein, Andrew Bolt misrepresents the Voice not as an advisory body, but as an 'Aboriginal parliament'. For example:

Prime minister Anthony Albanese he had another big headache today his plan for a voice to parliament, this kind of Aboriginal only parliament.

Andrew Bolt, Sky News, July 19, 2023

Andrew Bolt also claimed, in conversation with Barnaby Joyce, that the Voice "changes the nature of democracy". Bolt said:

So, when you say it completely changes the nature of democracy...if we have a debate right now we can't decide what to do, put up to a vote. If 51, 50 plus one, of the people want this, it happens. But here we've got a model where if three percent of the people say no, they can stop the other 97.

Andrew Bolt, Sky News, August 3, 2023

The Voice is also regularly referred to as 'constitutionally risky', with suggestions that the high court would determine its powers and that it will delay parliament. These claims have been consistently debunked by constitutional law experts, yet they continue to be platformed amongst the 'No' arguments at News Corp. For example:

I also discussed how, subject to the High Court, the voice body could clog the entire process of Australian government and in that way be able to fulfil the radical aims of the Uluru statement.

Robert Gottliebsen, The Australian, August 12, 2023

The only power a constitutionally enshrined Voice has which a legislated one does not have, is that if the Voice is in the constitution, it cannot be terminated by future governments. This fact is regularly misrepresented to underpin various arguments premised on misinformation as part of a wider scare-campaign to undermine the 'Yes' campaign.





DIVISIVE 'NO' ARGUMENTS

Many 'No' arguments against the Voice are divisive and some are racially charged.

One notable example is Andrew Bolt perpetuating the 'No' claim that the Voice gives Aboriginal people special privileges and alleging that Aboriginal people fake their Aboriginal cultural heritage to gain these special privileges.

These claims were included in Bolt's Sky News videos titled *'Almost no one checks': Claims nearly 'a third' of people claiming to be Aboriginal aren't* (July 26, 2023) and *Indigenous groups becoming increasingly angry 'fake Aboriginals' are taking jobs, grants* (August 9, 2023).

In a piece published by the *Herald Sun* on August 9, 2023, Bolt said of Labor MP Gordon Reid "the problem is that Reid, like an astonishing number of prominent Australians making a public fuss about their Aboriginality, turns out to have not one Aboriginal ancestor in his family tree" and that Reid "has often declared this Aboriginality that no stranger would guess from just looking at him."

Another racially charged element of commentary from 'No' voices is discussions of whether British colonisation was positive for Aboriginal people. For example:

Even had John Howard yes but coming out and saying and this made headlines around the world that the British colonising this land and positive the best thing that could have happened and that is just a statement of fact. It's not just opinion.

Because unless you genuinely believe that Australia was going to be undiscovered, this massive, and it was just going to be left alone by the rest of the world, the fact that it was the British as opposed to others colonising it.

And you look at what we have built in 200 odd years, how, uh prosperous, peaceful, what sort of a uniquely uh blessed country we have, that is something to be celebrated.

*Rita Panahi, Sky News,
July 30, 2023*

MISSING 'YES' ARGUMENTS

It is important to also consider which 'Yes' arguments are not receiving coverage from News Corp.

All available research shows that >80% of Aboriginal people support the Voice and this is a key argument of the 'Yes' campaign. As per

Figure 10, this argument has been included far less often than the 'No' camp argument that Aboriginal people do not want a Voice.

Similarly, as per Figure 11, the 'No' argument about there being no details about the Voice is one of

the most used arguments across the outlets. However, the 'Yes' argument that the details can only be decided by parliament if the constitutional amendment is successful, receives barely any coverage.

Comparing arguments about Aboriginal people supporting Voice.

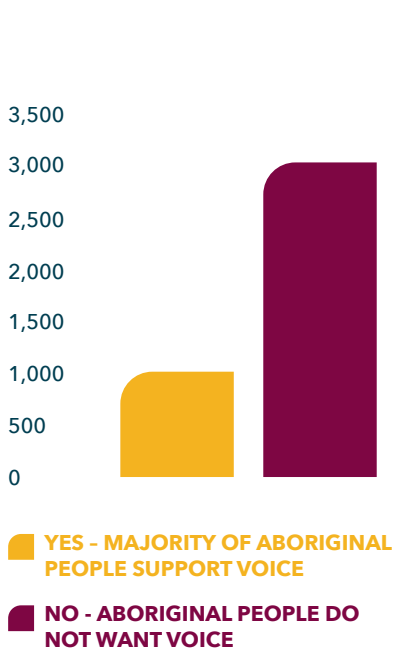


Figure 10: Comparing arguments about whether Aboriginal people want a Voice by number of words, 17 July - 27 August 2023, across all outlets, newspaper articles from Australian (250), Herald Sun (74) and Daily Telegraph (97) and 310 Sky News videos.

Comparing arguments about Voice details.

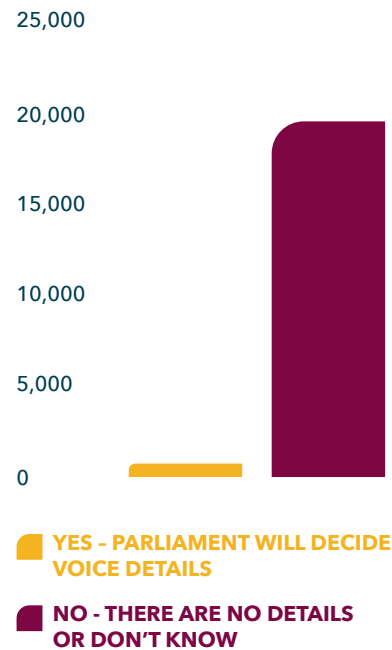


Figure 11: Comparing arguments about Voice details by number of words, 17 July - 27 August 2023, across all outlets, newspaper articles from Australian (250), Herald Sun (74) and Daily Telegraph (97) and 310 Sky News videos.

CHARACTERISATIONS AND NARRATIVES

Figure 12 shows the percentage of characterisations of 'Yes' and 'No' voices, as a total percentage of words where characterisations were used for the six weeks of analysis.

As per the arguments graph, this is not a percentage of all content, but only the content where voices were characterised as either victims (something bad is happening to them), villains (they are doing something wrong), or heroes (they are doing something good).

Percentage of words used to characterise yes and no camps.

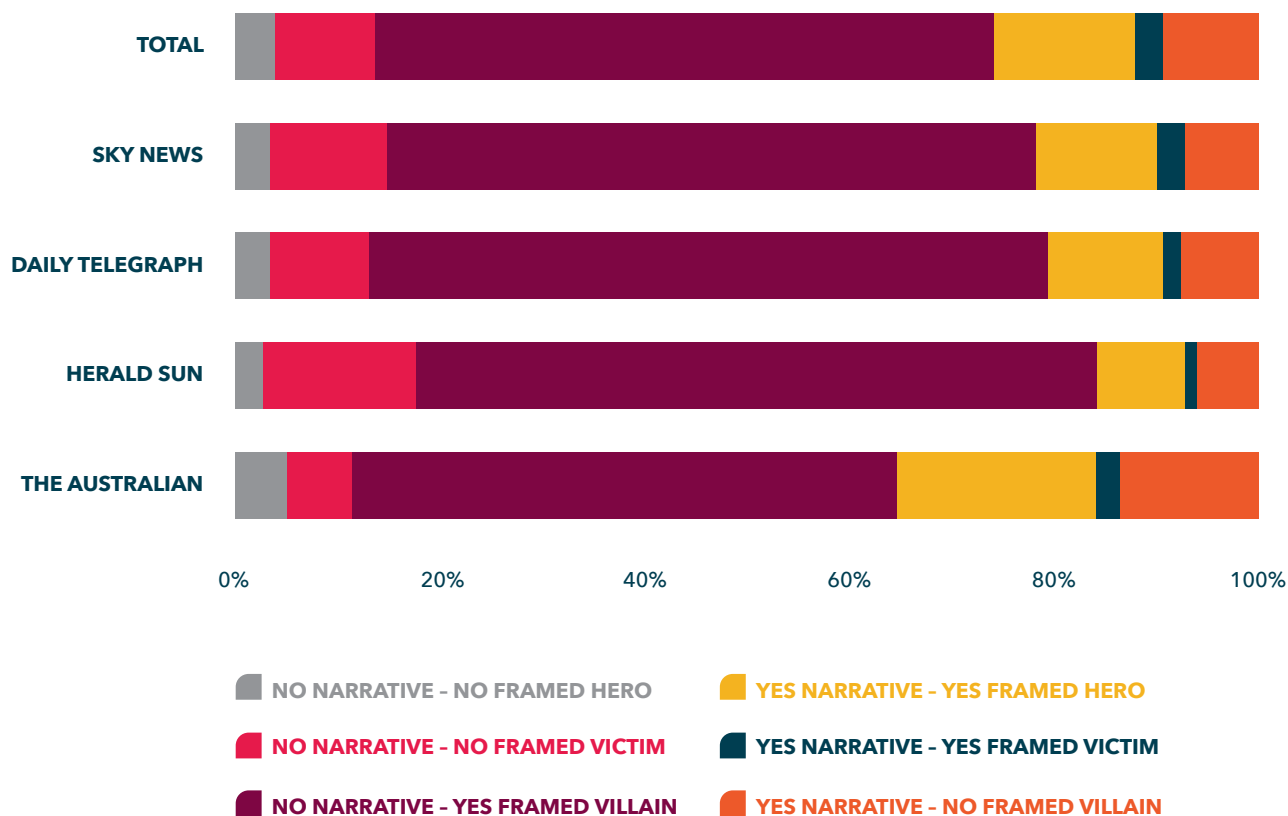


Figure 12: Percentage of words used to characterise 'Yes' and 'No' camps, 17 July - 27 August 2023, across all outlets, newspaper articles from Australian (250), Herald Sun (74) and Daily Telegraph (97) and 310 Sky News videos.

'NO' NARRATIVE

'Yes' campaign as 'villains': 60% of characterisations

The most used characterisation across the outlets is the 'Yes' camp as villains for advocating for a Voice to parliament (60% of framed words).

Across the six weeks, this characterisation is mostly focused on Anthony Albanese, who is blamed variously for dividing the country with the referendum, for not being honest about what the Voice really is, for hosting the referendum at the wrong time, and for not gaining enough support for the 'Yes' campaign.

This negative coverage also includes allegations that Albanese does not know what the Voice consequences will be, and contradictorily, that he has a hidden agenda about the Voice consequences.

This villainous characterisation is used by both 'No' campaign voices external to News Corp, and News Corp voices themselves, particularly commentators.

However, Senator Price said Mr Albanese was not being straight with voters. "It's absolutely not at all dumb, as the prime minister might suggest, to ask the question of whether Australians would be expected to pay reparations," she said. "We know there are Voice proponents like Thomas Mayo who have blatantly stated that they would be seeking reparations." Mr Albanese has previously committed to implementing the Uluru Statement in full and indicated that treaty and "truth-telling" would be "part of the next phase" of the reconciliation process... Senator Price added that she was disappointed that Indigenous Australians Minister Linda Burney had declined her offer to participate in a public debate on the Voice.

James Morrow and Angira Bharadway, Daily Telegraph, July 20, 2023

Be in no doubt. If the Voice gets up there will soon be two classes of Australians: those with ancestry extending back tens of thousands of years, increasingly consumed with a sense of grievance and entitlement, even though modern Australia is almost entirely colourblind; and those whose ancestry in this country goes back no further than 1788, who will be expected to pay reparations for the privilege of living in the nation they and their ancestors have helped create.

It's all there in the documents now available, whatever smokescreen the Prime Minister and other Yes campaigners try to throw up. And as a campaigner, heed this warning. It is not a given that the voice is doomed to fail. The Yes campaign will outspend the other side by a margin of 10 to one with a final message that it's racist to say No, even though the whole point of the voice is to transform forever the least racist country on earth.

Please, read the documents that those who want the Voice hoped you would never see.

Peta Credlin The Australian, August 3, 2023

'No' campaign as 'victims': 10% of characterisations

The second most used 'No' narrative characterisation frames 'No' voices as victims of the referendum campaign. This victim frame has particularly been used to represent Jacinta Price and Warren Mundine as victims of criticism from the 'Yes' campaign, backlash from their own communities for their 'No' advocacy, and as victims of division more generally due to the referendum. One example is:

"You look at Noel Pearson's comments and he made a dreadful racist comment against me in The Australian ... then you got Marcia Langton who I've known for 30 years," Mr Mundine said. "You've got a whole wide range of people like that. So this is central ... it's not like they're on the fringe." It comes after the Herald Sun revealed he had attempted self-harm after vicious trolls accused him of betraying Indigenous Australians by speaking against the Voice. Mr Mundine said slurs from Mr Pearson, as well as other Indigenous people, had hit him the hardest. "So that really hurt me. But you know, when you start using racial abuse, and attacking people like that, then that's just a no go."

Mr Mundine said social media abuse, which has increased as the Voice campaigns get off the ground, had affected him so badly he "tried to commit suicide twice".

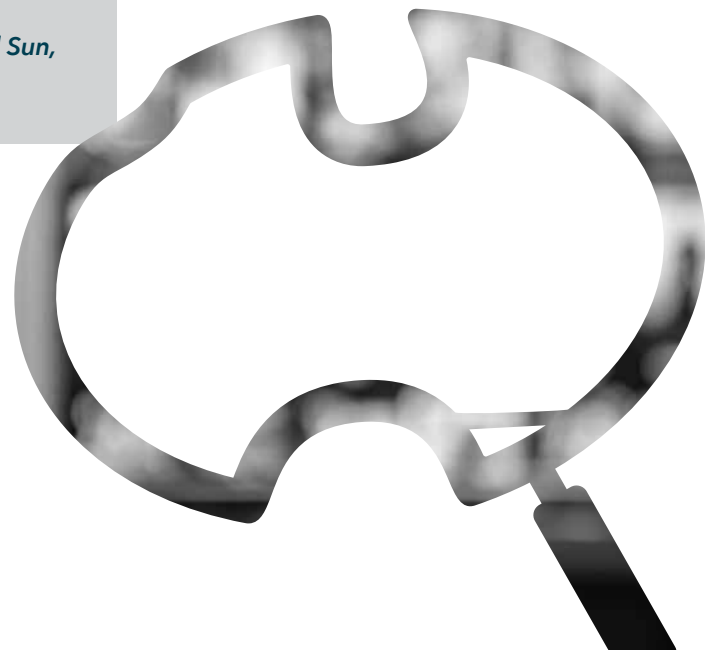
Jade Gailberger, Herald Sun, July 24, 2023

'No' campaign as 'heroes': 4% of characterisations

The 'No' campaign as heroes characterisation is used in only 4% of content. The 'No' campaign and News Corp voices rarely frame the 'No' camp as heroes as they are more focused on accusing the 'Yes' campaign of being villains. One example of the 'No' campaign framed as a hero for holding the 'Yes' campaign accountable is this one. For example:

When the No campaign injects some basic curiosity about the voice's actual powers and about the real agenda of its core supporters, it upsets that carefully crafted spin.

Janet Albrechtsen, The Australian, July 22, 2023



'YES' NARRATIVE

'Yes' campaign as 'heroes': 14% of characterisations

The 'Yes' campaign are framed as heroes in 14% of characterised words. This characterisation tends to be used by 'Yes' voices themselves when they're advocating for the value of the Voice. Here is an example.

Anthony Albanese: I think once it occurs, you will see it coming together as well. If Australians do vote to change our constitution, you'll see it coming together just like on the apology to stolen generations. Now that was an issue that some argued was divisive, some argued shouldn't occur and that there were all sorts of consequences which of course didn't arise. I don't know anyone now who walks around and says that was a bad thing for the nation.

Matt Cunningham, Sky News, 'The Voice: Australia Decides', 25 July, 2023

'Yes' campaign as 'victims': 3% of characterisations

The 'Yes' campaign are framed as victims in 3% of characterised content. Again, like heroes, this characterisation is used by 'Yes' voices themselves, usually when they are accusing the 'No' campaign of misbehaviour and are describing the impact this has had on the 'Yes' advocates. This is one example.

Mr Mayo on Monday hit out at "disappointing" personal attacks against him during the voice campaign he said had been hurtful, after he was depicted in a widely criticised No campaign ad receiving a handout from Wesfarmers chairman Michael Chaney.

Rosie Lewis, The Australian, July 18, 2023

'No' campaign as 'villains': 9% of characterisations

Like the other characterisations in the 'Yes' narrative, when the 'No' campaign are characterised as villains (9%), it is the 'Yes' voices accusing the 'No' campaign of misbehaviour in the referendum. This misbehaviour includes misrepresenting details about the Voice and spreading misinformation, and for racial discrimination against 'Yes' advocates, for example:

There is some pretty-nasty dingo whistling. Australia Day and the national flag are doomed. Australia will have a Treaty of Versailles with its own Indigenous citizens. There will be "reparations" for the taking of land and culture. It doesn't matter that any government standing on such a platform would face a mass loss of electoral deposits. In the Gothic horror world of No, all these disasters will occur the day after a successful referendum.

Greg Craven, The Australian, July 20, 2023

OVERALL NARRATIVES

The characterisations of heroes, villains and victims can be grouped to form a distinct narrative for each campaign:

- The 'Yes' narrative depicts themselves as heroes or victims, and the 'No' campaign as villains,
- The 'No' narrative depicts themselves as heroes or victims, and the 'Yes' campaign as villains.

The 'Yes' narrative makes up 26% of words amongst these narratives, and the 'No' narrative is dominant with 74% of all framed content. This is another perspective on the one-sidedness of the News Corp Voice coverage.

NEWS CORP: BIAS, BALANCE AND OBJECTIVITY

Although this research differentiates between reporters as those presenting news, and commentators as those presenting their opinions, this delineation is not always obvious to the audience.

Sky News commentators often present themselves as reporting news. For example, despite being a political commentator, Peta Credlin on *Sky News* (August 3, 2023) appropriates journalistic terminology in reporting her 'exposure' of the supposed hidden pages of the Uluru Statement, which she says were discovered through freedom of information requests. In this type of content, Credlin presents herself as an investigative journalist rather than a commentator.

Andrew Bolt also describes himself and his colleagues ("us") as being trusted by "millions of Australians" to "give them the news and to call it as it really is" in a video titled *'What a bitter man': Andrew Bolt blasts Turnbull for giving Sky News an 'almighty spray'* - *Sky News*, July 26, 2023.

The difference between news, analysis and commentary is thus blurred and often meaningless at News Corp, particularly at Sky News. Furthermore, since commentators and reporters

are presenting audiences with information about the Voice, they are all influencing the public's knowledge and understanding of the 'Yes' and 'No' arguments and thus all have an influence on the quality and diversity of the referendum debate.

Some News Corp voices seem to acknowledge the importance of referendum information being presented fairly and in an unbiased, balanced way, even when they are being one-sided themselves.

An interesting insight into News Corp's views on the importance of balanced and objective news coverage is revealed in their reporting about the Guardian's and the ABC's Voice coverage, as well as RMIT ABC's Fact Check.

Across the six weeks of analysis, the ABC was discussed in 6,191 words of coverage, and The Guardian in 740.

Amongst these mentions, News Corp regularly criticises other news outlets for being 'biased' towards the 'Yes' campaign, or against the 'No' campaign.

For example, Peta Credlin said the "media class" apart from News Corp is not giving the 'No' campaign enough coverage:



Well referendums ... they should be decided on argument not on ad campaigns. But if a referendum result can be bought, this one will be bought by a politically correct establishment that feels guilty about our history and wants to stay on side with the activist class.

Aided of course in all of this by a media class already captivated by whatever is woke, so more than willing to run the yes line and rarely, News Corp of course and this channel as an exception, rarely willing to give the no side much air time at all.

Peta Credlin, *Sky News*, August 7, 2023

Media writer Sophie Elsworth's coverage of the Voice is also regularly about the ABC or Guardian reporting and whether it is objective or biased towards the 'Yes' campaign. One example is:

The Balnaves Foundation philanthropic Foundation is part of a collection of same sort of groups that have donated 17 million dollars to the yes campaign. Now many of these articles on the Guardian website you could argue are favorable to the Voice and uh the Balnaves Foundation is supporting these articles so they have articles that are meant to be objective.

Sophie Elsworth, interviewed by Andrew Bolt, Sky News, July 19, 2023

Another example is when 'No' advocate Warren Mundine pulled out of the Q&A episode at the Garma Festival, Sophie Elsworth quoted Mundine saying:

"The ABC continue to do this, they have one-sided debates and you have a lot of media not supporting us and the yes campaign are still losing".

Sophie Elsworth, The Australian, August 6, 2023.

Speaking on Sky News (August 23, 2023) about journalists working at RMIT Fact Check who corrected Credlin's claims about the length of the Uluru Statement, host of Sky News' media show, Jack Houghton, and Andrew Bolt implied that it is important for journalists to be independent, objective, and not trying to influence the referendum.

Jack Houghton said:

One of them actually tweeted out that Peter Dutton was a fear mongering racist. Uh, these people are not objective and they're being paid specifically to influence the national debate. In this case, it's probably working a bit. And the referendum probably is being influenced.

Andrew Bolt then responded:

Yeah, like I say, I know Russell Skelton. Who's the head of this unit? Uh uh, has that employee that, uh, was saying, uh, that about Peter Dutton? Um, doesn't surprise me, uh, that there's this bias. I think Russell will be, uh, put up his hand to admit to being er, left wing. Uh, he's married, as you say to the very left wing ABC presenter Virginia Trioli.

Nick Tabakoff, in The Australian, July 30, 2023, reported that the ABC was tracking their Voice coverage to ensure 'appropriate diversity'. Tabakoff reported that the ABC's "content tracker" was

"ostensibly created to ensure a balanced position by the public broadcaster in stories about the Voice". He reported "many staff" at the ABC believed the tracker was created to:

deal with the sort of blowback that managing director David Anderson has routinely faced on similar issues during his high-profile Senate Estimates hearings, which invariably make headlines. The feeling is that an ABC Voice story could easily be the subject of a tough question from the likes of Liberal senator Sarah Henderson in Estimates.

Nick Tabakoff, The Australian, July 30, 2023

Such critiques of other outlet's balance, bias, independence and objectivity suggest that News Corp are aware of the importance of such principles in quality journalism. So much so that they see it as important to hold other outlets to account for meeting these standards.

In complete contradiction, Sky News has already attacked this research project, which is simply quantifying bias in News Corp's own coverage, as an "academic driven censorship campaign" designed with the intention of "hauling journalists before a royal commission for the crime of reporting the news".

Appendix

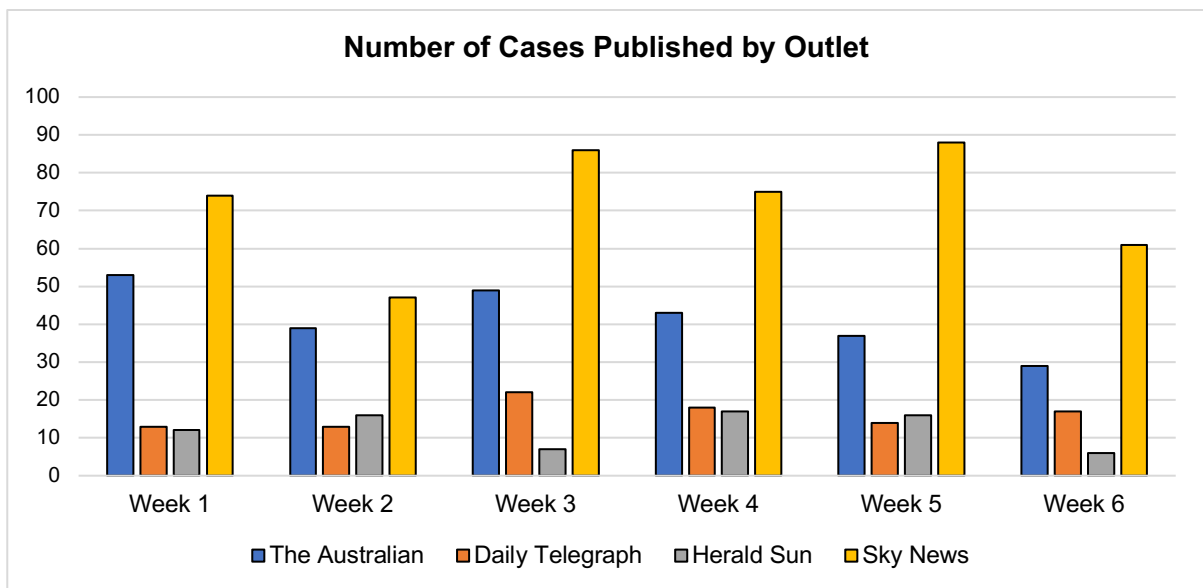
**PROJECT OUTLINE,
METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE**

Media monitoring has been undertaken by four media experts, including project leader Dr Victoria Fielding and research assistants Dr Catherine Son, Dr Alexander Beare and Robert Boucaut. Dr Victoria Fielding is a Lecturer in Strategic Communication at the University of Adelaide. Dr Fielding’s research focuses on media coverage of political, social and industrial contestation.

The method employed in this research is quantitative and qualitative manual content analysis of news and commentary pieces mentioning “The Voice”, published

by *The Australian*, *Herald Sun*, *Daily Telegraph* in printed and online newspapers, and on *Sky News’* YouTube channel. Newspaper articles were sourced from the NewsBank database and YouTube videos from Google search.

This interim report includes data for the first six weeks of analysis between 17 July - 27 August 2023. The number of cases excluding duplicates published across these six weeks by outlet is depicted in Figure 1.



Appendix Figure 1: Number of cases published by *The Australian*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Herald Sun* and *Sky News* per week between 17 July - 27 August 2023 mentioning “The Voice”.

Each week a maximum of 126 pieces of content (articles or videos) were analysed by the team of four researchers, providing a practicable and consistent sample in which to compare reporting over time.

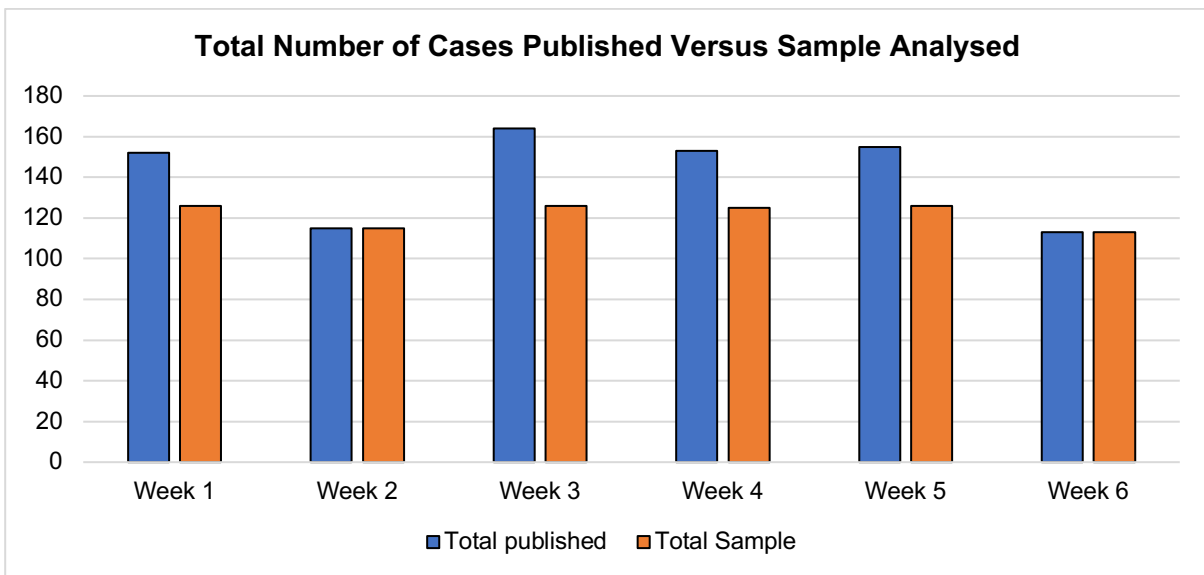
As per Figure 2, 86% of published articles and videos have been analysed over the six weeks. This includes 100% of the articles published by *The Australian*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Herald Sun*, and 72% of *Sky News* videos. This sample of videos was randomised by selecting the shortest videos for inclusion.

The coding framework used identifies by word which voices are included in coverage through quotes, paraphrasing or spoken interviews, which voices are

mentioned and which 'yes' and 'no' arguments for or against the Voice are included.

An additional layer of analysis allows for identification of the context or narrative framing of referendum voices and arguments through identification of their characterisation as either villains (people doing the wrong thing), victims (people having wrong done to them), or heroes (people doing the right thing).

This intricate layered content analysis method enables detailed quantification of the elements of coverage by number of words to provide a full and meaningful picture of News Corp's coverage of the Voice referendum.



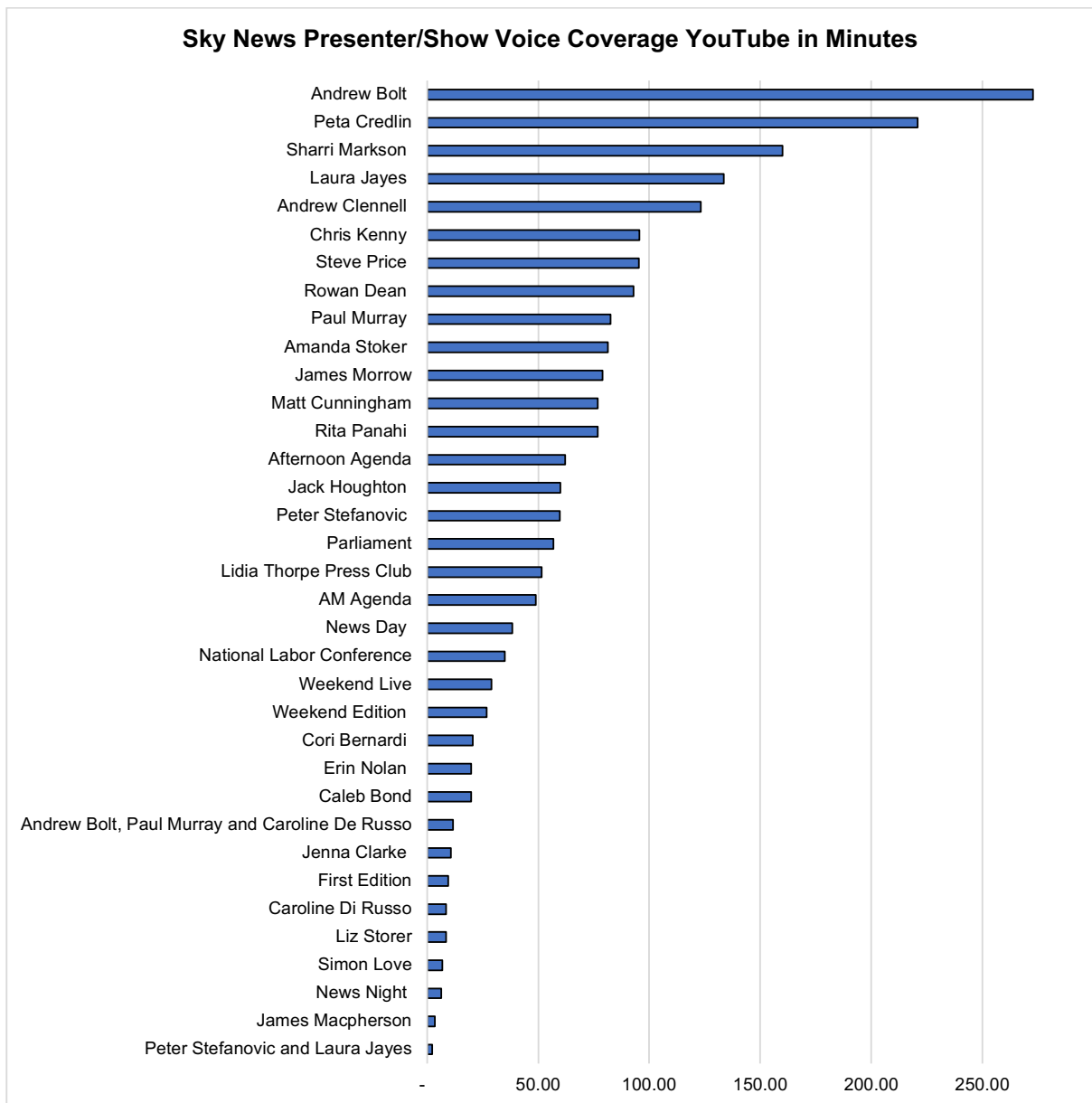
Appendix Figure 2: Number of cases published by *The Australian*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Herald Sun* and *Sky News* per week between 17 July - 27 August 2023 mentioning "The Voice", versus the number of articles analysed in sample.

TIME SPEAKING ABOUT THE VOICE: SKY NEWS HOSTS

The number of minutes each Sky News host spent talking about the Voice is shown in Figure 3. This calculation includes all 431 videos published to Sky News’ YouTube channel which mention ‘the Voice’, as identified using Google search, over the six weeks of analysis.

The two most prolific hosts speaking about the Voice include Andrew Bolt and Peta Credlin who are entirely and aggressively negative about the Voice. Although ‘yes’ proponent Chris Kenny’s contribution to the debate was small in the first three weeks, his

coverage has risen between week three to six, bringing him up the overall rankings to fifth overall.



Appendix Figure 3: Minutes per host across 431 videos published by Sky News YouTube channel, 17 July - 27 August 2023.

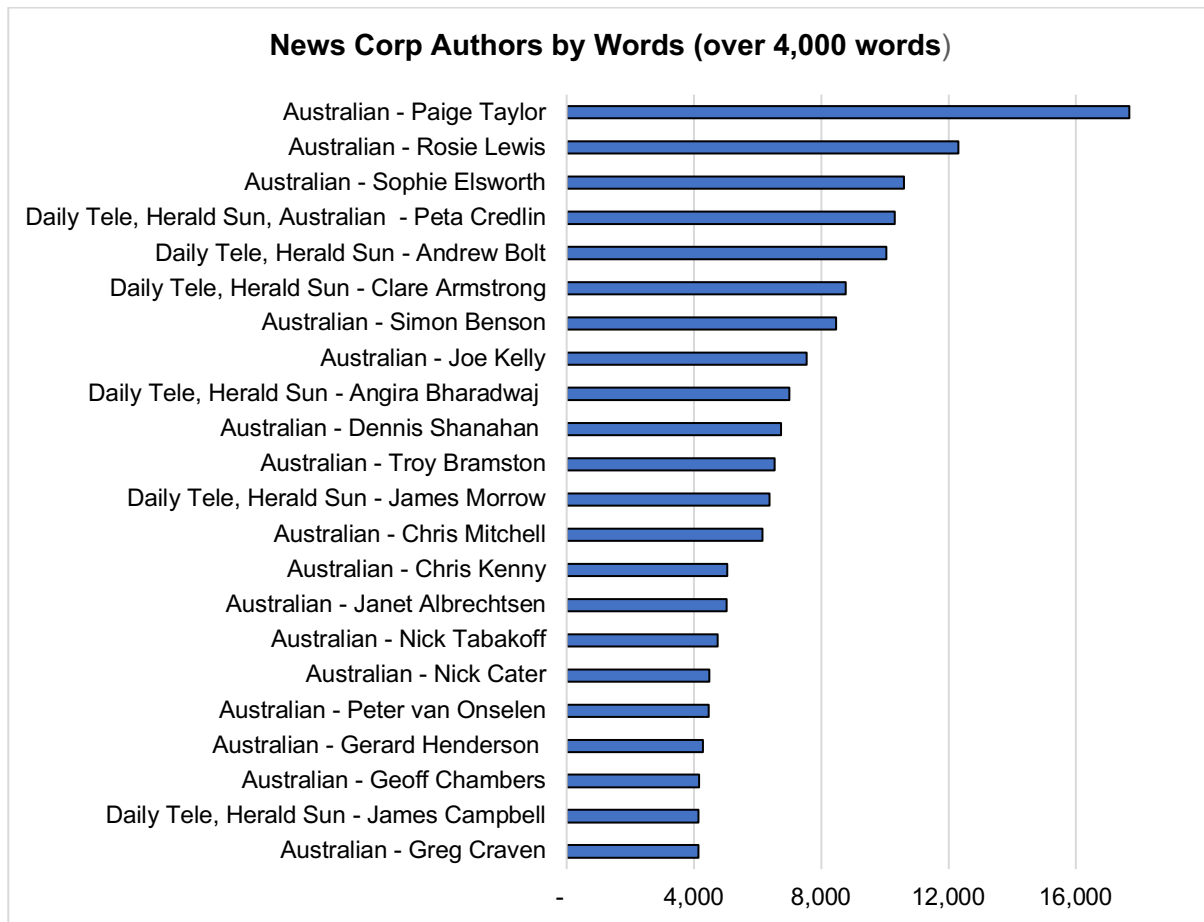
NEWS CORP AUTHORS

The most prolific News Corp authors writing about the Voice are included in Figure 4, showing those authors who have contributed more than 4,000 words in articles mentioning “The Voice” across six weeks.

The Australian’s Rosie Lewis and Paige Taylor are the most prolific writers, and are offering balanced reporting about the Voice. The Australian’s Sophie Elsworth is third, who writes about media coverage of the Voice, with a particular focus

on critiquing the ABC’s Voice coverage as apparently biased towards the ‘yes’ campaign.

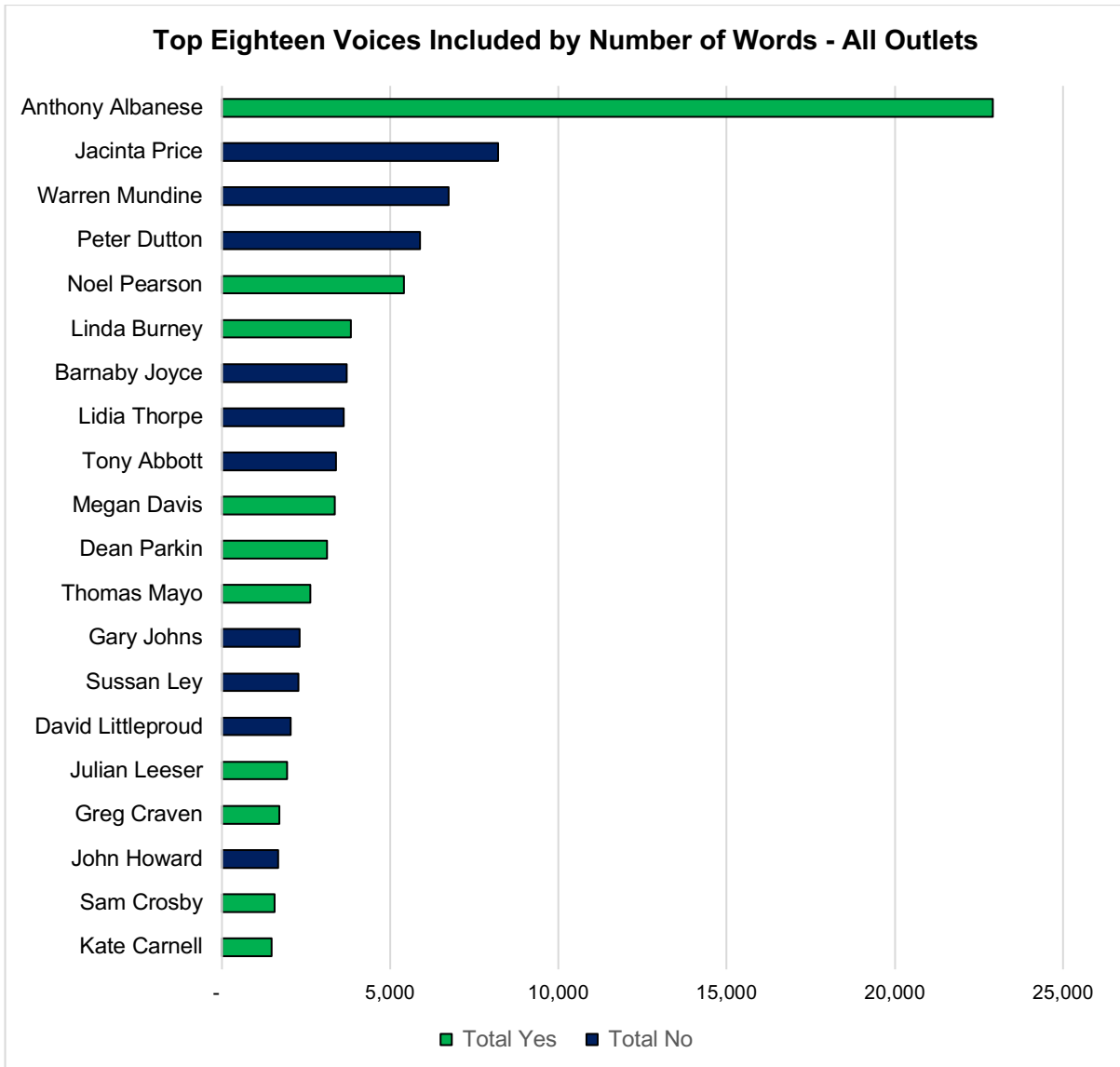
Peta Credlin and Andrew Bolt are third and fourth, with Credlin publishing in The Australian, Herald Sun and Daily Telegraph, and Bolt in Herald Sun and Daily Telegraph. Like their Sky News coverage, Credlin and Bolt are entirely negative about the Voice and advocate for readers to vote ‘no’.



Appendix Figure 4: Authors by number of words for newspaper articles mentioning “The Voice” (for authors over 4,000 words) in the Australian, Daily Telegraph and Herald Sun, July 17 - August 27 2023, total of 421 articles.

VOICES INCLUDED - ALL OUTLETS

Voices included in media coverage are those who are external to News Corp, who have been either quoted or paraphrased in newspaper reports, or interviewed and included as soundbites on Sky News. The top eighteen included voices in all outlets is shown in Figure 5, with 'yes' voices in green and 'no' voices in blue.



Appendix Figure 5: Top eighteen voices from outside of News Corp included in quotes, paraphrases or speaking by number of words 17 July - 27 August 2023, across all outlets, newspaper articles from Australian (250), Herald Sun (74) and Daily Telegraph (97) and 310 Sky News videos.

Across the six weeks, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese was the most included voice by a large margin (22,914 words). His inclusions were in the majority framed negatively.

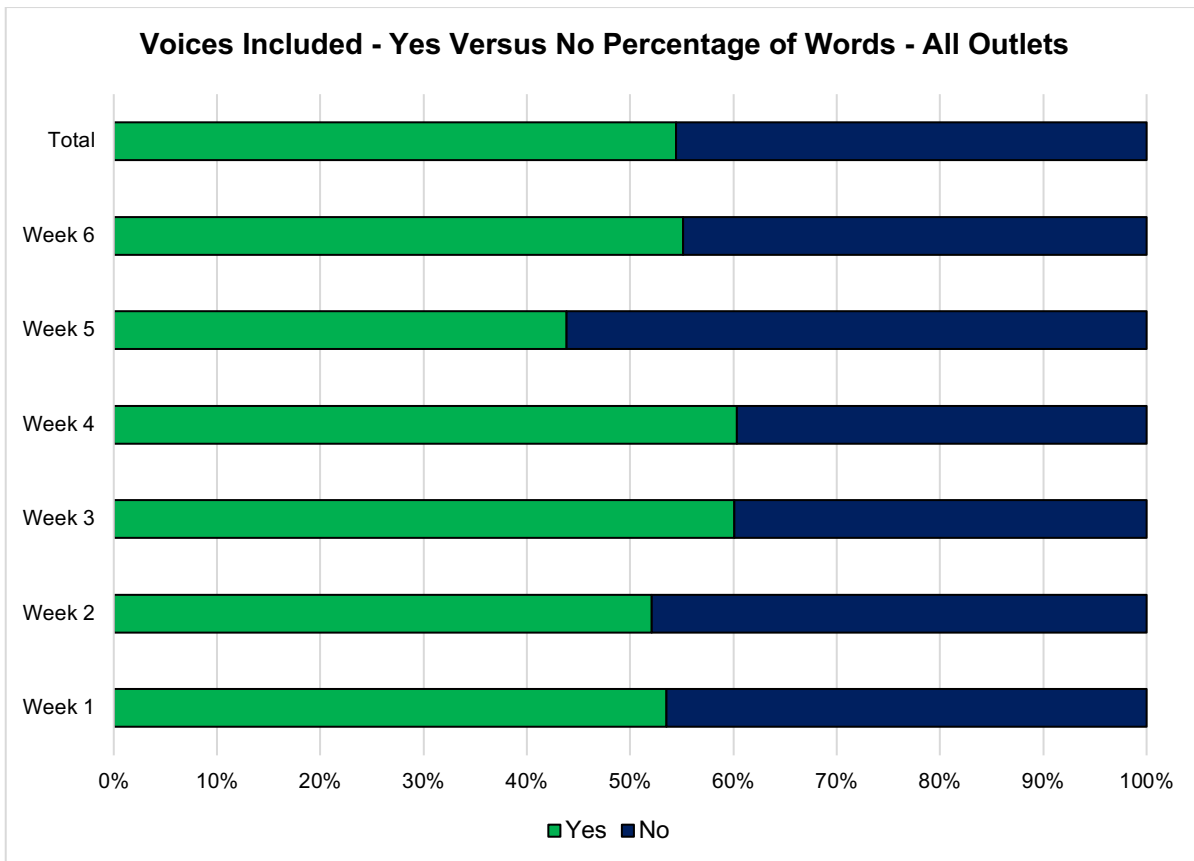
The most included voices for the 'no' camp are the second, third and fourth most included Voices overall: Jacinta Price, Warren Mundine and Peter Dutton.

'Yes' voices Noel Pearson and Minister Linda Burney were placed fifth and sixth overall. Like Albanese, Burney's inclusions were often framed negatively.

'No' advocates Barnaby Joyce and Tony Abbott were included more often than key 'yes' voices Megan Davis, Dean Parkin, and Thomas Mayo. Progressive 'no' voice Lidia Thorpe also had more inclusions than these 'yes' voices.

The proportion of words included for voices representing 'yes' or 'no' positions is represented in Figure 6. 'Yes' voices have slightly over 50% of inclusions for each week except week 5. Over the six weeks, 54% of words included from voices external to News Corp are 'yes' advocates, and 46% are 'no'.

Despite this fairly even balance between 'yes' and 'no' voices, 'no' arguments dominate the coverage, and the 'yes' camp is in the majority framed negatively. This one-sidedness is due to the one-sided coverage from News Corp's own voices, particularly commentators advocating for the 'no' campaign.



Appendix figure 6: Voices included by number of words advocating for 'yes' or 'no' campaigns, 17 July - 27 August 2023, across all outlets, newspaper articles from Australian (250), Herald Sun (74) and Daily Telegraph (97) and 310 Sky News videos.

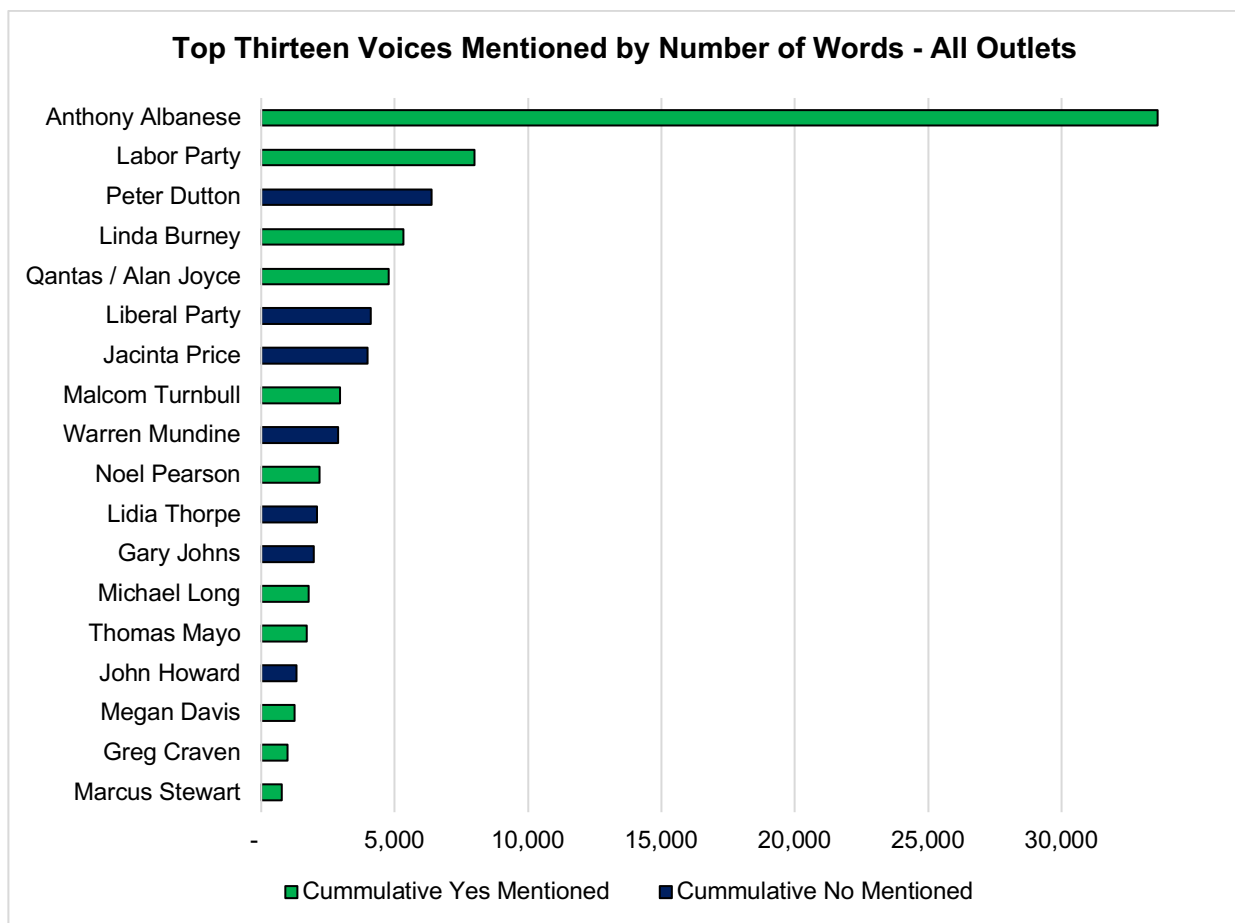
VOICES MENTIONED

Figure 7 cumulates the top 13 voices mentioned across the six weeks of coverage, by number of words.

Just as Anthony Albanese is the most included voice, he is also the most talked about person in relation to the Voice by a long margin, followed by the Labor Party or Labor government generally.

Peter Dutton is the third most talked about person, followed by Linda Burney, who is often talked about in a negative context.

Qantas or Alan Joyce are the fifth most talked about person and organisation due to criticisms of their support of the 'yes' campaign.



Appendix Figure 7: Top thirteen voices from outside of News Corp mentioned by number of words 17 July - 27 August 2023, across all outlets, newspaper articles from Australian (250), Herald Sun (74) and Daily Telegraph (97) and 310 Sky News videos.

PERCENTAGE OF ARTICLES AND VIDEOS INCLUDING OR JUST MENTIONING VOICES

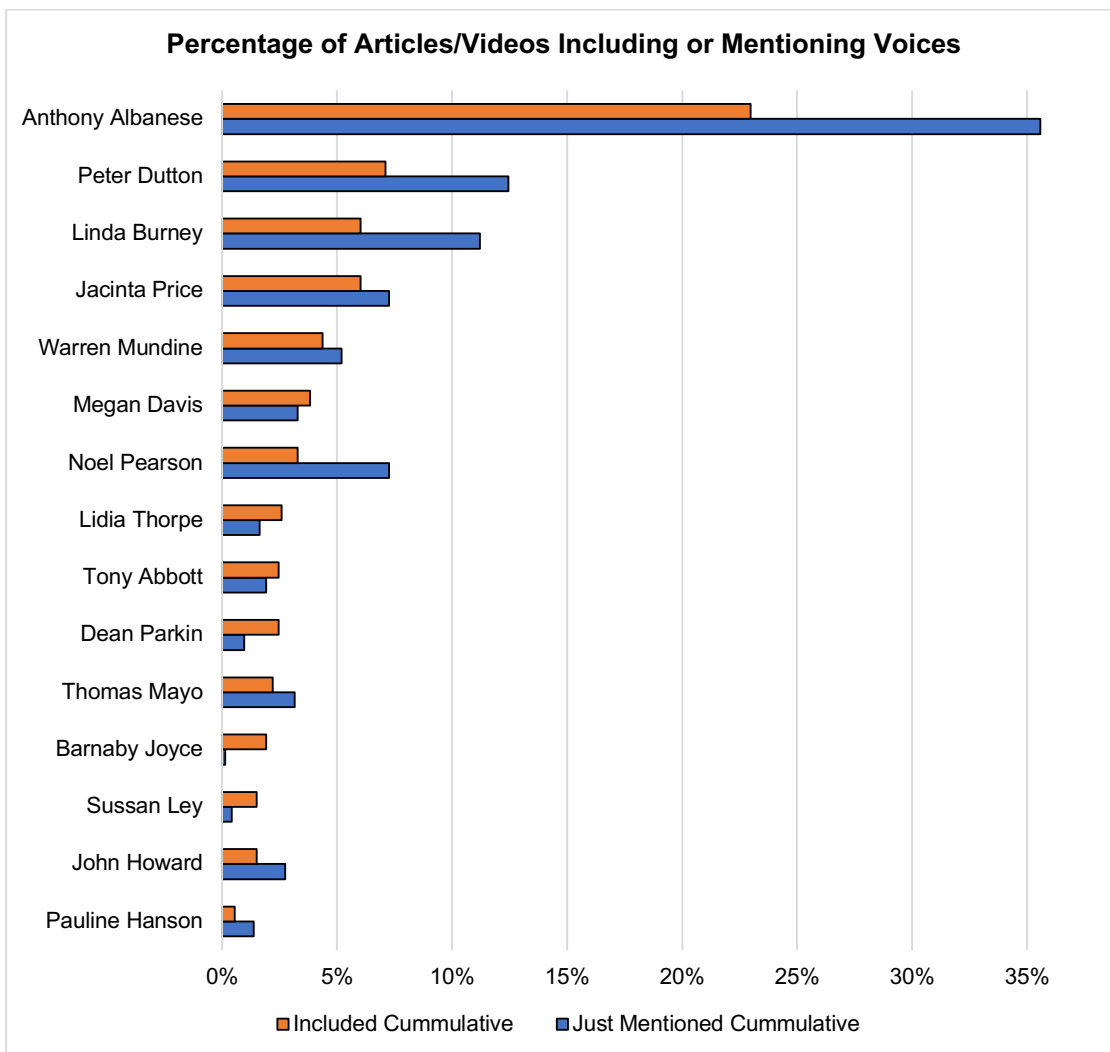
This graph, Figure 8 shows a different perspective of the voices included and mentioned by depicting the percentage of total articles which either include a voice, or just mention it without including it.

Across the six weeks, Anthony Albanese is the most talked about and included Voice, continuing to demonstrate much of the content is framing the referendum as all about the Prime Minister.

Peter Dutton, Linda Burney, Jacinta Price and Warren Mundine are other voices regularly talked about or included, although not in the same proportion to the Prime Minister.

Aboriginal ‘yes’ advocates, excluding Linda Burney, such as Megan Davis, Noel Pearson, Dean Parkin and Thomas Mayo, are far less regularly included than Aboriginal ‘no’ advocates Jacinta Price and Warren Mundine. Progressive ‘no’ voice Lidia Thorpe has been more

included and more mentioned than Dean Parkin and Thomas Mayo. Tony Abbott is also more included and mentioned than Dean Parkin and Thomas Mayo.



Appendix Figure 8: Percentage of articles and videos either including voices or just mentioning them, 17 July - 27 August 2023, across all outlets, newspaper articles from Australian (250), Herald Sun (74) and Daily Telegraph (97) and 310 Sky News videos.

AUSTRALIA
MURDOCH
UNIVERSITY
COMMUNITY



AUSTRALIANS FOR A
MURDOCH
ROYAL
COMMISSION

