

# Trusted media vital in cutting through Gaza crisis misinformation

By *Lee Duffield*

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***Finding out about the crisis in the Middle East and trying to understand it can be a marathon undertaking.***

***IA's media editor, Dr [Lee Duffield](#), makes a case here for relying on much-maligned news media.***

REPORTING THE Israel-Palestine [peace plan](#) agreed to on [9 October](#) had to cover a mountain of complications for media audiences interested in making sense of the whole story.

Despite always tightening budgets in the face of revenues lost to digital advertising formats, the news organisations have committed themselves to covering major world events, which they do best — deploying quality personnel with advanced technological resources throughout each day.

## **Using the news media — or do it yourself?**

In Australia, it applies to the commercial television networks, which can draw on agreements with international agencies. [SBS](#), which always emphasises global news and especially the [ABC](#), are held responsible for broadcasting in the national interest.

To many potential audience members, it does not matter what the networks do, given the prevalence of social media. There, you can be in an echo chamber following only what you want to hear and you can “have your say”. What comes over may be wrong, but it will feel alright.

To use it, to try and be a journalist for yourself, will take more effort. It is true that you can get direct access to what the main actors are saying, even if untruthful and disingenuous, whereas once that content was put in media releases and given to media professionals, to evaluate and pass on.

## **Big effort by media on big story**

The case for using professional media services instead, especially with a crisis like that in the Middle East, is that the good ones can do a lot of work that the task requires and fairly transparently explain it for you, either for a cheap price or for free.

A few observations on the Gaza coverage this

October:

One main task was to cut through what the partisan sides will avoid discussing: highly partisan supporters of Palestine avoid the Islamist terror attack, the pogrom of [7 October 2023](#); the [Netanyahu](#) Government of Israel and its backers avoid the 67,000 dead in Gaza.

There were immediate problems with the 20-point “peace plan”: Was Hamas demanding unacceptably too much with the release of murderers? If Hamas disarmed, would they be massacred by the [Israel Defence Forces](#)?

Has U.S. President [Donald Trump](#), in positioning himself as majordomo of the peace process, after an extended delay, turned on his close comrade Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu; and could that mean an actual breach of the unbroken policy of America since 1948, to always support and fund Israel, and supply it with armaments?

Are American, especially Trump family business interests in the Arab Gulf countries, a strong enough imperative to keep the U.S. Administration interested in a reconciliation program?

The news media have to adjudicate all of that and get on with setting out facts day by day; all highly useful to audience members, if they want to inform their conscience on a crisis affecting all humanity, if they want to honestly reconcile what is happening with firmly-held views they may have, or if they are just very curious as to what it is all about.

### **Coverage by ABC**

Coverage by the ABC set high standards in the week of the ceasefire taking effect.

Correspondent [Matthew Doran](#) distinguished himself by operating in the mode of a well-informed field reporter. The man appeared to

be everywhere he could go, to get and show the information being given at all levels: officials, crowd scenes and people in the streets. It was given context and explained in terms of the “why” of verified events. It was even-handed but confronted with the abuse and immiseration of the population of Gaza, which shocked the world and allowed for compassion.

In point of analysis, this correspondent grasped the significance of huge crowds in Tel Aviv booing the name of Netanyahu; a window on the pressures now being experienced by that intent and dangerous politician.

[Eric Tlozek](#), a Middle East correspondent since 2018, maybe seen in a more in-studio role, likewise has sorted out main points and followed the “human” significance of the story, not blankly reiterating declarations from one side or another. [John Lyons](#), the global affairs editor, has provided some [insightful analyses](#). He has also been concentrating on sources, getting information from those who know and do not always want to tell — very often the name of the game.

For more on the ABC, replay the panel discussion of Gaza on [Insiders](#) on Sunday 12 October, to get reasoned and informed discourse on what has been going on.

Finally, on the ABC, the coverage of the [national demonstrations for Palestine](#) on the Sunday broke through a decades-old mind block on street protests, where they would be reported but without telling what the protesters wanted to say — all put down to “emotionalism”.

More ethically, in 2025, the message was quoted to any prepared to listen: the protesters did not trust Israel to see the process through; they believed a “ceasefire was not liberation”, still wanting to see a Palestinian state and called for “sanctions on Israel” as pressure on Israel to give in to that

outcome.

The Sunday crowd estimates appeared to be conscientiously done, always a good indicator of community feeling. The 10,000 in Sydney backed up the statements of the organisers; if not the 90,000-plus on 3 August [crossing the Harbour Bridge](#), a more simple “march for humanity” in horror at the death toll in Gaza.

### Can print still do the news?

This review has not mentioned newspapers. In Australia, these are being discarded for opinion-making and exposed to ridicule, because of invective and distortions found in the commentary pages, editorialising, letters and much headline-writing — on the part of the dominant [News Corp](#) group.

Spare a thought then for the regular journalists still struggling in depleted newsrooms, but with good resources for finding out via electronica and some shifting in the national culture towards appreciation of valid information.

The news coverage after, maybe, some partisan contortions on page one, but on the way through to the offending or offensive op ed pages, tends to be still a good enough service for the cover price — say, \$3.50. Against scrolling and peering to get what you want on a small screen, this offers a digest of what has been going on, even with a splash of entertainment, all the work done for you.

### Case studies — the news in print

Two random examples (admittedly not being proof), papers picked up free at coffee shops:

The Brisbane [Courier Mail](#) of 28 August, in print, comprehensively covered most of the main news agenda, beginning on page one with [Taylor Swift](#)'s engagement; the [Gold Coast Suns](#) getting their first Finals berth;

Liberal state ministers in a scandal over a senior public service appointment; and a Labor frontbencher getting censured over an “offensive and misogynistic” Facebook posting.

Other processed news of the day:

- [Brittany Higgins](#)' lost defamation case;
- [Star Casino](#)'s debt crisis;
- a featurette on [Cathy Freeman](#);
- AI in schools;
- the hunt for [Dezi Freeman](#);
- a fatal boating accident;
- scooter bans for under 16s;
- a story about “nature” for Wildlife Photographer of the Year; and
- “EVs no silver bullet” — an obligatory contribution to News Corp's denialism on climate change.

And so on for 18 pages.

The coverage did include a few partisan digs, as with saying that withdrawals of federal subsidies and rebates were bound to fuel inflation.

The *Courier Mail* on 30 September, in print, also performed well on comprehensiveness:

- state energy executives to lose bonuses after breakdowns;
- errors in a public hospital affecting cancer patients;
- a new diagnostic tool for melanoma;
- a “crazed rampage” in suburban Brisbane by a would-be rapist with a knife;
- supporter blurb for the [Broncos](#) run at the Grand Final;
- [Ley](#) criticising [Albanese](#) for addressing UK Labour;
- Paralympians doing well in Singapore;
- an update on [Optus](#) and 000 calls;
- police medals awarded;
- two found dead in a Brisbane welfare

- check;
- a showbiz wedding;
- Treasurer says an EV charge will not deter buyers;
- a neo-Nazi charged for repeating a Hitler salute;
- another shooting in the USA at a Mormon Church;
- peace moves on Gaza; and
- NATO toughening engagement rules.

Fourteen pages, again orthodox reportage.

Part of what is significant about all this news coverage is not only the amount published, but what is left out, for failing a test of newsworthiness (is it new, interesting, informative, important?) — difficult to do.

Members of the public no longer have to trust entirely in the competence and scruples of journalists to obtain a daily feed through these limited channels. We are empowered to try and sort it all out for ourselves, which might be good for investigating a particular issue, not so good for making a general cover on the world.

Maybe, perhaps, sort of, dare it be suggested, that might be something you can leave to the professionals.

***Amongst Dr [Lee Duffield](#)'s vast journalistic experience, he has served as ABC's European correspondent. He is also an esteemed academic and member of the editorial advisory board of Pacific Journalism Review and elected member of the University of Queensland Senate.***