

Media content analysis

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Table of Contents

Background to the media analysis.....	3
Method	3
Findings by category.....	6
<i>Place-based truth-telling</i>	6
<i>Truth-telling through the arts</i>	7
<i>Truth-telling about First Nations cultural resilience and survival</i>	8
<i>Truth-telling, rights and justice</i>	8
<i>Truth-telling and education</i>	10
<i>Truth-telling, trauma and healing</i>	11
<i>Historical truth</i>	11
<i>Institutional truth-telling</i>	12
Understandings of “truth-telling”	13
Barriers to and enablers of truth-telling	16

Background to the media analysis

This media analysis focuses on an eight-week period that included the two weeks prior to the Australian Reconciliation Barometer 2022 survey, as well as the entire period the survey was open for responses. Between 1 July and 28 August 2022, the media analysis identifies specific events in which the notion of “truth-telling” was a central focus of interest. In early July, NAIDOC week and the release of the interim report of the Victorian Yoorrook Commission generated significant coverage. Also in July, news media covered the Garma festival and the national debate about an Indigenous Voice to Parliament, including the Greens’ position that truth-telling should come prior to a treaty and any Voice. The death of singer Archie Roach in late July prompted several articles discussing the relationship between his music and truth-telling. In August, the Queensland Government’s commitment to truth-telling as part of its treaty process was discussed in the press. In Tasmania, the removal of a statue of a former premier was prominent in both Tasmanian newspapers as well as those on the mainland.

Aside from coverage of the events above, many more articles — in local newspaper reports or in the opinion pages of major metropolitan dailies, for example — referred to truth-telling in a variety of other contexts. What the analysis of this material highlights is the diversity of meanings the term truth-telling has acquired, the variety of contexts in which truth-telling in all its forms occurs, and the range of different things people refer to when they talk about “truth-telling”.

Method

The date range of the analysis was from 1 July 2022 to 28 August 2022. We searched Australian news media during that time — including major metropolitan dailies, regional and local newspapers, and online news sites — for articles containing either the term “truth telling” or “truth-telling”. By including local and regional newspapers in our search, we were able to capture a larger variety of local

truth-telling activities, which were often absent from major metropolitan newspapers and online news sites.

The search generated 362 hits. Ninety-eight of those 362 articles were duplicates, while an additional 102 were deemed to be irrelevant to the analysis. The remaining 162 articles form the source material for this analysis.

We undertook an initial survey of the material, categorising each article according to the topic it covered, the jurisdiction each article focused on, as well as drawing out what the author and/or those being quoted understood “truth-telling” to be, what they thought about truth-telling (that is, whether they expressed positive, neutral or negative feelings towards it), and whether they discussed any enablers or barriers to the process of truth-telling or to community acceptance of truth-telling).

After this preliminary review, we developed thematic categories that have informed our detailed analysis below. The thematic categories are as follows:

- **Place-based truth-telling**, including, for example, references to re-naming, or dual naming protocols for, places or objects; the establishment of sites for truth-telling or reconciliation; memorials; as well as the recontextualisation or the removal of statues.
- **Truth-telling through the arts**, in which the arts (in the form of art, music, and theatre for example) is viewed as playing a role in truth-telling about the past.
- **Truth-telling about First Nations cultural resilience and survival**, including stories about the celebration of First Nations cultures, First Nations language revitalisation and the dissemination of Indigenous knowledges.
- **Truth-telling, rights, and justice**, encompassing the role of truth-telling in campaigns for First Nations rights, justice, and treaties vis-à-vis the state, as well as state-initiated efforts to come to terms with the past.

- **Truth-telling and education**, in which truth-telling is viewed as pedagogical, encompassing the belief that Australians need to be educated about First Nations perspectives on past history.
- **Truth-telling, trauma and healing**, in which truth-telling is viewed as an essential step on the path to healing the wounds of past traumas.
- **Historical truth**, including stories about efforts to uncover what happened in the past, and debates about how that process should best be conducted.
- **Institutional truth-telling (or truth-telling inside institutions)**, in which institutions (corporations and sporting organisations, for instance) have attempted or are attempting to address historical or contemporary injustices that they have perpetrated in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

As with any process of categorisation, we acknowledge that there is a degree of overlap between some categories, and some articles could fit into two or more categories. Where this was the case, we have noted this in the analysis below.

Our analysis was informed by the following questions:

1. How was “truth-telling” defined or described, if at all, by those employing the term, and what activities or actions are given the label?
2. Were any barriers or enablers of truth-telling identified, alluded to, or perceived in the source material, or barriers to community acceptance of the truths being presented?
3. What attitudes or feelings were being expressed towards truth-telling, was truth-telling viewed positively, neutrally, or negatively?

Findings by category

Place-based truth-telling

33 articles were coded under this category.

A significant portion of these articles related to the decision by the Hobart City Council to remove a statue of the former Tasmanian premier and doctor, William Crowther, from Hobart's Franklin Square. Prior to the statue's removal, the Council commissioned several Aboriginal artists to "re-work" the statue and, as historian Nancy Cushing noted, those "interventions drew attention to the statue" and "momentum built for [its] removal" (Cushing, 21 August 2022); as a result, some of the articles could also have been classified under the heading of "truth-telling through the arts".

What was most noteworthy about the articles about the statue's removal, however, was the focus on place, and more specifically, that places can be used to further truth-telling. The Council hoped that the statue's removal was just the start of a process which would eventually make, in the words of Hobart's mayor, "truth-telling a much more central part of our Civic Square" (Pridham, 17 August 2022). Several letters to the editor expressed the hope that removing the statue would spark further conversation about what had happened in the past, and at least one thought this could only be achieved by placing the statue in the Tasmanian Museum or in a purpose-built "Museum of Truth-Telling" (Launceston Examiner, 24 August 2022).

The removal of the statue was seen simultaneously as an act of truth-telling and an enabler of it, by encouraging debate and further reflection about Australia's dark past. Many correspondents were only made aware of, or became interested in, Crowther because of the debate over his statue's removal (Launceston Examiner, 24 August 2022; Cushing, 21 August 2022). However, the general manager of the Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation, Paul Roberts, suggested that "truth-telling" should come prior to the removal of statues, commenting that "At the end of the

day, it needs to be something that is talked through with the community. We think it needs to be a broad and open discussion” (Bird, 20 August 2022).

Other articles considered the idea of refiguring public spaces so that they became sites of truth-telling. These included: an opinion piece by planning consultant Stephen Bargwana arguing for the Australian War Memorial to recognise the “Frontier Wars” (Bargwana, 29 July 2022); two articles about raising Aboriginal flags at local health services (Ararat Advertiser, 8 July 2022; Kyabram Free Press, 13 July 2022) and another about placing Aboriginal artworks on Rural Fire Service station and trucks, (Kriedemann, 4 July 2022); reports on urban planning and landscape architecture that foregrounds “truth-telling” (Peddie, 2 July 2022; Welch, 2 July 2022; Masanauskas, 16 July 2022); an article about the launching of a phone app that guides user through places of historical significance in the Melbourne suburb of Fitzroy (ABC News, 30 July 2022); others about the restoring original Aboriginal placenames or renaming places (Foletta, 27 August 2022; The Gympie Times, 25 July 2022); and finally a piece about using “truth-telling” to attract tourists (Parkinson and Saroukos, 19 August 2022).

Truth-telling through the arts

The coding exercise resulted in 13 articles being categorised under this heading.

Most of the articles in this category related to the death of singer Archie Roach and the argument that many made, when reflecting on his life, that Roach engaged in truth-telling through his music. Indeed, several of those quoted made the specific link between Roach and the idea of truth-telling. For example, writer and broadcaster Daniel James suggested that Roach helped to start the discussion about truth-telling in Australia (ABC News, 31 July 2022), while Boon Wurrung senior elder Professor Carolyn Briggs went further, arguing that Roach had created the concept (McMillan and Ilanbey, 1 August 2022).

Several other articles also suggested, in one way or another, that truth-telling could be performed through the arts, in art exhibitions (O’Brien, 6 July 2022; Cooper, 27 August 2022), theatre performances (Scott, 8 July 2022; Collins, Smith, and

Barker, 21 August 2022), documentaries (Blue Mountains Gazette, 17 August 2022), and music.

Truth-telling about First Nations cultural resilience and survival

Six articles were categorised under this heading. Three related to NAIDOC week, reflecting the emphasis placed on truth-telling about First Nations cultural resilience and survival at events during that time (Bendigo Advertiser, 4 July 2022; Kyabram Free Press, 6 July 2022; Shepparton News, 1 August 2022).

As noted in several other categories, some of the articles included under this heading could have been coded differently. For instance, a report about the call made by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner June Oscar at the Garma festival for Indigenous knowledge to be acknowledged by the Australian public, as well as being a mandated part of the school curriculum, could also have been categorised under the “truth-telling and education” category (Averill, 29 July 2022). As acknowledgment was viewed as the first step and education the second, it was placed in this category. Likewise, an article about Aboriginal language revival in the form of a children’s book being introduced into schools and kindergartens in north-east Victoria is also relevant to “truth-telling and education” as well as “truth-telling through the arts” (Latimore, 5 July 2022).

Truth-telling, rights and justice

82 articles were identified in which the topic broadly related to truth-telling in relation to campaigns for formal First Nations rights or justice, the negotiation of treaties between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Australian governments, as well as formal inquiries. This was by far the largest category in the analysis.

The number of articles in this category can largely be explained by the prominent media debate about the Indigenous Voice to Parliament and the Greens’ position that “truth-telling” should come first in any national reconciliation process. Furthermore, many of the articles about the Voice only mentioned truth-telling to note that it was another aspect of the Uluru Statement from the Heart in addition

to the proposed Voice (see, for example: Gould, 27 July 2022; Daily Telegraph, 31 July 2022).

Aside from coverage about the truth-telling process on the national stage, there were many other articles which covered truth-telling initiatives at a state level.

Newspapers in Victoria reported on the release of the interim report of the Yoorrook Commission, which contained, according to Commission Chair Professor Eleanor Bourke, the stories and truths of Elders who had testified (Barracrough, 3 July 2022; Australian Associated Press – General News, 3 July 2022; Linton, 6 July 2022; Sil, 6 July 2022; The Mandarin, 6 July 2022).

Likewise, there were several articles focussed on the Victorian treaty process (Sunday Age, 31 July 2022; Faine, 31 July 2022; Benalla Ensign, 3 August 2022; Ilanbey, 16 August 2022; The Age, 18 August 2022). A further two articles appeared in relation to the South Australian treaty process (Walter, 15 July 2022; The Advertiser, 16 July), three on the Tasmanian truth-telling and treaty process (Denholm, 9 July 2022; Rowe, 26 July 2022; Goodes, 27 July 2022), and eleven on the Queensland Government's commitment to truth-telling as part of its undertaking to establish a treaty (See for example: Johnson and O'Brien, 17 August 2022).

Articles about the Queensland Government's proposed process, in particular, reflected a diversity of opinion about what such truth-telling entailed and how it should be conducted. Craig Crawford, the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, understood truth-telling as a formal process, conducted by an inquiry with the authority and powers to compel and demand evidence, and would produce something like an official history to "correct the record" in Queensland's institutions and school curricula (Silk, 17 August 2022). On the other hand, Mick Gooda, who co-chaired the Treaty Advancement Committee, suggested that Victoria's "royal commission-style 'truth-telling' commission" should be rejected in favour of "something more imaginative, possibly involv[ing] festivals in some communities where people could tell their stories" (McKenna, 17 August 2022). When the Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk signed a formal pledge to establish the inquiry within 18 months, she conceived of

it slightly differently again, as something that would help Queenslanders understand their history so it could be moved on from: “We are on the path to understand our past and acknowledge that in some parts our history is hard, but we can't let the past prevent us from building a better future,” Ms Palaszczuk said in a speech at the signing ceremony at parliament. “This is our chance to mark the end of one chapter of this story and begin another, not as an act of government, but as the will of the people” (Silk and Wuth, 16 August 2022). Palaszczuk’s reported comments highlight a common impulse within some conceptualisations of truth-telling and other transitional justice mechanisms: the desire to “fix” the past firmly in the past and to deny its ongoing implications for contemporary issues. Moreover, it was reported that an interim body would be established in Queensland to promote truth-telling in public institutions such as libraries, museums, archives, and art galleries (Silk and Wuth, 16 August 2022).

Truth-telling and education

Three articles were classified under this category, although there were others in the data set that also made some reference to the link between education and truth-telling.

One article, which could have been included under the theme of “First Nations resilience and cultural survival”, reported on the establishment of an Aboriginal cultural centre in Western Australia and was conceived as both a “mechanism of truth-telling” as well as “a facility to educate, unify and heal both Indigenous and non-indigenous people from the past traumas to continue in a shared future together” (Garlett, 23 August 2022). Another article reported Uncle Alan Marden telling the Yoorrook Commission that the “Aboriginal history side will be introduced as a compulsory subject, as is maths and English, and the truth of this country and Victoria” (Goode, 4 July 2022). An article in the Moree Champion also highlighted the perceived link between truth-telling and education, quoting Collarenebri Central School’s Aboriginal Education Officer, Roslyn McGregor who suggested that education had a vital role to play in ensuring people had the

“real facts” about Aboriginal culture and Australia’s past (Moree Champion, 14 July 2022).

Truth-telling, trauma and healing

A further four articles were placed into the category of “truth-telling, trauma and healing”. While this makes up only a small percentage of the sample, it belies the category’s significance, as many other articles also noted the belief that truth-telling was a means of overcoming and healing trauma. For example, reports about Victoria’s Yoorrook Commission also noted that Elders were giving testimony about particularly traumatic pasts.

Two of the articles categorised under this heading highlighted the belief that truth-telling was necessary for healing, with reference to two different traumatic events — the Northern Territory intervention and the separation of Aboriginal children from their families. In relation to the latter, the CEO of the Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation, Dr Tiffany McComsey, noted that a video which featured testimony from ex-residents of Kinchela Boys Home, was “guided by a survivor-led practice framework where central to the healing process is the practice of truth-telling” (Macleay Argus, 8 July 2022; Averill, 30 July 2022). According to her understanding, survivors of traumatic events would be helped to heal by being given the opportunity to tell their stories, and by having their stories heard.

The two other articles in this category came from *The Conversation* and focused on the Pope’s apology for the role the Catholic church played in Canada’s Indian residential school system. Both viewed the acknowledgment of past traumas by way of an *appropriate* apology as an act of “truth-telling” (Bergen, 26 July 2022; Richardson, 4 August 2022).

Historical truth

The six articles that were categorised under this heading related to efforts to understand what happened in the past, to tell the truth about it, and debates about how this might be done. As with the other categories, there was also overlap

between this and several other categories, especially in relation to formal inquiries, such as the proposed truth-telling body in Queensland.

Two articles focussed on a book about frontier violence in New South Wales, another on the efforts of archaeologists in Western Australia to uncover the truth about the treatment of Aboriginal people in leprosariums in the early twentieth century, while yet another in *The Conversation* argued that any truth-telling about Canada's past should include an investigation into Indian day schools and not only Indian residential schools (ABC News, 10 July 2022; Carleton, 12 July 2022; Blue Mountains Gazette, 4 August 2022; Blue Mountains Gazette, 10 August 2022).

The article on reckoning with Indian day schools, as well as an opinion piece by Amanda Vanstone and an article about the controversy over the repatriation of the remains of Mungo Man and Mungo Lady, all also point to some of the debates about how to approach truth-telling, as well as questions about whose truths gets to be told and the eventual content of the truths that are revealed (Garvey, 2 July 2022; Vanstone, 21 July 2022). These matters will be discussed further below.

Institutional truth-telling

Nine articles were categorised as being related to forms of “truth-telling” being undertaken by institutions to make amends for injustices committed inside or by them.

During the period in question there was newspaper coverage about calls for truth-telling and efforts to do so within a variety of institutions, including local governments, federal parliament, the public service, universities, and sporting organisations. For example, in response to the “Do Better” report into allegations of systemic racism inside the Collingwood Football Club and as part of an effort to improve relations with retired First Nations players, the club hired both Leon Davis and Andrew Krakouer as part of its “truth-telling program”, which was not defined or explained in any of the articles (Maddocks, 11 July 2022; Gleeson, 12 July 2022; Wood, 12 July 2022).

Understandings of “truth-telling”

Perhaps the most striking feature of this analysis has been the sheer diversity of activities, actions and events that are conceived of in the media as “truth-telling”, and the wide variety of understandings about what the idea of truth-telling means. This media analysis demonstrate that as far as public understanding goes, truth-telling is something that can be done in any manner of ways. It can mean a range of things to different people, and, in this sense, it is an amorphous notion.

In an indication of the evolution of truth-telling as an idea, and the way its meaning has expanded well beyond the original notion of victim testimony in the context of restorative justice, its use has over seeped into a number of other contexts including commentary on the Murdoch press, the idea of ‘fake news’, reports about pork barrelling, whistleblowing, defamation laws, disputes within the royal family, the British covid response, conversations about performance inside football clubs, responses to census questions, and Julian Assange’s legal plight.

As the coding exercise has shown, a wide range of things labelled as truth-telling broadly refer to an effort to address Australia’s colonial history and the relationship between First Nations and non-Indigenous Australia. News media reports of events such as NAIDOC week and the Garma Festival, local book festivals, the opening of local health services or public parks either contain “truth-telling” elements or as viewed as “truth-telling” in and of themselves. When Greens Senator Lidia Thorpe called the Queen a coloniser in Parliament it was described as truth-telling, as was the evidence given by family members about the death of a relative in the formal setting of a coroner’s court. A children’s book telling a story about a feast of bogong moths that is partly written in an Aboriginal language that has not been spoken fluently since the nineteenth century is regarded as truth-telling, as is a planned revamp of school curricula to include Indigenous knowledge and history, and a forensic archaeological investigation in Western Australian leprosariums from a century ago. Furthermore, the renaming of places, the removal of statues, as well as formal state or national inquiries are also all regarded as acts of “truth-telling”.

Even when it comes to a particular activity or event, it is not always clear which aspect of it is truth-telling, which is either part of the process or an enabler of it, and where truth-telling begins and ends. In relation to the removal of the statue of William Crowther from the Hobart's Franklin Square, for instance, the removal of the statue itself was considered truth-telling as was the commissioned artwork, which "re-storied" the statue. For some, the removal of the statue (or its reworking) was not necessarily truth-telling, those were actions that might prompt future truth-telling, but also might not. For others, it was only when the statue was recontextualised elsewhere, in a museum perhaps, or when Franklin Square became a place that told the truth about Tasmania's past, that truth-telling could be considered to have happened. For others, truth-telling was the step prior to the statue's removal, when Crowther's past actions were thoroughly investigated and the truth about them uncovered. Some people felt that this truth-telling had not happened as there was something of a rush to judgment in removing the statue. Finally, others such as historian Cassandra Pybus, argued that other statues commemorated even more barbaric Tasmanians and consideration of them would need to be included in any truth-telling exercise. As long as Crowther was the only one singled out, Pybus suggested, "you're not going to have the truth-telling about what a shocking and complete process was going on" (Knox, 20 August 2022).

Another issue that was prominent in the media sources was the question of whose truths were told (and heard), or, in other words, who was afforded the authority to engage in truth-telling. This, at times, related to the question of who is considered a member of the Aboriginal community in question, as has been an issue in Tasmania, or whose suffering warrants inclusion in any truth-telling, such as questions about the inclusion or exclusion of the former pupils who attended Canada's Indian day schools.¹

¹ Day schools, as opposed to residential schools, were those which First Nations children attended during the day, returning to their families / communities after school hours.

A related issue was the content of any truth-telling exercise. That is, what “truths” should be considered and which ones should be left out of any historical reckoning (and who gets to decide?). Former Minister in the Howard Government, Amanda Vanstone, echoed former Prime Minister John Howard’s calls for “balance” from several decades earlier, contending that while there is “certainly some truth” that First Nations Australians were treated appallingly by “some colonialists” and that we are all “living in a stolen country”, there is still “much to be proud of”. Of course, she suggested “there has to be truth-telling but let it be the whole truth not just the bad stuff” (Vanstone, 21 July 2022). Coming from a different perspective, Canadian Métis scholar Catherine Richardson reflected on the importance of language use in any truth-telling, arguing that using “inaccurate” words such as “resilience” instead of “resistance”, and “trauma” instead of “violence”, downplays historical injuries and distorts the content of the truth (Richardson, 4 August 2022).

While truth-telling was generally seen in a positive light in the sources identified in this analysis, there were some negative responses to the way truth-telling has been carried out or is planned. Of the 162 news media items considered in the analysis, only eleven were judged to be overtly negative. While there were other articles judged to be neutral towards the concept of truth-telling that quoted the views of those who held more negative opinions, our analysis suggests that truth-telling, as a (somewhat amorphous) concept, is difficult to disagree with. The process by which truth-telling takes place is another matter. One letter writer felt the removal of the Crowther statue was done hastily, to appease “noisy” activists. This opinion, that the loudest voices or those with political power are more likely to be heard, was not a completely isolated one (Burnie Advocate, 23 August 2022; Hobart Mercury, 24 August 2022). Another article reported that the Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation had accused the council of failing to heed “historical facts”, arguing that the claims against Crowther for his role in the mutilation of the remains of Aboriginal man William Lanne in 1869 were “fanciful.” Writing for *The Australian*, Matthew Denholm reported that several historians, whom he left unnamed, had urged the Council to delay its vote, stating that they had argued that

“further research was required before being able to conclude Crowther – who denied the claims against him – was guilty of the mutilation” (Denholm, 15 August 2022). Others too were concerned, or perhaps sceptical, about how “truths” were “fact-checked” and who would be doing this (The Australian, 22 August 2022). These findings suggests that some of those who might be opposed to certain forms of truth-telling position themselves as committed to the notion of “historical truth” and its pursuit. Most notably, former Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, and his former adviser turned media commentator, Peta Credlin, argued that any national truth-telling process would be an attempt to re-write history in an overly negative fashion (Abbott, 3 August 2022; Credlin, 4 August 2022).

Barriers to and enablers of truth-telling

As we have described in relation to the Crowther statue, what was seen as an act of truth-telling by some was regarded as an enabler by others. There were those who, for example, would not have been aware of the statue and the past it signified prior to any debate about its removal. Another example were the articles about Archie Roach’s death and his music, and those about art more generally. Roach’s music or other artistic expressions might be viewed as truth-telling in themselves but also as a way of prompting or encouraging a wider truth-telling discussion in the community (Scott, 8 July 2022; McMillan and Ilanbey, 1 August 2022).

Just as there was a striking diversity of things labelled as truth-telling, there was also a long list of things that were seen as enabling the process. These included:

- supportive local governments (Pascoe, 5 July 2022; Foletta, 27 August 2022), including those committed to restoring local sites’ Indigenous names (The Gympie Times, 25 August 2022);
- supportive public institutions (Silk and Wuth, 16 August 2022), universities (Gregory, 12 July 2022), sporting clubs (Gleeson, 12 July 2022; Wood, 12 July 2022), and local organisations (Kriedemann, 4 July 2022), as well as support from the business community (Goodes, 27 July 2022);

- symbolic gestures from such organisations (Ararat Advertiser, 8 July 2022);
- the incorporation of truth-telling into landscape architecture, urban planning strategies and the built environment (Victor Harbor Times, 2 July 2022; The Advertiser, 2 July 2022; Masanauskas, 16 July 2022);
- a greater First Nations presence in monuments and statues (ABC News, 22 August 2022);
- community events, including NAIDOC week (Kyabram Free Press, 6 July 2022; Blue Mountains Gazette, 17 August 2022; Cameron, 16 August 2022; Linton, 3 August);
- open discussion (Bird, 20 August 2022), sharing stories about the past (Courier Mail, 17 August 2022), as well as empathy, deep listening and a suspension of judgment from those hearing the stories (Giwa, Vandering, Moore, Joe, and Ricciardelli, 10 July 2022; Collins, Smith, and Barker, 21 August 2022);
- encouraging First Nations people to participate and instilling confidence in young First Nations people to do so (Savage, 2 July 2022; McKenna, 17 August 2022);
- education about Aboriginal culture and history (Goode, 4 July 2022; Garlett, 23 August 2022; Averill, 29 July 2022);
- agreement within the community, including the Aboriginal community, about the truth-telling process (Rowe, 26 July 2022); technological tools (ABC News, 30 July 2022);
- the media (Crikey, 2 August 2022);
- scholarly research (ABC News, 10 July 2022);
- successful native title determinations (Fox, 8 July 2022);
- truth-telling ventures in other jurisdictions (Morse, 16 August 2022) as well as international norms such as the UNDRIP (Thorpe, 8 July 2022);
- the powers of formal inquiries to compel and gather evidence (Silk, 17 August 2022);
- political bipartisanship (Sun Herald, 3 July 2022; Craven, 26 July 2022; Faine, 31 August 2022).

While political bipartisanship was viewed as an enabler of truth-telling, partisan politics and division were likewise seen as a barrier to both the process of truth-telling and the acceptance of any “truths” such a process might reveal (Jack the Insider, 4 August 2022; Faine, 31 August 2022). Legal scholar Greg Craven, for instance, argued that proponents of truth-telling and the Voice would almost certainly encounter misleading statements from political opponents, and while such statements, in and of themselves, would be barriers to truth-telling, so too would be any blind optimism from proponents, who believe such arguments and untruths would not be presented (Craven, 26 July 2022). It was also noted that truth-telling might potentially be hijacked by personal and political agendas (McKenna, 13 August 2022). The media was also seen as having the capacity to be either an enabler or a barrier to truth-telling (Crikey, 2 August 2022).

Other perceived barriers apparent in the source material included a lack of universal First Nations support (Gooley and Latimore, 3 August 2022); and disagreement over who was allowed to tell their stories, including the matter of who was considered part of the Aboriginal community (Bingham, 5 July 2022; Denholm, 9 July 2022; Rowe, 26 July 2022). The former Western Australian Treasurer Ben Wyatt and Greens Senator Lidia Thorpe both suggested that the any sense of truth-telling processes being unrepresentative of diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives could undermine it, with Wyatt arguing that not all Australians will feel empowered to tell their truths. Both also pointed out that the debate over Australia’s past would necessarily be confronting and some truths might be too painful to accept (Maiden, 1 August 2022; Maiden, 2 August 2022; Caines, 2 August 2022; Thorpe, 9 August 2022; Wyatt, 22 August 2022). Others suggested that disputes or disagreement about the process by which truths were told, the standards by which they were adjudicated, and who arbitrates when there is conflict or competing accounts were all barriers (Latimore, 31 July 2022; *The Australian*, 22 August 2022). Relatedly, it was suggested that a lack of historical rigour might be a barrier to community acceptance (Denholm, 15 August 2022). It was also argued that words matter, and inaccurate or inappropriate word choices might undermine the potential for acceptance (Richardson, 4 August 2022).

There was evidence of some wariness about any form of manipulation or the feeling that truth-telling might be inauthentic in some way. For example, when it was leaked that the Hobart City Council had hired a public relations firm to prepare press releases about the removal of the Crowther statue from Franklin Square, this was perceived by some as evidence that the process was confected (Reynolds, 10 August 2022; Denholm, 16 August 2022). In a similar vein, Country Liberal Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price, in arguing in an opinion piece that the process of truth-telling was manipulative and designed to pull at the heartstrings, suggested that any overly sentimental displays, especially from politicians, ran the risk of being perceived as ungenune and therefore might be considered a barrier to acceptance (Price, 13 August 2022). Elsewhere, while art was seen as an enabler of truth-telling it might also be considered a barrier if it slipped over into sentimentality (O'Brien, 6 July 2022). Finally, Amanda Vanstone suggested that an overly negative account of the past would also be a barrier to acceptance (Vanstone, 21 July 2022), while columnist Paul Kelly and commentator Peta Credlin argued that any sense that money or compensation was attached to any truth-telling process would undermine its legitimacy in the eyes of the public (Kelly, 3 August 2022; Credlin, 4 August 2022).