

Journalism plays an [important role](#) in democratic societies. As articulated in the [ACCC's Digital Platforms Inquiry](#), this role includes holding power to account, campaigning for social goals, and facilitating debate and the exchange of ideas. But who decides whether someone is a journalist or not? Before social media platforms it was uncontroversial that journalists were people reporting for large media organisations. Recently, however, youtubers have emerged on the periphery of journalism, and they are making inroads towards becoming accepted by mainstream audiences. The rise in popularity of youtubers is occurring in the wider context of new avoidance and [low trust in news media](#), with many people [criticising "the MSM"](#) as failing in its societal function.

[Avi Yemini](#) and [Jordan Shanks](#) (at friendlyjordies) have both amassed large audiences on YouTube, both have numerous articles written about them in mainstream media, and both have experiences with law courts related to their journalistic activities, as [plaintiff](#) or [defendant](#) respectively.

Avi Yemini and his supporters say [he is a journalist](#), others say [he is not](#). [Politicians](#) have called Jordan Shanks a journalist, yet in *Barilaro v Google*, Justice Rares slammed the friendlyjordies content relevant to the case as ["poison"](#). Avi Yemini and Jordan Shanks are not the only youtubers building audiences with journalistic content. Relative newcomers such as Leonardo Puglisi and the teenaged team at [6 News Australia](#) are beginning to make an impact, even [interviewing prime ministers](#). But like Yemini and Shanks, the teenagers' journalism status has not gone [unquestioned](#).

Discussion around who are journalists can get heated. It can also have legal consequences. For example, it is unclear whether the identity of the confidential whistle-blower in friendlyjordies' video [The Baddest MP: Dutton](#) would be protected under shield laws. I propose getting around this issue by focussing on content, not people. [Platform journalism](#) is an emerging form of journalism that combines the norms and routines of social media platforms (e.g. calls to action, dramatic sound effects, conversational mode of address) with journalism ideals and original investigation. If a YouTube video uses youtuber norms to present an original investigation into a public-interest issue, with verifiable facts, with a minimisation of harm, and the creator is not anonymous, then it is performing the role of journalism.

The emergence of platform journalism is likely to continue and expand. It will continue to shape how audiences are informed. To move past controversies and arguments over who is a journalist it may be better to focus on content.