

**Zoe Daniel, former ABC US bureau chief:**

**What have been the greatest challenges for the media covering the Trump presidency**

Trump is masterful at controlling the conversation. His chaos theory approach to the presidency applies equally to his political opponents and the press. It becomes a matter of simply trying to keep up rather than initiating either fresh policy or inventive stories. This was particularly the case during the early days of his administration when there was huge demand for coverage of his every tweet and outlandish remark. US media organisations have drastically upped their staffing to provide more capacity but it has been very challenging for foreign bureaux (not just the ABC's) in an era of ever increasing demand and decreasing resources. The net result is less nuanced, original storytelling about issues that matter in the US and more reactive news stories that sustain his desired narrative.

There's also the matter of interpreting and fact checking Donald Trump in real time. Experienced observers of the President can read his meaning and intent even when the thread of what's said meanders a lot, but there's a question of how much leeway should he get and shouldn't everything he says be consequential?

As to fact checking; it's slow and labour intensive and sucks up resources, which is part of the point – some untruths inevitably get through without rigour or qualification. That's to his advantage, or to any politician's advantage.

And, fake news; everything starts from the assumption that it's a lie these days, rather than truth, including journalism. Truth has become a very nebulous term. Trust has been deeply eroded and that's a lot to do with Trump.

**Is the US media more divided and more partisan at the close of his first term?**

Definitely. In part, Trump has been a win for the US media because he rates and he sells papers, so that's an upside. On the downside, trust in the press has been eroded via his use of 'enemy of the people' and 'fake news' to destabilise the credibility of the media. The media has not helped that by picking sides. Of course the US media was already very partisan before Trump, but like the voters, the TV networks, the papers and the web based press have retreated further into their corners during his administration. News and information is delivered through a partisan lens, creating quite valid questions about whether what they're telling you is true, false or at least deliberately politically skewed.

**If Trump wins a second term, what should the media do differently or what can the media do better?**

Fewer commentators, fewer inflammatory, gotcha moments, more real storytelling based around the stories and experiences of real Americans. A big part of the reason for Donald Trump's election was due to a perception from his supporters that they were forgotten. This has been compounded by the loss of regional and rural

journalists who were helping expose those stories. So, the national media needs to speak to people and help the partisan sides understand each other. Drill down into the issues in healthcare, education, industry, agriculture, environment, the arts and culture. Don't be ruled by Trump's deliberately constructed narrative and distracted by his dumpster fires. Set your own agenda.