

**Cameron Stewart, Washington correspondent for The Australian:**

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

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

The Trump presidency has been so utterly unique that it has forced reporters to rethink the way they cover politics. This is a presidency that has been marked by an almost unprecedented level of drama, theatre and controversy even before the pandemic. Old fashioned notions of truth and facts are contested like never before on both sides of US politics and I think the media has often struggled to drill through all of this to report what matters.

This is the third US election I have covered from the US and I have never seen the American media as polarised as it is now. Not even close. The US media has all but taken sides to be either pro-Trump or anti-Trump. Famous mastheads like the New York Times and the Washington Post sprinkle what they purport to be straight news stories (as opposed to opinion pieces) with editorial judgements like 'Trump said misleadingly' as if they are the gatekeepers. This is a relatively new trend. Take this example from last week (NYT or WAPO, I can't recall). "At one point Trump misleadingly presented voters with 'a choice between optimism, patriotic vision for American success' and what he described as Mr Biden's 'gloomy vision.' You would get an F at journalism school in Australia if you inserted the word 'misleadingly' into that sentence in a news story. Conservative media in the US are no better - both sides of the media in America seem to be playing to their increasingly partisan audiences. To flick the TV from conservative Fox News to liberal CNN is like switching between two Americas, neither of which understands the other.

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

If Trump is re-elected I think the American media needs to leave their city newsrooms more often and travel through rural and regional America to hear the views of ordinary voters. This is the only way to truly understand the forces that put Trump in the White House and - if he wins - kept him there. It feels sometimes as if both the liberal media and the conservative media in the US live in an echo chamber, only confirming their own bias rather than trying to truly understand what is really taking place out there.