

A decade of set-and-forget: how ACM protects Australia's regional news archive

Four owners. Three infrastructure eras. One backup setup that never needed replacing.



ACM

10+ YEARS WITH N2W

Chosen when ACM opened its AWS account

365 NIGHTLY BACKUP CYCLES

All running the same consistent process

0 MANUAL CLEANUP TASKS

Snapshot retention policies handle the lifecycle

1 CONSOLE

For backup, restore, and cross-region migration

- ✔ Reduced operational overhead
- ✔ Recovery confidence
- ✔ Faster, less risky migration

The company

Australian Community Media (ACM) is one of Australia's leading regional media companies, with mastheads serving communities across the country. James Flores, Enterprise Systems Engineer, has been there since 2009, long enough to watch the company change hands four times (Rural Press, Fairfax, Nine, and now ACM) and the infrastructure change shape three times. He's seen them scale from single servers at offices scattered around the country, to a consolidated VMware data center, and today to a cloud-first environment on AWS.

Through all of it, one thing hasn't changed: news doesn't sleep. **Breaking news demands 24/7** availability, and legacy print production runs overnight. ACM's systems have to be up precisely when most of the world is offline.

The challenge

Moving to the cloud solved one problem: no more big capital outlay for servers and storage. It introduced new ones:

Elastic also means easy to forget. Resources get spun up and, just as easily, get left running and ignored. With multiple people provisioning in the same AWS account, James had no reliable way to know what was actually protected versus what he assumed was protected. "There's stuff everywhere and we didn't have any visibility."

ACM is effectively a national archive. PDFs of every page, decades of images, content that can never be deleted. The data only grows, and so does the pressure to control storage costs. "There really is no 'get rid of stuff,'" James says. "We need to keep all our data since the inception of keeping news."

Manual snapshot management doesn't scale. Before N2W, ACM managed native AWS snapshots on their own, including relying on memory to restore an EC2 instance with its original IP, security groups, and VPC. As James puts it, managing snapshots yourself "becomes a nightmare exponentially depending on the number of instances you have."

"We need to keep all our data since the inception of keeping news."

James Flores, Enterprise Systems Engineer, ACM

The solution: simple, cloud-native

When ACM opened its AWS account over a decade ago, there was no easy native way to manage EC2 and RDS backup at scale. James went looking and picked N2W for three reasons:

1. **It deployed straight from the AWS Marketplace** with no manual install.
2. **Billing was bundled into the Marketplace** so there was nothing extra to manage.
3. **And it was really simple**, it didn't bury him in features he didn't need.

"I can't even remember what the other products were. That's how memorable they were."

The impact

- ✔ **Full configuration capture.** N2W captures complete EC2 configuration as part of every backup: IP address, security groups, VPC. Restoring an instance means going back to a point in time, not reconstructing settings from memory. "N2W just handled all that for me."
- ✔ **Automatic cleanup.** Retention policies manage the snapshot lifecycle end to end, removing the "nightmare" of manually tracking and deleting snapshots as instance counts grow.
- ✔ **Visibility into coverage.** James schedules N2W's unprotected resources report weekly (52 checks a year) that catch anything colleagues spun up and forgot. With N2W's Protection Overview widget, he can now get that same protected-versus-unprotected view directly on the dashboard, environment-wide, every time he logs in.
- ✔ **Recovery confidence, verified in advance.** Built-in test restores mean James can confirm the environment is recoverable—and get flagged if something's wrong—"before you leave it and forget about it," not during an emergency.
- ✔ **Alerts instead of checking.** Daily success/failure reports mean backups are something James hears about only when they need attention. "It's less checking and more doing other things."

Unexpected win: cross-region migration

N2W was brought in for backup. James found it just as valuable for something he never anticipated: moving resources between regions and accounts. When ACM needed an EC2 instance in the Frankfurt region, he did the entire move inside the N2W console.

"It would have been a bit of a process to do that manually through the AWS console," he says. "With N2W, you can add multiple AWS accounts and copy between them." This completely removed the part he used to dread: recreating security groups, IPs, and VPCs by hand in the new region. "I'd hate to forget something. So that's just been really helpful for me."

"When you're designing new systems, make sure backup is part of that from the start. Not after migration, not after creation."

The results

1. **A decade of set-and-forget.** "My philosophy is set it up and then forget about it, unless notified otherwise," James says. Ten-plus years on, every backup still runs the same way, every night with no ad hoc processes and no inconsistent naming conventions.
2. **Recovery validated before it's needed.** Test restores prove the environment is recoverable ahead of an emergency, not during one.
3. **Zero manual snapshot housekeeping.** Retention and cleanup run themselves.
4. **Alerts replaced checking.** Daily reports and notifications freed James for higher-value work.
5. **Migration without the console maze.** A manual, multi-step cross-region move became a single workflow inside N2W.

Advice for other media companies

"Don't rely on manual backups, and don't assume everything's fine. You need to test it. Being in the cloud doesn't remove your responsibility. It just changes it. You're responsible in a different way."

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