

MEDIA RELEASE

News Bargaining Incentive welcome, but media concentration still a threat to democracy

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Australia's small and independent publishers and broadcasters are cautiously welcoming the federal government's long awaited News Bargaining Incentive legislation, introduced this afternoon.

But they warn amendments are needed to guarantee the benefits flow to small and independent media as well as larger outlets.

The bill incentivises global tech giants to pay for content produced by Australian journalists – and applies a levy of 2.5% of tech companies' domestic advertising revenue where commercial deals aren't pursued.

Advocacy by Local and Independent News Association, the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, Public Interest Publishers' Alliance, the National Rural Press Club and others has already secured changes to the legislation, including:

- An increased incentive loading for smaller media outlets from 170 per cent to 200 per cent (to encourage deal making with smaller players);
- An increased distribution scheme loading for regional journalists, small to medium-sized publishers, and media servicing underrepresented communities;
- A broader definition of journalists to include freelancers and other essential news roles;
- A new dedicated grant program to distribute a proportion of the revenue to small publishers; and
- Doubling the number of Australian news companies with which tech giants would be required to secure commercial deals, from four to eight.

Executive Director of the Local and Independent News Association, Claire Stuchbery, said it should be mandatory for tech giants to do deals with consortiums of smaller media outlets, to prevent the benefits only flowing to the eight biggest players.

"Protecting Australian journalism in all its diversity is crucial for democracy, and the government must make sure small and independent newsrooms are not just optional beneficiaries of the News Bargaining Incentive," Ms Stuchbery said.

"From the outset, there have been warnings that the News Bargaining Incentive could merely transfer resources from big tech platforms to big media publishers.

"In choosing not to make it mandatory for tech giants to also do deals with consortiums of smaller media outlets, the government has left approximately 700 public interest news publishers in limbo.



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“These smaller outlets – which serve country towns, speakers of languages other than English, and hard-to-reach communities – have no guarantee of access to deals or funds under the legislation as it currently stands,” Ms Stuchbery said.

Australia is the world's second most concentrated news media market and 120 newsrooms across the country have closed their doors in the past five years.

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Democracy Counts is a growing alliance of organisations and Australians who care about the way democracy functions in Australia. Partners include the Centre for Public Integrity, Digital Rights Watch, the Local and Independent News Association, Sentiment and the Alliance for Journalists' Freedom. The campaign is powered McKinnon, an independent, non-partisan, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to empower better governments for a stronger Australia.