

Joint Statement

Call for amendments to the News Bargaining Incentive

Tuesday 19th May, 2026

As organisations committed to keeping communities informed through reliable, relevant and trusted news services, we support the actions of successive governments to support the news media industry in Australia.

We welcome the News Bargaining Incentive as a mechanism to address disruption in the information ecosystem caused by digital platforms. The news industry needs this revenue, without delay.

The news media industry is facing concurrent challenges, and small, independent, multicultural and regional news publishers are among the most vulnerable to market changes and economic pressures. However, we are concerned about the risk of unintended consequences of the legislation design that could further entrench media concentration and give global digital platforms undue influence in Australia's democracy.

We call on the Government to make the following minor amendments to the draft legislation at a minimum:

The incentive structure: under the current draft, a platform could satisfy its entire obligation by striking deals with as few as four major media players. This risks large media outlets receiving funding to the exclusion of small and medium sized competitors. Instead, the **Incentive must require that at least 25% of all deals be made with small and medium publishers** (revenue under \$50M) to ensure a diverse media ecosystem.

Bargaining power: the current draft includes an offset rate of 170% for deals made with small and medium publishers, only 20% more than the offset provided for all publishers. This offset difference is not enough to overcome the administrative burden platforms face when negotiating multiple small-scale contracts. Instead, **the offset rate should be materially increased for small and medium publishers** (eg. 200-300%)

These changes do not change the structure of the proposed legislation, nor the quantum of obligation required from the digital platforms. They create greater opportunity for small and medium sized publishers to engage with the Incentive and improve the efficacy of the scheme and outcomes for media competition and diversity.

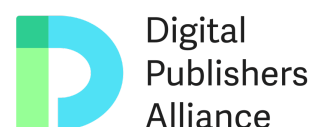
The Government is also consulting on a proposed distribution mechanism to return any levy funds collected to the news industry.

Levy distribution: We support a simple and direct distribution of levy funds, but the proposed model based on employment of full-time equivalent journalists rewards incumbents and further reinforces concentration in the media industry. **We ask that a portion of these funds (15%) be set aside for a supplementary grant program or alternative distribution means for smaller and independent publishers** to support news production activities addressing news deserts and underrepresented voices.

These priorities accord with the Government's rationale for policy intervention to support the news industry through the News Media Assistance Policy Framework adopted in December 2024.

Australia's small, independent and regional publishers are pivotal to a thriving democracy. These tweaks and amendments to the draft legislation will ensure this important sector survives and thrives into the future.

Signed,



Media contact

To arrange interviews with representatives from any of the above organisations:

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