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ACM management must consult with union and staff before making cuts

Australian Community Media's decision to begin winding back on its print publications has been made without adequate consultation and is disrespectful to loyal editorial staff, says the union for Australian media workers.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance is weighing up whether to take ACM to the Fair Work Commission for failure to consult about the changes, in breach of the company's enterprise agreement.

Director of MEAA Media, Neill Jones, said staff had been kept in the dark by management and only became aware of the decision at the same time as the public.

It was still unclear which publications would be closed or how many editorial employees would be impacted, he said.

"ACM management is legally required to consult with staff representatives, including MEAA, before undertaking any major changes to operations," Mr Jones said.

"That hasn't taken place and all management has done by this announcement today is create more uncertainty among employees about where cuts will be made.

"Management needs to detail as soon as possible where the cuts will be felt.

"MEAA also finds it difficult to reconcile how a company can take such drastic action and yet not be eligible for the JobKeeper income subsidy. Employers should be exploring all avenues to retain staff rather than making people redundant.

"We are urgently seeking more clarity from the company about the grounds on which it claims it is not eligible for JobKeeper."

Mr Jones said the Federal Government could no longer ignore the crisis in Australia's regional media.

"ACM is Australia's largest owner of regional and rural publications, and for a company of this size to be closing down mastheads is more evidence, if any was needed, that the future of regional media in this country is under threat," he said.

"Advertising revenues have been devastated by coronavirus, and we have seen close to a dozen mastheads close in the last fortnight while the Communications Minister Paul Fletcher has sat on his hands.

"More than ever, rural and regional communities need trusted sources of news and the government must provide emergency funding so media in country Australia can survive."

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