



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Digital platforms levy could support sustainability of Australian journalism

The federal government should move quickly to adopt the recommendation of a Parliamentary inquiry into social media by requiring digital platforms to pay a levy to fund public interest journalism, says the union for Australian journalists.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance welcomes the second interim report of the Joint Select Committee on Social Media and Australian Society and its focus on the relationship between digital platforms and news media.

The committee has accurately reflected MEAA's position that Australian journalism, news and public interest media play an important role in ensuring a healthy democracy by countering mis- and disinformation on digital platforms.

It also recognises that the growth of digital platforms such as Meta and Google have undermined the sustainability of traditional news outlets in Australia.

The News Media Bargaining Code was an attempt to address this, but Meta's decision to walk away from the Code has exposed its limitations.

However, this should not let the digital platforms off the hook, said the Federal President of MEAA Media, Karen Percy.

She said the committee's proposal of a digital platform levy was a strong alternative model for these global companies to fund Australian journalism.

"These digital giants are making huge amounts of money from the work of journalists and media organisations. Their businesses are not sustainable without our work," Ms Percy said.

"The result is total disruption of business models, the loss of journalist jobs, and a news industry that is on its knees.

"At the same time, the digital platforms are rife with misinformation and disinformation which only well-funded news media can counter.

"If the News Media Bargaining Code cannot effectively redirect some of this revenue back to media outlets, then the government needs to explore alternatives, such as a digital platform levy.

"This is a relatively straight-forward way of redistributing the wealth of digital platforms towards ethical public interest journalism."

MEAA says a levy must be designed so that the distribution of funds is overseen by an independent agency led by working journalists to ensure money is invested directly into ethical public interest journalism.

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Small, independent and digital-only publishers must be able to access funds generated by a levy.

“One of the flaws of the News Media Bargaining Code is that only existing large media companies benefited from it, and smaller outlets, including regional and rural publishers and freelancers, were left out in the cold,” Ms Percy said.

“The eligibility thresholds for any future funds must be lowered to encourage diversification of Australia’s media landscape by independent and start-up publishers.

“It’s also crucial that there is accountability and transparency of funding. News media outlets must spend the money on journalism and must be able to show they are supporting jobs and our industry.”

MEAA also welcomes the separate announcement this week by the federal government of a \$15 million News Media Relief Program for small regional and community news publishers.

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