



Rod Sims
Chair
Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
GPO Box 3131
Canberra ACT 2601

6 March 2020

Dear Mr Sims

Australian Associated Press - competition concerns

I write in relation to the announced closure of Australian Associated Press (AAP).

The closure of AAP has dire ramifications for the Australian media industry. The impact on the production of local news across the country is profound. We call on the ACCC to consider whether the closure of AAP is likely to significantly lessen competition in the Australian media market.

Formed in 1935 by 13 of Australia's leading news organisations who put aside their rivalries to create an independent news resource that could be trusted to get it right, deliver it efficiently and without political bias, AAP has been a cornerstone of Australia's media ecosystem ever since.

Apart from the almost 200 reporters, photographers and sub-editors it employs, the newswire plays a crucial role in providing Australians with reliable reporting of courts, politics, sport, business, general news and photography.

AAP's historic mission statement has always been to provide news that is independent, accurate, objective, balanced and completely free of political agendas. At a time when the media landscape is fracturing and we are struggling to counter the proliferation of fake news, a news source that is trusted and accurate is more important than ever.

The crisis confronting AAP is a parable for the devastating damage being inflicted on all news media by digital content aggregators, search engines and social media. This has undermined the revenue streams of not just AAP, but all media organisations, pushing some to the edges of viability and making it more difficult to fund quality public interest journalism.

The ACCC's digital platforms inquiry spent two years collecting masses of evidence about the negative impact major digital companies like Google and Facebook have on media content producers and on consumers.

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It found that the value of the Australian newspaper market had fallen from \$4.6 billion to \$2.5 billion over the past decade, and is dwarfed by the size of Google and Facebook.

As the union for AAP's editorial staff, the MEAA urges the ACCC to fully examine the actions of the shareholding companies (NewsCorp and Nine) in light of recent media commentary regarding the motivation for ceasing operation of the newswire service. What are the competition policy implications of a potential transfer of the AAP news and photograph archive, for instance?

If you require any further information, please contact me or Neill Jones Director, Media on 0428226388 or neill.jones@meaa.org.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Murphy', with a stylized, cursive script.

Paul Murphy
Chief Executive