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MEAA condemns regional newspaper closures

At a time when fast and accurate information is more important than ever, media owners have an obligation to do all in their power to keep publishing, broadcasting and serving their communities.

MEAA is responding to reports that regional newspapers have begun shutting down their titles and putting their staff out of work.

MEAA Media president Marcus Strom says: “The media is an essential service right now. Media outlets have a heightened responsibility to their communities. They provide a lifeline that binds a community together and bolsters resilience. Their local knowledge cannot be replaced by media outlets in the bigger cities.

“Without doubt this is a difficult operating environment but many of these mastheads have a long and proud history – they have survived depression, drought and world wars. And yet a week of this current crisis has led them to close their doors. Shutting down in advance of the benefits they are to receive from the government stimulus packages, is a knee-jerk reaction.

“The stimulus money available to these businesses include lines of credit, relaxed insolvency regulations and business cash flow measures. Pulling down the shutters only piles more pressure on communities that already have limited employment opportunities and that can ill afford more people on welfare.

“Long after this crisis is over, those communities will remember how their trust in and support for their local newspaper over many years was repaid by having the media proprietors abandon them at a crucial time of need,” Strom says.

“Furthermore, if the papers can’t survive, the government must step in and financially support them as an essential service until this crisis has passed.”

Media contact: Mike Dobbie – ph: 03 9691 7101; mike.dobbie@meaa.org

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance - the people who inform and entertain

📍 PO Box 723 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012 📞 1300 656 513

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