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MEAA welcomes Public Interest Journalism recommendations

MEAA is encouraged that a Parliamentary Committee has endorsed many of the recommendations made to it by MEAA to nurture and protect the future of public interest journalism in Australia. The recommendations were made by a Senate Select Committee.

Among the committee's recommendations recommended and supported by MEAA are:

- ensuring adequate funding for the ABC and SBS to ensure they meet their charter obligations – particularly in rural and regional services and fact-checking capacity;
- providing surety for funding of the community broadcasting sector including for training and education and the rollout of digital;
- the development and implementation of a framework for tax deductibility status for not-for-profit news media;
- Treasury to model providing tax deductibility for news media subscriptions;
- an Australian Law Reform Commission audit of laws that adversely affect the work of journalists;
- a Council of Australian Governments' review of Australia's defamation law regime;
- expansion of current whistleblower and journalist shield law provisions.

MEAA chief executive Paul Murphy said: "This is a clear vindication of what MEAA has been saying for many years: government can and should be doing more to support the media industry which is being hurt by the impact of digital technology and draconian laws that muzzle legitimate reporting in the public interest. The Committee has clearly acknowledged the vital role a healthy media industry plays in a strong democracy. The public broadcasters have a crucial role to play – they must be given the funding to ensure they can fulfil their duty under their charters. Commercial media is being adversely affected by the loss of revenue arising from digital disruption.

"In the past six years, thousands of journalist jobs have been lost. The result is that public interest journalism has been dangerously harmed. This report brings Australia in to line with best practice overseas, and demonstrates that there is much that can be done to ensure the media can continue its crucial role as the fourth estate and that journalists can get on with keeping their communities informed," Murphy said.

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