



MEDIA RELEASE

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News bargaining code remains essential to support small media outlets

Content deals reportedly struck between major publishers and Google in recent days should not deter Federal Parliament from passing News Media Bargaining Code laws this week, says the union for Australia's journalists.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance says the reported deals between Google and both Nine Entertainment Co. and Seven West Media are welcome developments, but Parliament must proceed with the bargaining code legislation to ensure that all media operators – including AAP, regional and local organisations, and others regardless of their size – are compensated by digital platforms for the use of their content.

MEAA Media Federal President Marcus Strom said the laws were essential because smaller publishers and broadcasters did not have the same ability to negotiate directly on relatively equal terms with Google and Facebook as did media conglomerates like Nine and Seven.

“The deals which have been reported in the past 48 hours only came about because of the threat of arbitration under the proposed news bargaining code,” Mr Strom said.

“Media companies have a moral obligation to demonstrate that the millions they will receive from Google will be spent on news gathering and not on share dividends.

“Any monies from these deals need to end up in the newsroom, not the boardroom. We will be pressing the case for transparency on how these funds are spent.

“But it should be noted it is only Google who has been willing to negotiate. Facebook continues to resist compensating media outlets.

“The news bargaining code is still needed to ensure both of these global digital platforms contribute to the cost of all the journalism that they benefit from, and that smaller players are also compensated for their content, especially community, regional and rural outlets.

“It must also be mandated that when media companies are able to negotiate commercial agreements with digital platforms, they must commit to allocating the funds to journalism, and not other parts of their organisations.”

Mr Strom said the Morrison Government also must assure Australians that any commercial agreements negotiated by the ABC or SBS will not be used as an excuse for further funding cuts at the two national broadcasters.

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