



MEDIA RELEASE

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Regional media companies that receive taxpayer money must keep services going

Regional media outlets that have benefitted from taxpayer-funded support must use the money to maintain or increase their local coverage, says the union for Australian journalists.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance says \$50 million has been provided to media companies under the federal government's Public Interest News Gathering Program (PING) but some media organisations which benefitted from grants to support regional journalism are now closing rural services to the detriment of their local communities.

This week's decision by WIN TV to close its regional news operations in some states and replace them with statewide bulletins in Queensland, Victoria and southern NSW shows that federal funds have not been received in good faith.

According an analysis by MEAA of how funds were allocated through the PING, 80% of the money went to major media companies, including WIN, Prime, Southern Cross Austereo and Australian Community Media/Rural Press.

MEAA Media federal president Marcus Strom said companies that have received funding program must comply with the grant's rule to maintain existing levels of journalism production and distribution.

"Regional media has just gone through the most torrid 12 months," Mr Strom said.

"Many did not survive when the COVID pandemic was at its worst. Across the country, up to 150 outlets were forced to close with the loss of about 1000 journalist jobs.

"That's why MEAA launched the Our Communities, Our Stories campaign: to lobby for greater support to keep rural and regional alive so they can continue to deliver local news and information to their audiences they serve.

"The Government's PING program supports about 100 regional media outlets. That money should not be taken while abandoning regional audiences. A statewide news bulletin from the big city cannot take the place of the news and issues in a local community."

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