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Support for regional media is nowhere near enough

The union representing Australia's journalists has called on the Federal Government to bolster its assistance package to regional media companies.

Marcus Strom, the federal president of the Media section of the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA) said: "The package announced by Communications Minister Paul Fletcher today is wholly inadequate.

"We are seeing newspapers that have served their communities for more 100 years shut their doors and lay-off workers but the best the Government can offer is to bring forward a paltry \$5 million dollars out of a \$48 million fund – a fund whose purpose is to promote regional journalism, local jobs and innovation.

"Aside from the miserly level of funding, there is still no process for applying for these funds – the Government says the funding guidelines will be available in coming days. But regional media outlets began shutting down last week; they need support now. They provide an essential service to their communities because big city media can't focus on their localised issues," Strom said.

"MEAA is concerned that by the time the regional publishers come to grips with the application process, deal with the red tape and find out if they are successful, it will be too little too late.

"Since the COVID-19 outbreak we have seen a dozen or more regional papers announce that they can't keep going. These mastheads include *The Sunraysia Daily*, *The Barrier Daily Truth* and *The Yarram Standard* – papers that have been stalwarts in serving their communities for decades.

"More funds, that are already earmarked for regional media, must be pushed out of Canberra and into the regions and rural towns that desperately need them," Strom said.

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