



# News Bargaining Initiative: Statutory Payment Scheme to distribute any revenue raised by the Incentive. Submission by ABC Alumni Ltd

## Introduction

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This submission is made on behalf of the ABC Alumni organisation. ABC Alumni is an association of former Australian Broadcasting Corporation workers who believe passionately in the importance of a well-funded and independent national broadcaster as a vital part of Australian democracy. While not formally connected to the ABC, we have worked since formation in 2018 to advocate for the importance of public service media, especially the ABC, as a key component of a diverse Australian media system.

ABC Alumni has previously made a submission in response to the consultation paper on the News Bargaining Incentive in December 2025.

[Here is a link to that submission.](#)

ABC Alumni submits that the proposed structure should vigorously support small news publishers and those supporting regional news and news provided to marginal communities. The weightings applied to FTE journalists in this area should be at a minimum 30%.

The Alumni submits that news publishers who have successfully negotiated a commercial deal with social media and streaming services should be restricted in their eligibility to access revenue collected by the federal government under the News Media Incentive provisions.

## Eligibility Criteria – Organisation

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### **Q1: Do you have any concerns with the proposed registration and application process?**

No

### **Q2: Would your organisation meet the criteria as set out under the ACMA register? If not, please explain which component of the eligibility criteria may cause an issue.**

Not applicable.

### **Q3: Is the proposed eligibility criteria fit-for-purpose in ensuring that the scheme supports continued investment in public interest news, diversity of media voices, and quality journalism?**

ABC Alumni does not consider that the eligibility criteria are fit for purpose in that they appear to include those news organisations that have successfully negotiated commercial deals with social media and streaming services. We have argued in our submission on the draft News Bargaining Incentive draft legislation, that smaller news operators, including the vast majority of independent



regional news outlets, are unlikely to successfully negotiate commercial deals, even with an increased offset. We append a copy of that submission to this document. It is those operators that the NBI should be benefiting under its objective to promote diversity, especially smaller and regional publishers.

For this reason, we submit

- that news organisations that have successfully negotiated more than one commercial deal with social media and/or streaming services be excluded from the Statutory Payment Scheme for the period of their commercial contract/s, or
- that the annualised value of the total of any commercial deals with the social and streaming services be deducted from the their NBI distribution payment.

We understand that this proposal may affect the ABC's access to NBI revenue distributed by the federal government, as the ABC is a major news organisation with extensive news resources with which social media and streaming services are likely to negotiate a commercial agreement. However, in a scenario where social media and streaming services fail to negotiate commercial deals with the ABC, the ABC would be eligible to receive NBI distributed revenue weighted towards FTE journalists in regional Australia and those reporting to disadvantaged communities (see our response under Q9).

**Q4: Do any of the proposed eligibility criteria present significant costs or administrative burden for your organisation?**

Not applicable

#### **Payment Allocation Formula**

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**Q5: Is FTE journalists a good approximation for investment in news and journalism, and an appropriate basis for determining payments to the sector?**

Yes

**Q6: Are the identified editorial roles clear and fit-for-purpose? Are there other roles that should be included?**

Yes

**Q7: Do the proposed evidentiary requirements present any specific difficulties, or a sizeable burden, for your business? Are there any risks arising from these evidentiary requirements?**

Not Applicable

#### **Additional support for activities (weightings)**

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**Q8: Are the weighting categories an appropriate and effective means of accounting for the economies of scale and resourcing differences across the sector; and meeting the objectives of the Statutory Payment Scheme?**

ABC Alumni supports the three weighting factors proposed:

- Regional and remote as defined by the Australian Statistical Geography Standard
- Small business where the corporate group reports less than \$10 million in annual revenue.
- News serving or representing under-represented or marginalised communities.

**Q9: What weighting values would best achieve these aims?**

In order to achieve the objective of promoting diversity, especially smaller and regional publishers, ABC Alumni submits that the example of 10% additional weighting per FTE journalist defined in each of these categories is inadequate. While we recognise that news organisations with a primary focus on mainstream audiences must also benefit from the NBI, it is clear that one of the major issues facing the news industry, as advertising revenues from traditional media decline, is the survival of local news coverage both in regional and urban Australia. We submit that a minimal weighting of 30% for eligible FTE journalists in these categories is appropriate to both achieving the aims of the NBI and broader structural issues in the Australian news ecosystem.

**Payment Conditions**

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**Q10: Is the proposed retention obligation an appropriate measure to ensure that funding provided to the sector delivers against a clear and valid public purpose?**

ABC Alumni supports in theory the requirement of recipients of payments to, at a minimum, retain the existing number of FTE journalists reported in their application. However, organisations may face extenuating services which require them to reduce FTE journalists, despite additional funding from the NBI. In this case, funding from the NBI may be even more critical to their survival. On balance, this may be a difficult requirement for news organisations to comply with.

News Organisations should perhaps be required to give advance notice of these extenuating circumstances, including loss of income from other sources which affects the operation of the organisation. In these circumstances, where FTE equivalent journalists are reduced from loss of other income sources, the administrators may grant an extension to eligibility for NBI funding once circumstances are assessed.

**Q11: Are there any risks or other issues we should take into consideration with regard to the retention obligation, including time periods and tolerance thresholds?**

Refer to our response on Q10 above

**Q12: What penalties should apply for organisations that are later found to have mis-reported their eligibility or employment practices?**





We have no comment to make on these matters.

**Administration of the Scheme**

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We have no comment to make on these matters.

