

# MURRAY BRIDGE NEWS



To the Department,

On behalf of Murray Bridge News, I offer the following feedback on the proposed statutory payment scheme which may form part of the News Bargaining Incentive framework.

## **Registration and application process**

The proposed process is adequate, and we would meet its requirements. I would recommend lowering the eligibility threshold to \$75,000, on par with the GST threshold, to ensure emerging publishers are able to access funding.

## **Payment allocation formula**

The proposed formula is broadly appropriate. However, I would suggest quarantining a small proportion of the total funds – perhaps something like 5% – for distribution to emerging publishers who aspire to meet the criteria for registration in future financial years via a competitive grant program. This would serve the social objective of filling in some of Australia's news deserts.

## **Additional support for activities**

I would support the inclusion of weighted criteria for certain publishers in pursuit of diversity and representation objectives, as proposed. I would also propose that a weighting be used to increase the allocation of funding to news organisations which are independently owned within the communities they serve, which do not form part of a large network of mastheads and do not benefit from economies of scale. A 10 per cent weighting would be appropriate.

## **Payment conditions**

It would be appropriate to tie funding allocations to the continued employment of editorial staff. For avoidance of doubt, news organisations which have benefited from eligible expenditure under

the NBI should not be able to access funds distributed by the proposed statutory payment scheme. However, I would be cautious about introducing penalties for any but the largest-scale mis-reporting of outcomes. This is a precarious industry and maintaining jobs, or even attracting applicants, can be a tricky business.

#### **Administration of the scheme**

The proposed reporting scheme would seem appropriate so long as it is not overly onerous. A heads-up at the outset of a funding agreement, and a 30-day reminder, would be appropriate. Transparency would be appropriate and welcomed.

**Peri Strathearn**

Managing editor