



**SUBMISSION TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS**

NEWS BARGAINING INCENTIVE – CONSULTATION ON REVENUE DISTRIBUTION

18 May 2026

News Corp Australia (**NCA**) and Australian News Channel (**ANC**) welcome the opportunity to provide this submission in response to the Department of Communications *News Bargaining Incentive – Consultation on Revenue Distribution (the Paper)* regarding the development of the proposed distribution model for any revenue collected by the News Bargaining Incentive (*the Incentive*).

The Paper clearly states that the purpose of any Statutory Payment Scheme is to facilitate ongoing investment in and production of news and journalism in Australia.

Contemporary journalism and news reporting is constantly adapting and evolving to compete with information moving at the speed of viral posts on platforms amplifying a surplus of information. Against and within this landscape journalists and journalism are the vital connective tissue of Australian society and our communities. Journalists ensure that the stories and nuances of Australian life come to life, connect with audiences and help us to progress. Cadets are the future of this Australian storytelling and key to ensuring Australia's local and national conversation remains vibrant beyond today.

With this context, NCA and ANC set out suggestions on how the Statutory Payment Scheme should be designed to ensure this purpose can be realised.

Q1-4: Eligibility Criteria

NCA and ANC are supportive of the proposal to use the current process established under the News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code (*the Code*) as the means of determining eligibility of an organisation to participate in the Statutory Payment Scheme. Each of NCA and ANC are separately registered eligible news businesses under the Code.

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

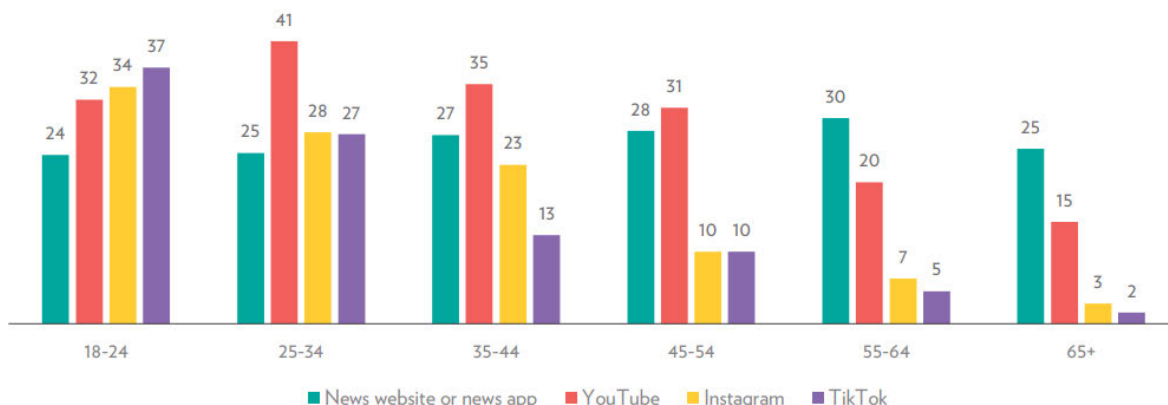
NCA and ANC recognise that any Statutory Payment Scheme should provide a stable, transparent and proportionate model for distributing news funding.

The formula must acknowledge and accommodate modern news reporting and journalism

The proposed payment allocation formula uses the number of FTE journalists employed by a news organisation as an approximation for that organisation's investment in *producing core news content*. We consider this approach to be unreasonably narrow as it does not account for the full suite of roles in modern newsrooms that are similarly instrumental in the production of core news content that audiences of today and tomorrow are consuming. This risks producing a distorted and inequitable measure of a news business' genuine investment in Australian news and journalism.

The proposed payment allocation formula fails to take into account the fast-paced and evolving nature of news production and the news media sector to meet audiences where and how they are consuming content. As the Government is aware, news consumption in Australia (and indeed the world) has undergone, and continues to undergo, shifts driven by consumer demand. For example, Australians turn increasingly to social media platforms to watch news videos, with the consumption of these videos much higher among younger people. According to the Digital News Report 2025, Australia is among the countries with a higher proportion of users paying attention to traditional news media sources on TikTok – while the global average is 36%, 45% of Australian users report doing so.¹ Further, even among those watching news videos across all age groups, the platforms where the videos are consumed vary widely across different age groups. See **Figure 1** below.

Figure 1: News-related video consumption by age



Source: Digital News Report: Australia 2025, University of Canberra, News and Media Research Centre, p86

Modern news reporting and journalism must therefore be able to innovate and evolve as formats of news content need to adapt to reach all audiences that are increasingly scattered across multiple digital platforms and services. This necessarily requires the development and implementation of evolving journalistic and other associated roles. For example, core news content increasingly needs to be available in a 'vodcast' format alongside other non-vodcast channels and formats.

The formula must acknowledge and accommodate anchors and presenters

The Government's proposal unnecessarily excludes narrators, anchors and presenters who present core news content to the Australian public in the form of audio visual content. This unreasonably excludes personnel who are instrumental to the creation and delivery of one of the most commonly engaged with

¹ Digital News Report: Australia 2025, University of Canberra, News and Media Research Centre, p97

formats of news and journalism content. The format often includes live interviews with politicians, business and industry leaders and discussion and analysis of topics of public interest. This creates a disincentive for news businesses to invest in and innovate certain aspects of its business, despite the value to the Australian public, which undermines the very public good the Government is intending to sustain through the Incentive.

All roles engaged in producing and presenting core news content are essential to delivering journalism that meets Australians on their preferred platforms. By doing so, they uphold a public good that is fundamental to the health of our democracy and society. The payment allocation formula must therefore be able to adapt to and accommodate innovation and changes to the consumption and production of news content. It must be sufficiently flexible so as to recognise the investment of news businesses in new formats and in the places where Australians consume core news content.

Regarding FTE, NCA and ANC support part time journalists being recognised based on their FTE² and included in the determination of funding.

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

NCA and ANC submit that the Statutory Payment Scheme should be designed in a way that recognises the full breadth of roles required to produce and disseminate core news content to the Australian public. While journalists remain indispensable to the production of news content, a broad range of additional roles are integral in, and dedicated to, the production of news content, including the communication and presentation of that material. This is increasingly crucial in the modern news environment.

Recognising those roles in any Statutory Payment Scheme would not merely be capturing 'other costs associated with the operation of a news business.'³ Instead, confining the approximation of a news business' investment in news and journalism to the number of FTE journalists that it employs overlooks the critical roles of all individuals primarily responsible for the production of core news content that is so fundamental in Australian society.

A formula that overlooks all roles principally responsible for making news content available and accessible cannot be consistent with a scheme intended to support a strong and sustainable news sector across all its forms. For this reason, the test should be broad enough to ensure that it does not indirectly limit investment in innovation. Accordingly, NCA and ANC propose that the definition should anticipate the inclusion of all roles that are primarily engaged in the production of core news content without exclusions.

The roles covered by applicable industrial awards are a useful starting point

NCA and ANC consider that employees covered by relevant industrial instruments including enterprise bargaining agreements (*EBA*) and awards relating to the production of core news content outlined below provide an *initial starting point* for determining eligible employees for the purpose of the Statutory Payment Scheme.

² Australian Government, NBI Consultation on Revenue Distribution, April 2026, p 9.

³ Australian Government, NBI Consultation on Revenue Distribution, April 2026, p 10.

The fact that an employee is covered by a relevant industrial instrument may also simplify the evidence requirement and assessment process whereby news organisations need only establish that the employee is subject to a relevant EBA or Award to be eligible to determine funding allocation. For NCA and ANC the following are relevant:

- News Corp Australia Newspapers - MEAA Enterprise Bargaining Agreement 2025 AG2025/2188 (**NCAN EBA**);
- Journalists Published Media Award 2020 (**JPMA**); and
- Broadcasting, Recorded Entertainment and Cinemas Award 2020 (**BREA**).

The roles covered by the industrial instruments above, and that are essential to the production of core news content, should be similarly recognised by the Government as an investment in news and journalism in the context of the Statutory Payment Scheme.

Additional editorial or managerial roles essential to the production of news content

Other editorial roles that are responsible for the production of core news content, but which may not be covered by one of the industrial instruments above, must be included in the Statutory Payment Scheme. This includes significant editorial or managerial roles that are essential to the production of core news content, but which are award free or engaged through a services agreement.

It should be noted that the employment of cadets and the implementation of cadet programmes represents a deliberate and significant investment by news businesses in the future of Australian journalism and should be expressly acknowledged in the payment allocation formula and should be upweighted as discussed further below.

Other roles essential to the production of news content

Lastly, the Scheme must also recognise that there are roles that are primarily involved in the production of core news content but are not covered by one of the industrial instruments mentioned above and may not be editorial in nature. These roles are key to producing core news for Australians, in the formats and places they engage with and consume news. It is critical that the Scheme allows for the inclusion of these roles and it will then fall to the relevant news organisation to demonstrate eligibility.

Q8: Are the above 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?

Weighting should be applied for cadets

NCA and ANC recommend that the Government include an additional weighting category for cadets. The NCAN EBA, the JPMA and the BREA have classifications for cadets in training for journalism, press photography, editorial art and the collection and/or preparation of material for television or radio news services. Cadetship programmes represent one of the most important investments that news businesses can make in the sustainability and future of the Australian news sector. We submit that weighting for cadet employees will be an important step in incentivising news businesses to train, develop and sustain the future

workforce of Australian news production. Excluding cadets from the FTE count would inappropriately penalise those news organisations investing in the future of news in Australia.

Weighting should be applied for regional, rural and remote located journalists

The production and delivery of core news content in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia is critical. In its final report in the Digital Platforms Inquiry, the ACCC identified the decline of local and regional news as one of the most serious consequences of the structural disruption caused by digital platforms to the Australian news media industry.

To support the production of news content in regional and rural areas, we agree with the Government's proposal for a weighting for eligible news employees physically located in a regional or remote area. To ensure this is effective and adequately incentivises the attraction and retention of staff we consider that this weighting should apply to staff located in any geographic area other than the 'Major Cities of Australia' classification under the Australian Statistical Geography Standard. This would comprise the Inner Regional Australia, Outer Regional Australia, Remote Australia and Very Remote Australia classes of geographic remoteness.⁴

⁴ <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/standards/australian-statistical-geography-standard-asgs-edition-3/jul2021-jun2026/remoteness-structure/remoteness-areas>