

47F

From: 47F
Sent: Wednesday, 8 July 2020 9:29 AM
To: s47F
Subject: FW: AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal [SEC=PROTECTED, DLM=Sensitive:Cabinet]
Attachments: 20200706_AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal.pdf

Hi s47F

AAP funding proposal for PING 2. s47C

s47

Note that s47F was asking about this last night.

Regards

s47F

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

From: Makin, Mike <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 8 July 2020 8:51 AM
To: s47F @communications.gov.au>; Sullivan, Pauline
 <Pauline.Sullivan@communications.gov.au>
Subject: FW: AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal [SEC=PROTECTED, DLM=Sensitive:Cabinet]

s47F

Can you review and get the team onto using this for a PING2.0 proposal

Mike

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

From: s47F @communications.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 7 July 2020 10:57 PM
To: Sullivan, Pauline <Pauline.Sullivan@communications.gov.au>; Makin, Mike
 <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>
Subject: Fwd: AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal [DLM=Sensitive]

Sensitive

This just arrived in my inbox.

s47F

Sensitive

From: s47F
Date: Tuesday, 7 July 2020 at 10:54:14 pm
 s47F
 >
Cc: "Emma Cowdroy" <s47F
 (labour And Impact s47F
Subject: AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal

Dear s47F

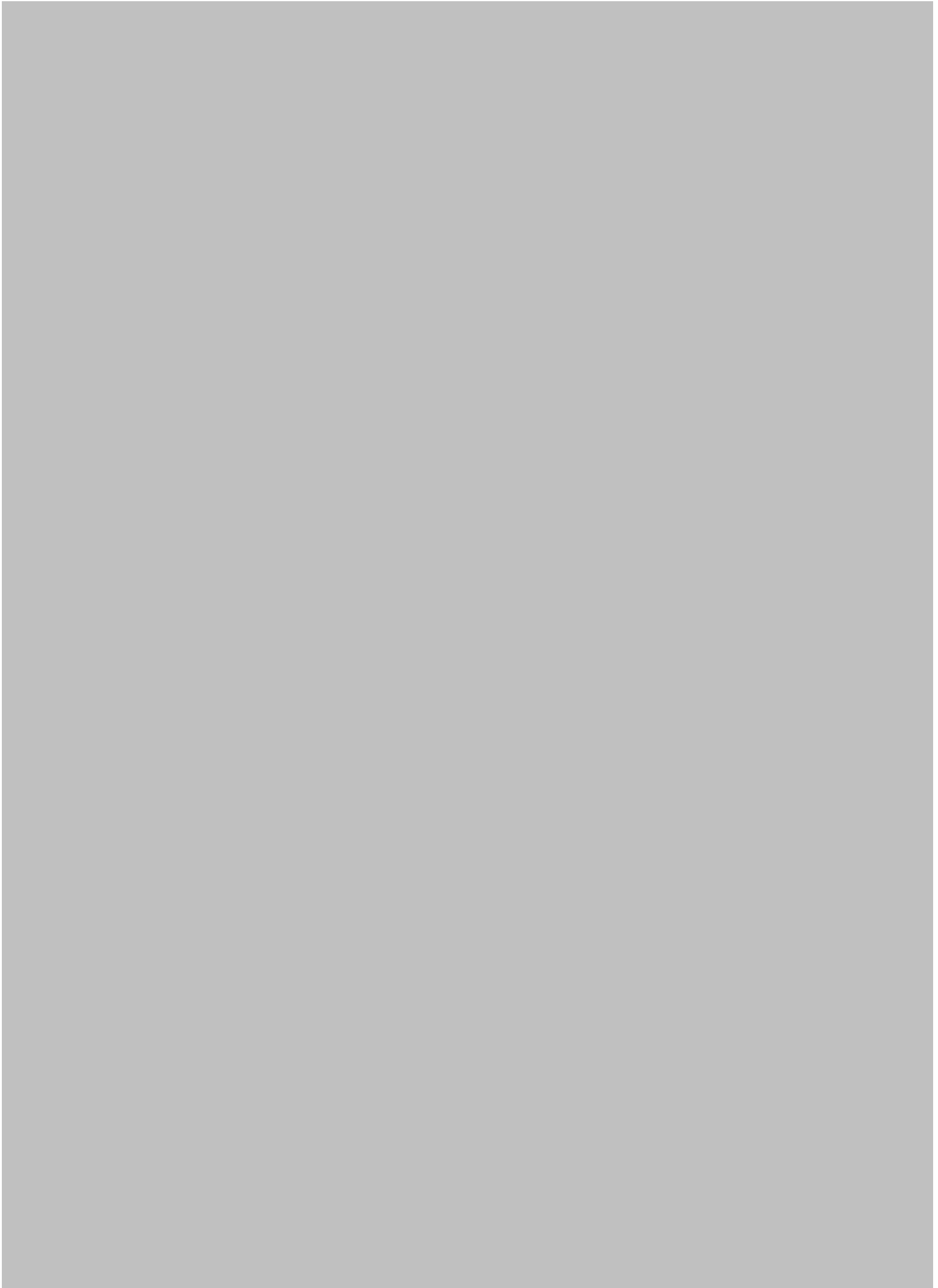
47



47F



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s47F

From: s47F
Sent: Friday, 17 July 2020 6:14 PM
To: s47F
Cc: Sullivan, Pauline; Makin, Mike; s47F
Subject: s34(3)

Hi s47F

Please find attached s34(3)

PMC has advised the JEFU will contain the following words ' \$55m over two years from 2019-20 to establish a Public Interest News Gathering Program to support broadcasters and publishers who are producing news in regional Australia, partially offset by redirecting unallocated funds from the RSPJI Package'.

PM approval would allow any public announcement to be made in regards to the additional \$5 million.

Regards

s47F

Director / Media Markets / New and Media Industry
 Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

s47F

communications.gov.au

2 Phillip Law Street, Canberra ACT 2601
 GPO Box 594 Canberra, ACT 2601

communications.gov.au / @CommsAu
arts.gov.au / @artsculturegov
infrastructure.gov.au / @infra_regional

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PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

 Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications	Ministerial Submission MS20-000473
---	---

To: Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP
(for decision)

Subject: s34(3)

Critical Date: s34(3)

Recommendations for Minister Fletcher: That you

1. s34(3)	Signed / Not Signed
2. Note the information provided in this brief	Noted / Please Discuss
Minister's Signature:	Date: / / 2020
Minister's Comments	Quality Rating
	1. Very Poor 2. Poor 3. Satisfactory 4. Good 5. Excellent

Purpose:

s34(3)

Key Issues:

s34(3)

4. s47

s34(3)

s47C

Financial Implications:

7. Funding of \$5 million would be expended in the 2020-21 financial year.

Background/Issues:

8. The initial PING program is a grants program worth a total of \$50 million that aims to support regional broadcasters and publishers to continue to provide high quality news in regional and remote areas of Australia. The program operated with clear eligibility criteria to allocate grant funds between the eligible applicants in a manner proportional to their relative revenues. On 29 June 2020, you announced that 107 applicants were found eligible to receive funding. The Department is currently negotiating grant agreement with these entities.

9. On 3 March 2020, the shareholders of AAP announced that the AAP Newswire would close on 30 June 2020. On 29 June 2020, the AAP Newswire and Factcheck businesses were acquired from the previous shareholders with a formal transaction date of 1 August 2020.

Communication/Media Activities: N/A

Consultation: N/A

Attachments:

Attachment A: Draft letter to the Prime Minister

s47

Contact Officer: s47F
Position: Director
Branch: News and Media Industry
Phone/Mobile: s47F

Cleared by: Pauline Sullivan
Position: First Assistant Secretary
Division: Content
Phone/Mobile: 02 6271 1913 / ss47F

Instructions for MAPS: Nil

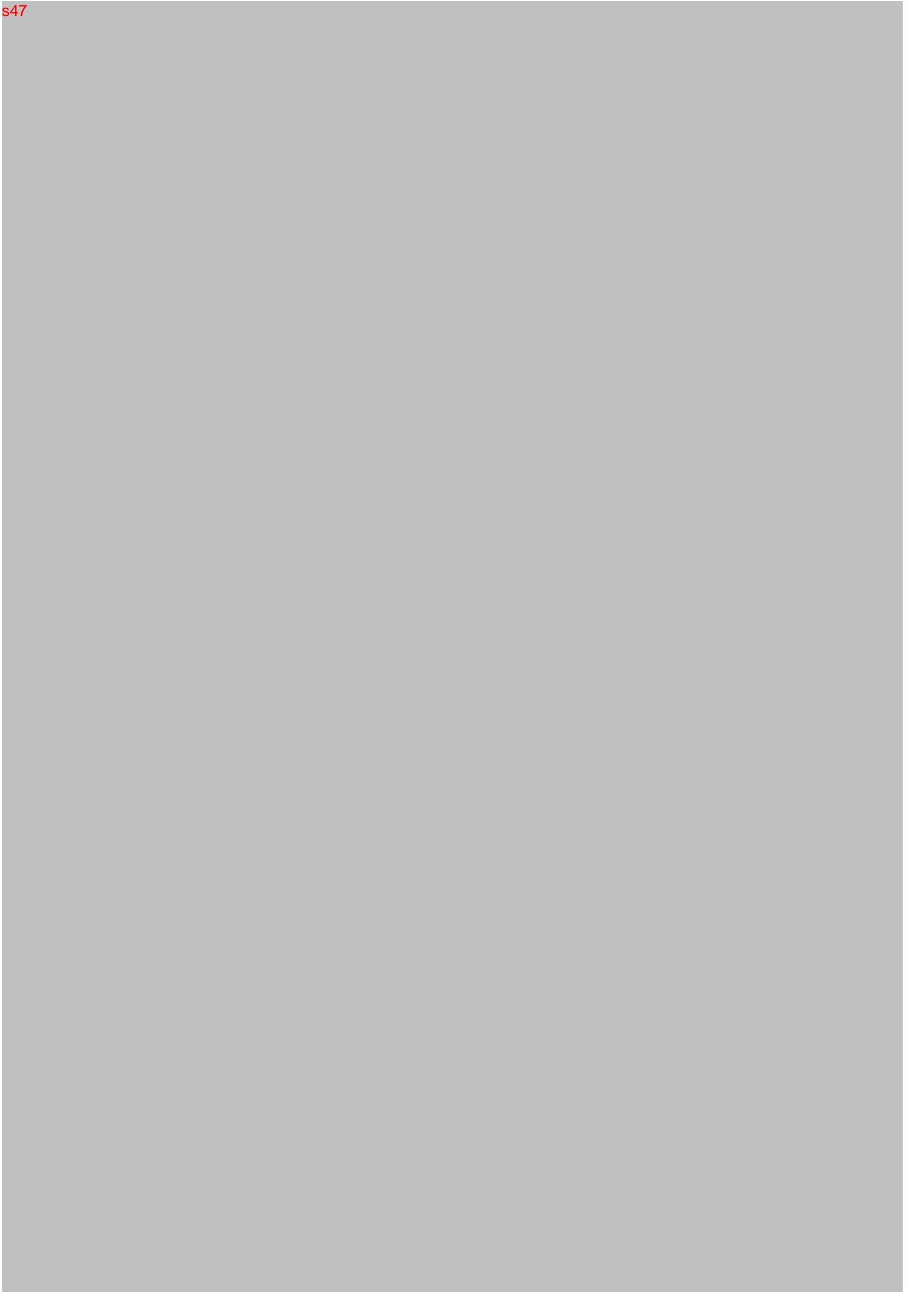
Responsible Adviser: s47F

Distribution CC List: Simon Atkinson, Richard Windeyer, Pauline Sullivan, s47F Mike Makin, Carol Cote, s47F

s34(1)(d)







s47F

From: s47F
Sent: Monday, 20 July 2020 12:38 PM
To: s47F Sullivan, Pauline; Makin, Mike
Cc: s47F
Subject: s34(3)

Hi s47F – slight formatting tweaks to make sure it prints on his letterhead.

s47F

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

From: s47F @communications.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 20 July 2020 12:13 PM
To: s47F @communications.gov.au>; DLO <DLO@communications.gov.au>; Sullivan, Pauline <Pauline.Sullivan@communications.gov.au>; Makin, Mike <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>

s47F

Subject: s34(3) [SEC=PROTECTED, DLM=Sensitive:Cabinet]
Importance: High

Hi s47F

Please see revised letter as discussed. Revised para 3rd from bottom.

s47F is going to update the version in PDMS.

Regards

s47F

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

From: s47F @communications.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 17 July 2020 7:29 PM
To: DLO <DLO@communications.gov.au>
Cc: s47F @communications.gov.au>; Sullivan, Pauline <Pauline.Sullivan@communications.gov.au>; Makin, Mike <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>; s47F @communications.gov.au>; s47F @communications.gov.au>
Subject: s34(3)

Thanks s47. Much appreciated.

s47

Sent from my iPhone

On 17 Jul 2020, at 6:54 pm, DLO <DLO@communications.gov.au> wrote:

Hi s47F

Have moved it to you in PDMS. Let me know if there's anything you need to get it actioned by / on Monday.

s47F

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

From: s47F <[redacted]@communications.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 17 July 2020 6:22 PM
To: s47F <[redacted]@communications.gov.au>
Cc: Sullivan, Pauline <Pauline.Sullivan@communications.gov.au>; Makin, Mike <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>; s47F <[redacted]@communications.gov.au>; s47F <[redacted]@communications.gov.au>; DLO <DLO@communications.gov.au>
Subject: s34(3)

PROTECTED, Sensitive:Cabinet

Thanks s47F - that letter looks good. I'll get it to the Minister over the weekend.

Cheers

s47F

PROTECTED, Sensitive:Cabinet

From: s47F <[redacted]@communications.gov.au>
Date: Friday, 17 July 2020 at 6:14:05 pm
To: "s47F" <[redacted]@communications.gov.au>
Cc: "Sullivan, Pauline" <Pauline.Sullivan@communications.gov.au>, "Makin, Mike" <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>, s47F <[redacted]@communications.gov.au>, "DLO" <DLO@communications.gov.au>
Subject: s34(3)

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Please find attached s34(3)

PMC has advised the JEFU will contain the following words '55m over two years from 2019-20 to establish a Public Interest News Gathering Program to support broadcasters and publishers who are producing news in regional Australia, partially offset by redirecting unallocated funds from the RSPJI Package'.

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Markets / New and Media Industry
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

[\[redacted\]@communications.gov.au](mailto:[redacted]@communications.gov.au)

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GPO Box 594 Canberra, ACT 2601

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infrastructure.gov.au / @infra_regional

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PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

s47F

From: s47F
Sent: Monday, 20 July 2020 3:32 PM
To: s47F
Cc: DLO
Subject: s34(3)

Attachments:

Importance: High

Categories: s47F

Hi s47F

As promised.

A copy has also gone to s34(3)

Cheers

s47F

s47F

| **Senior Adviser**

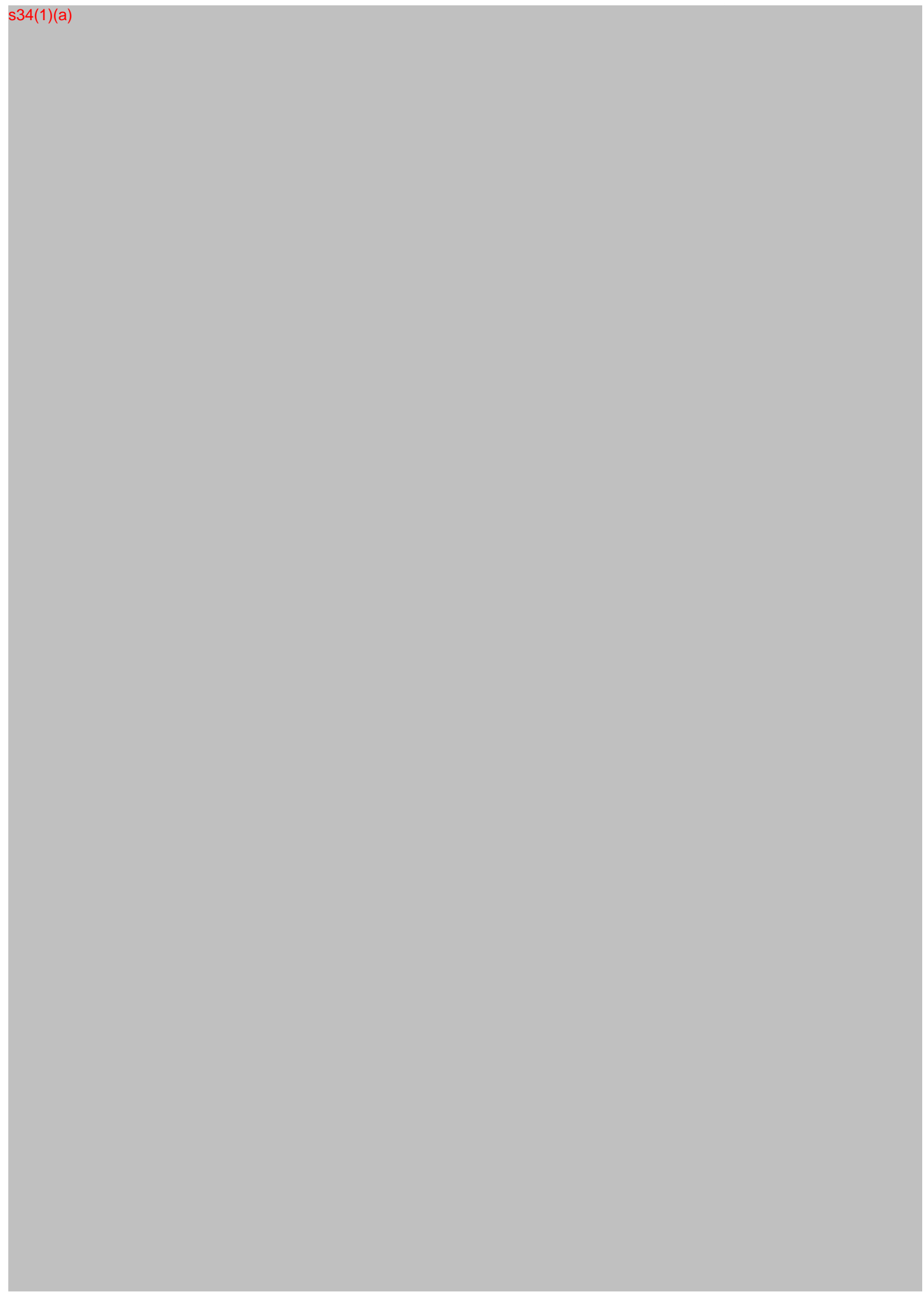
Office of the Hon Paul Fletcher MP

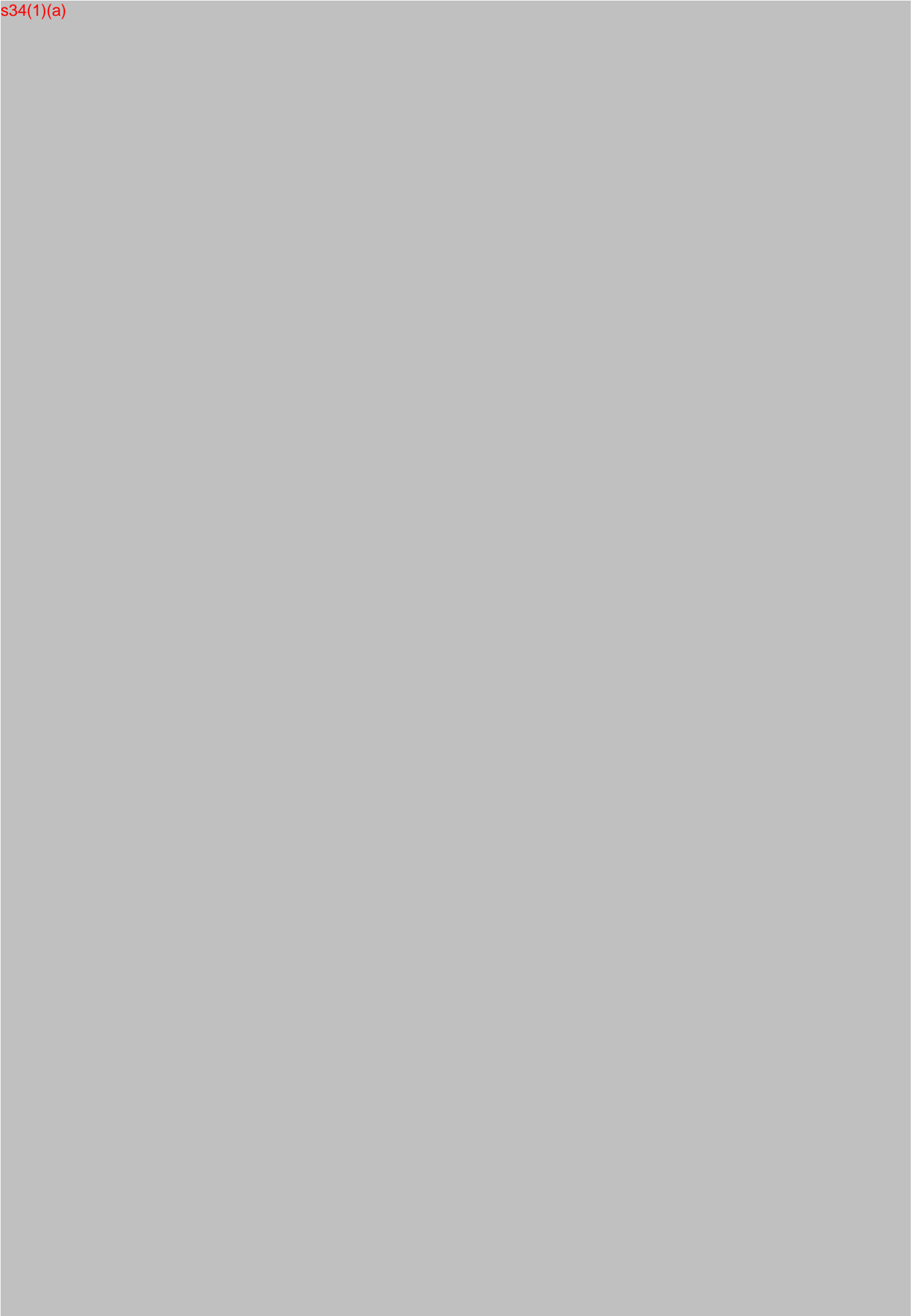
Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts

Commonwealth Parliamentary Offices | 1 Bligh Street | Sydney NSW 2000
Suite MG.48 | Parliament House | Canberra ACT 2600


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PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet





s34(1)(a)



s34



s47F

From: s47F
Sent: Monday, 20 July 2020 3:38 PM
To: Makin, Mike
Cc: s47F
Subject: s34(3)
Attachments: MS20-000473 Final Signed - For Dispatch .pdf; MS20-000473 - PF Edits .pdf

FYI – s47F letter signed.

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

From: s47F @communications.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 20 July 2020 3:29 PM
To: Sullivan, Pauline <Pauline.Sullivan@communications.gov.au>; s47F
s47F communications.gov.au>
Subject: s34(3) [SEC=PROTECTED, DLM=Sensitive:Cabinet]

Hi Pauline and s47F

s47C

s34(3)

s47F


Departmental Liaison Officer
Office of The Hon Paul Fletcher MP
Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet





s34(1)(d)





s34(1)(a)



PROTECTED: Sensitive: Cabinet

s47F

From: s47F
Sent: Monday, 19 October 2020 10:37 AM
To: s47F
Subject: FW: FW: AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal [SEC=PROTECTED, DLM=Sensitive:Cabinet]

Security Classification:
 PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

From: Windeyer, Richard <Richard.Windeyer@communications.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 20 July 2020 4:12 PM
To: Sullivan, Pauline <Pauline.Sullivan@communications.gov.au>; Makin, Mike <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>
Cc: s47F @communications.gov.au
Subject: RE: FW: AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal [SEC=PROTECTED, DLM=Sensitive:Cabinet]

Pauline

This approach to AAP sounds sensible to me. Happy for you to go back on this basis.

Thanks

Richard

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

From: Sullivan, Pauline <Pauline.Sullivan@communications.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 20 July 2020 2:16 PM
To: Windeyer, Richard <Richard.Windeyer@communications.gov.au>; s47F @communications.gov.au
Cc: s47F @communications.gov.au
Subject: s34(3)

RW

in regards to the below, the July Economic and Fiscal Update will s34(3)

My proposal is to go back to s47 and say something to the effect of:

- thanks for your email;
- currently under consideration;
- will come back to you later this week.

let me know if you have any concerns.

P

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

From: s47F
Sent: Monday, 20 July 2020 11:29 AM
To: s47F
Cc: Sullivan, Pauline <Pauline.Sullivan@communications.gov.au>; Windeyer, Richard <Richard.Windeyer@communications.gov.au>; Makin, Mike <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>; Emma Cowdroy s47F
Subject: Re: FW: AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal

Hi Pauline, Richard & Mike,

I hope you are both well.

I'd like to follow up on our PING funding proposal that s47F shared with you after our meeting on the 10th. Have you had a chance to consider it and is there anything we can do to assist in progressing it?

Kind regards

s47F



On Sat, 11 Jul 2020 at 17:03, s47F wrote:

Richard/Pauline/Mike

Thanks a lot for your time yesterday.

s47



Best regards

s47F



From: s47F
Date: Tuesday, 7 July 2020 at 10:54 pm
To: s47F <[REDACTED]@communications.gov.au>, s47F
s47F <[REDACTED]communications.gov.au>
Cc: Emma Cowdroy s47F
s47F
Subject: AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal

Dear s47F

Thank you for your time last week. We appreciated the opportunity to introduce s47F and s47F and to update you on our recent progress.

s47F

Should you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact Emma or myself.

Kind regards

s47F

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s47F

From: s47F
Sent: Wednesday, 29 July 2020 1:23 PM
To: s47F
Cc: s47F; Makin, Mike
Subject: PING Program - AAP Proposal [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

Dear s47F

Thank you for submitting your initial proposal for the PING program.

The objective of the PING Program is to maintain or increase the production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional areas.

s47C

It would be appreciated if you were able to provide a revised proposal as soon as practical so we can progress the funding process.

Please let me know if you have any queries.

Regards

s47F

s47F

arkets / New and Media Industry
structure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

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s47F

From: s47F
Sent: Wednesday, 29 July 2020 1:16 PM
To: s47F
Cc: Makin, Mike; s47F
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Regards

s47F

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PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

From: s47F
Date: Tuesday, 7 July 2020 at 10:54:14 pm
 s47F

Cc: "Emma Cowdroy" <s47F s47F>

Subject: AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal

Dear s47F

Thank you for your time last week. We appreciated the opportunity to introduce s47F s47F and to update you on our recent progress.

Please find attached our short-term funding proposal in line with the PING Funding Program priorities. We thank you in advance for your consideration and support.

Should you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact Emma or myself.

Kind regards

s47F

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s47F

From: s47F
Sent: Monday, 19 October 2020 10:37 AM
To: s47F
Subject: FW: PING Program - AAP Proposal [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

Security Classification:
 For Official Use Only

For Official Use Only

From: s47F @aap.com.au>
Sent: Friday, 31 July 2020 7:37 PM
To: s47F @communications.gov.au>
Cc: s47F communications.gov.au>; Makin, Mike <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>; Emma Cowdroy s47F
Subject: Re: PING Program - AAP Proposal [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

Hi s47F Mike,

A brief update to let you know that our revised proposal is progressing well. We plan on sending it to you early next week.

s47

Kind regards,

s47F

On Wed, 29 Jul 2020 at 13:33, s47F [aap.com.au](mailto:s47F@aap.com.au)> wrote:

Hi s47F and Mike,

Many thanks for your initial feedback on our proposal. We will revise our proposal and get this back to you as soon as possible.

Kind regards

s47F



Australian Associated Press
 Level 5, 3 Rider Boulevard, Rhodes NSW 2138, Australia
 PO Box 3411, Rhodes NSW 2138, Australia

s47F

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Regards

s47F

n

kets / New and Media Industry

structure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

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From: s47F
Sent: Monday, 10 August 2020 12:34 PM
To: Emma Cowdroy
Cc: s47F
Subject: RE: PING Program - AAP Proposal [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

Hi Emma

Thank you for revised proposal.

We will aim to review and come back to you shortly.

Regards

s47F

For Official Use Only

From: Emma Cowdroy s47F
Sent: Monday, 10 August 2020 10:31 AM
To: s47F @communications.gov.au>
Cc: s47F ; Makin,
 Mike <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>; s47F
Subject: Re: PING Program - AAP Proposal [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

Good morning s47F

I apologise for the delay in getting back to you on this. Please find attached a revised proposal from AAP taking into account the comments in your email of 29 July 2020. I have also attached our original proposal for ease of reference.

We look forward to progressing this with you and can be available at short notice if you would like a call to discuss it further.

Best regards
 Emma

Emma Cowdroy | Chief Executive Officer



Australian Associated Press

s47F

On Mon, 10 Aug 2020 at 10:04, s47F @communications.gov.au> wrote:

Hi s47F

Just hoping to get an update on your revised proposal?

Hope the transition to the new structure all went well too.

Regards

s47F

Director / Media Markets / New and Media Industry

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

s47F

[communications.gov.au](https://www.communications.gov.au)

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From: s47F

Sent: Friday, 31 July 2020 7:37 PM

To: s47F [@communications.gov.au](mailto:s47F@communications.gov.au)>

Cc: s47F [redacted] <[redacted]@communications.gov.au>; Makin, Mike <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>; Emma Cowdroy s47F [redacted]
[redacted] LM=For-Official-Use-Only]

Hi s47F [redacted] and Mike,

A brief update to let you know that our revised proposal is progressing well. We plan on sending it to you early next week.

We are on track to complete the transaction on Tuesday.

Kind regards,

s47F [redacted]

s47F [redacted]



Australian Associated Press
Level 5, 3 Rider Boulevard, Rhodes NSW 2138, Australia
PO Box 3411, Rhodes NSW 2138, Australia

s47F [redacted]

On Wed, 29 Jul 2020 at 13:33, s47F [redacted] s47F [redacted] > wrote:

Hi s47F [redacted] and Mike,

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Kind regards

s47F [redacted]

s47F



Australian Associated Press

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Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

s47F

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Attachments: AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal 2.0.pdf; 20200706_AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal.pdf

FYI

For Official Use Only

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Sent: Monday, 10 August 2020 10:31 AM
To: s47F communications.gov.au>
Cc: s47F ; Makin, Mike <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>; s47F
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Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

s47F

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From: s47F

Sent: Friday, 31 July 2020 7:37 PM

To: s47F

Cc: s47F; Makin, Mike <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>;

Emma Cowdroy s47F >

Subject: Re: PING Program - AAP Proposal [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

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The objective of the PING Program is to maintain or increase the production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional areas.

s47C

It would be appreciated if you were able to provide a revised proposal as soon as practical so we can progress the funding process.

Please let me know if you have any queries.

Regards

s47F

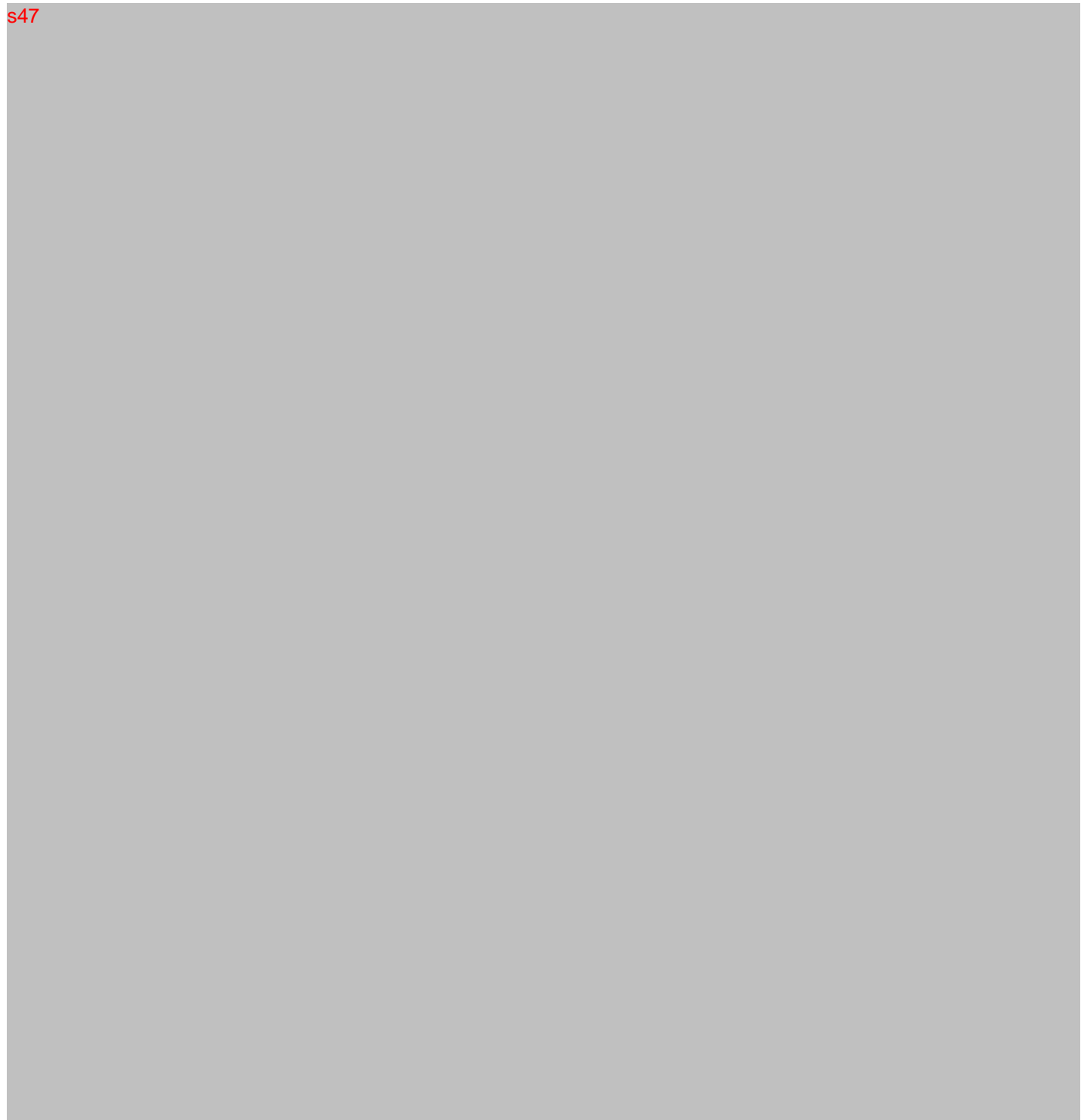
Director / Media Markets / New and Media Industry

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

s47F











s47F

From: s47F
To: Makin, Mike
Cc: s47F
Subject: PING 2.0 - AAP Guidelines and Risk Assessment s47 [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

Hi Mike – for review.

Please links below to the PING 2 Guidelines (AAP) and Risk Assessment s47

Regards

s47F

Record Title [PING 2.0 Program - Risk Assessment.docx](#)

Record Title [Public Interest News Gathering Program 2.0 Grant Guidelines - AAP.docx](#)

For Official Use Only

From: s47F@communications.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 11 August 2020 2:49 PM
To: s47F@communications.gov.au>
Subject: PING 2.0 - AAP Guidelines and Risk Assessment s47 [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

Hi

Please see draft guidelines and risk assessment at the links below for your review.

Happy to rework as needed.

Kind regards

s47F

Record Title [PING 2.0 Program - Risk Assessment.docx](#)

Record Title [Public Interest News Gathering Program 2.0 Grant Guidelines - AAP.docx](#)

For Official Use Only

s47F

From: s47F
Sent: Friday, 14 August 2020 3:05 PM
To: s47F
Cc: s47F

Subject: Draft Guidelines and Risk Assessment - Public Interest News Gathering Program - Additional Funding [SEC=PROTECTED]
Attachments: Public Interest News Gathering Program - Additional Funding AAP Newswire Grant Guidelines.docx; PING Additional Funding - AAP Newswire services - Risk Assessment.docx

Hi s47F – for review.

s47C

Further grant proposals under the additional stream may be submitted for review.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Regards

s47F

Director / Media Markets / New and Media Industry
 Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

s47F

[communications.gov.au](https://www.communications.gov.au)

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[arts.gov.au](https://www.arts.gov.au) / @artsculturegov
[infrastructure.gov.au](https://www.infrastructure.gov.au) / @infra_regional

I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on which we meet, work and live. I recognise and respect their continuing connection to the land, waters and communities. I pay my respect to Elders past and present and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

PROTECTED

PROGRAM GUIDELINES SELF ASSESSMENT RISK ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

Program details

Name of entity:

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

Name of grants:

Public Interest News Gathering – Additional Funding: Newswire Services

Administration hub:

Department

Name of program:

Public Interest News Gathering Program – Additional Funding: Newswire Services Program

Summary of program, including program objectives and the relevant agency outcome it contributes to:

The Australian Government has provided a total of \$55 million (GST exclusive) in grants to support the provision of public interest journalism in regional Australia. The objective of the Public Interest News Gathering Program (PING) is to support regional broadcasters and publishers to maintain or increase their production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic phase. Under the initial grants round, 107 applicants were found successful to receive a share of \$50 million funding.

Given the significant economic disruption to the entire media and broadcasting sector arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, an additional \$5 million in funding for the PING Program has been established. The objective of the additional funding is to further support regional media organisations to maintain or increase their production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional Australian during the COVID-19 pandemic phase.

The additional funding contributes to the Government's response to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's (ACCC) Digital Platforms Inquiry by replacing the remaining Regional and Small Publishers Jobs and Innovation Package.

Adding to the strong case for support already made by the ACCC is the increasing economic disruption resulting from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The enhanced program will provide direct support for the continued provision of local and regional journalism, which has never been more important than in recent times when communities across Australia need access to trusted sources of news and information.

s34

Summary of activity, including operational objectives, and the relevant program objective it contributes to for grants:

The objective of the PING Program is to support public interest journalism in regional Australia.

On 3 March 2020, the shareholders of the Australian Associated Press (AAP) announced that the AAP Newswire would close. The AAP Newswire business was acquired by a new consortium on 4 August 2020. The consortium has provided a limited lifeline to allow the business to restructure and work towards financial sustainability. While this sale has now taken place, the challenge is to make sure that AAP Newswire remains in operation to continue providing high quality public interest journalism to Australian media outlets, particularly those servicing regional Australia.

AAP Newswire currently services over 100 regional and community news outlets who in turn serve a large majority of regional Australia. The Newswire provides these regional outlets with core public interest content focused on national, state and regional level news. AAP is an essential piece of media infrastructure and will help Australian regional mastheads to reduce the costs of producing public interest journalism.

All content produced and distributed by AAP constitutes public interest journalism as it seeks to inform and engage the general public at a local, regional and national level about important issues. AAP's reporting, covering courts, federal and state politics, breaking news, economics, sport and world news, is fact-based reporting by skilled journalists covering matters that are of importance to the people of Australia. AAP Newswire is a key source of public information for many Australians, including, most relevantly, its regional customers and their audiences.

Consistent with the PING Program, AAP will be required to maintain or increase their level of public interest journalism in regional areas. AAP will achieve this in two major ways:

- providing direct support in regional news gathering via funding of local journalists; and
- providing critical indirect support through provision of newswire services to regional publishers which allows them to focus on their own investment solely on local reporting.

Funding AAP Newswire would be consistent with the objective of the PING Program to support regional journalism. The proposed funding amount to AAP would be similar in size to grants provided to large media entities under the first stream of the PING program.

s34(3)

s42



s42

Discussion of key issues and implementation risks

The Department has identified the following risks regarding the Program:

- Medium risks:
 - s42
 - Grant recipients shutting down operations following receipt of grant funding – the risk of Grant recipient’s organisation shutting down operations due to COVID-19 or other adverse events following receipt of grant funding.
 - Expenditure inconsistent with the Program – the risk that the expenditure may be spent in a manner that is inconsistent with the Program’s objectives.
- Low risks:
 - Fraud or deliberate mismanagement of grant funds – the risk of fraud or mismanagement of the grant funds by recipients, or the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications.
 - Impact of COVID-19 – the risk that the impacts of COVID-19 may affect the delivery of the program.

Further detail on the outlined risks can be found at Attachment A.

Risk assessment

The Department has identified the overall risk of the Program to be **Low**. All of the residual risks in relation to the Program are characterised as being “Low” risk. The Department has implemented, or will implement, a number of measures designed to mitigate and manage identified risk, as detailed in Attachment A.

Risk management: Detail on the risk management plan can be found at Attachment A.

RISK ASSESSMENT – Public Interest News Gathering Program

s42



Risk Title: Grant recipients shutting down operations following receipt of grant funding

Risk Owner: Assistant Secretary, News and Media Industry Branch

Description of the Risk	Impacts of risk happening		Current Risk Level (C / L)	Is this risk acceptable? (Yes / No)	Residual Risk Level (C / L)
Risk of Grant recipient's organisation shutting down operations due to COVID-19 or other adverse events following receipt of grant funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The objectives of the program may not be met, which may compromise the program (e.g. recipient organisations may become insolvent despite funding). Funding could be used to pay creditors in the case of insolvency. There may also be reputational damage for the Department and Government. 		Unlikely / Moderate - Medium	Yes	Low
Sources of risk / contributing factors	Existing risk controls in place	Control assessment	Additional treatments to be implemented? If yes, provide description of treatments		Timeline, status and action officer for each treatment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department will give appropriate due diligence prior to the provision of funding. Appropriate milestone activity to ensure accountability and that the objectives of the program are met before the final payment is made. The Department will have the capacity to undertake audit investigations as set out in the Program Guidelines and funding agreements. 	Effective			Apply in program design, being progressed, Director, Media Markets Section

Risk Title: Fraud or Deliberate Mismanagement of Funding**Risk Owner: Assistant Secretary, News and Media Industry Branch**

Description of the Risk	Impacts of risk happening		Current Risk Level (C / L)	Is this risk acceptable? (Yes / No)	Residual Risk Level (C / L)
Risk of fraud or deliberate mismanagement of funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The objectives of the program may not be met, which may compromise the program (e.g. funding may not be allocated / awarded in accordance with the funding agreement and the program guidelines). There may also be reputational damage for the Department and Government. Depending on the nature of any fraud / mismanagement, this may also expose these parties to criminal, civil or administrative remedies. 		Minimal / Rare - Low	Yes	Low
Sources of risk / contributing factors	Existing risk controls in place	Control assessment	Additional treatments to be implemented? If yes, provide description of treatments		Timeline, status and action officer for each treatment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fraud or mismanagement of funding by grantees. Fraud or mismanagement of grant funds by Department staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The program guidelines will outline the eligibility criteria that must be satisfied and be assessed against prior to the allocation of funding. The Department will give appropriate due diligence prior to the provision of funding. Appropriate Governance and audit framework to be clearly set out in 	Effective			Apply in program design, being progressed, Director, Media Markets Section

	<p>the program guidelines and funding agreements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department will be responsible for monitoring the overall program, and will need to ensure compliance with the program guidelines and funding agreements. • Grant recipients are required to have appropriate insurance and fraud management policies. • The Department will have the capacity to undertake audit and fraud investigations as set out in the Program Guidelines and funding agreements. 			
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Risk Title: Expenditure Inconsistent with Program Objectives**Risk Owner: News and Media Industry Branch, Media Markets Section**

Description of the Risk	Impacts of risk happening		Current Risk Level (C / L)	Is this risk acceptable? (Yes / No)	Residual Risk Level (C / L)
Expenditure of funding is inconsistent with the objectives of the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The objectives of the program may not be met, which could ultimately compromise the program. There may be reputational and relationship damage for the Department and the Government. 		Rare/Moderate Medium	Yes	Low
Sources of risk / contributing factors	Existing risk controls in place	Control assessment	Additional treatments to be implemented? If yes, provide description of treatments		Timeline, status and action officer for each treatment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding is not applied in a manner which advances the program's objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The program guidelines will definitively outline the eligibility requirements that must be satisfied against prior to the allocation of funding. Ongoing compliance will be monitored via grantees' reporting against defined milestone activity as stipulated in their funding agreement. The Department will be responsible for monitoring the overall program, and will need to ensure compliance with the program guidelines and funding agreements. 	Effective			Apply in program design, being progressed. Media Markets Section Staff

Risk Title: Impact of COVID-19 on administration of program**Risk Owner: News and Media Industry Branch, Media Markets Section**

Description of the Risk	Impacts of risk happening		Current Risk Level (C / L)	Is this risk acceptable? (Yes / No)	Residual Risk Level (C / L)
Risk that the impacts of COVID-19 may affect the delivery of the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department is at risk of shortages in staff due to COVID-19. There may be reputational damage for the program, Department and Government. 		Minimal / unlikely - Low	Yes	Low
Sources of risk / contributing factors	Existing risk controls in place	Control assessment	Additional treatments to be implemented? If yes, provide description of treatments		Timeline, status and action officer for each treatment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The short delivery timeframe for the PING program could be further impacted should a significant loss of staff occur due to COVID-19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department has adopted appropriate social distancing measures including staff working from home and on-site social distancing measures. The Department has revised the policies and procedures for conducting grant assessments and negotiating grant funding agreements to suit the revised working conditions. 	Effective			Director, Media Markets Section

Public Interest News Gathering Program – Newswire services Guidelines

Commonwealth policy and administering entity:	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications
Enquiries:	<p>If you have any questions, please contact:</p> <p>Director, Media Markets Section, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications</p> <p>Phone: s47F</p>
Date guidelines released:	August 2020
Type of Grant Opportunity	One off ad-hoc process

Contents

1. Public Interest News Gathering Program: overview and objective	3
2. Grant selection process	3
3. Who will approve the grant?	5
4. The grant agreement	5
5. Announcement of grants	6
6. Grant acquittal and reporting	6
7. Grant evaluation	7

1. Public Interest News Gathering Program: overview and objective

The Australian Government has allocated a total of \$55 million (GST exclusive) in grants under the Public Interest News Gathering Program (PING) to support the provision of public interest journalism in regional Australia. The objective of the PING Program is to support regional broadcasters and publishers to maintain or increase their production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic phase.

On 29 June 2020, the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, announced that 107 regional broadcasters and publishers would share in \$50 million (GST exclusive) under the first stream of the PING Program. Grantees are required to enter into agreements with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (on behalf of the Commonwealth) and grant information will be published on GrantConnect within 21 days of agreements being executed.

Given the significant economic disruption to the entire media and broadcasting sector arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, an additional \$5 million (GST exclusive) of funding has been made available under the PING Program to provide support to major media businesses who were ineligible to apply for funding under the first stream of the PING Program.

s47C

Consistent with the objective of the PING Program, the expected outcome of this grant will support AAP Newswire to maintain its production and distribution of public internet journalism in regional areas during the COVID-19 pandemic phase. A secondary benefit will enable AAP Newswire to continue to provide a vital service to regional media outlets that rely on AAP Newswire for breaking, national and regional news.

The grant will be undertaken in accordance with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017.

2. Grant selection process

This grant opportunity has been established as an *Ad-Hoc* grant. The Government considers that this offers value for money and is an appropriate type of selection process considering the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the entire media sector. The Ad-Hoc grant approach is an available option under the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017.

AAP Newswire has been selected to receive funding via an Ad-Hoc grant process as its business model is well placed to continue to produce and distribute high quality public interest journalism to the media industry, particularly to regional broadcasters and publishers. The funding reflects the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on AAP Newswire and the regional media sector that relies on AAP's newswire services.

On 3 March 2020, the shareholders of AAP announced that the AAP Newswire would close. The AAP Newswire business was acquired by a new consortium on 4 August 2020. The consortium has provided a limited lifeline to allow the business to restructure and work towards financial sustainability. While this sale has now taken place, the challenge is to make sure that AAP Newswire remains in operation to continue providing high quality public interest journalism to Australian media outlets, particularly those servicing regional Australia.

AAP Newswire currently services over 100 regional and community news outlets who in turn serve a large majority of regional Australia. The Newswire provides these regional outlets with core public interest content focused on national, state and regional level news. AAP is an essential piece of media infrastructure and will help Australian regional mastheads to reduce the costs of producing public interest journalism.

All content produced and distributed by AAP constitutes public interest journalism as it seeks to inform and engage the general public at a local, regional and national level about important issues. AAP's reporting, covering courts, federal and state politics, breaking news, economics, sport and world news, is fact-based reporting by skilled journalists covering matters that are of importance to the people of Australia. AAP Newswire is a key source of public information for many Australians, including, most relevantly, its regional customers and their audiences.

To be found eligible to receive funding under the original PING Program, media outlets had to fall into one of the following categories

- Stream funding pool 1: Regional Television Broadcasters
- Stream funding pool 2: Regional Radio Broadcasters
- Stream funding pool 3: Regional Publishers

AAP Newswire would not have been found eligible to receive funding under the original PING Program as, while they may be considered to be a distributor of public interest journalism as they provide news content to other media outlets, for the purposes of the original PING Program, they would not have been considered to be a regional publisher and as such, would not have met the eligibility criteria set out in the original PING Program Guidelines.

Consistent with the PING Program, AAP will be required to maintain or increase their level of public interest journalism in regional areas. AAP will achieve this in two major ways:

- providing direct support in regional news gathering via funding of local journalists; and
- providing critical indirect support through provision of newswire services to regional publishers which allows them to focus on their own investment solely on local reporting.

This will be achieved in the following ways:

Production and distribution of public interest journalism through maintenance of regional bureaus

AAP recently had to close its Darwin, Cairns and Townsville Bureaus. These closures mean that Far North Queensland and Australia's top end have lost a critical source of media

coverage for the area. Funding will allow AAP to reopen these bureaus and cover the salaries and technology required to operate these bureaus.

Production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional areas through freelance arrangements

AAP has traditionally had an extensive network of freelance journalists providing coverage of and to regional areas. The model provides numerous benefits to both AAP and the wider media industry including providing regional employment opportunities for local journalists, promoting regional Australian communities to a wider audience and providing coverage of news and events to Australian regional audiences. This content is distributed into regional areas as part of the supply of the AAP Newswire to AAP's regional customer base, which comprises 259 mastheads.

AAP had to scale back the use of regional freelancers. Funding will be used to support the use of regional journalism freelancers to increase the production of public interest journalism in regional areas. This amount includes part of the producers, editors and planners time required to effectively manage the freelancers' content to ensure it meets the AAP quality.

3. Who will approve the grant?

The Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts will make the final decision to approve a grant.

The Minister's decision is final in all matters, including:

- the approval of the grant;
- the grant funding amount to be awarded; and
- the terms and conditions of the grant.

The Minister must not approve funding if he reasonably considers the program funding available will not accommodate the funding offer, and/or if the commitment does not represent value for money.

There is no appeal mechanism for decisions to approve or not approve a grant.

4. The grant agreement

The funding recipient must enter into a legally binding grant agreement with the Commonwealth represented by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (the Department). Consistent with the first stream of the PING Program, the Department will use the *Commonwealth Low-Risk Grant Agreement Template*. Standard terms and conditions for the grant agreement will apply and cannot be changed. A schedule may be used to outline the specific grant requirements. Any additional conditions attached to the grant will be identified in the grant offer or during the grant agreement negotiations.

Consistent with the objective of the PING Program, the grantee will be required to maintain or increase the production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional areas during the grant period (12 months from the date of execution of the grant agreement). The Department will request information from the Grantee, which will include the following:

- details of the activities, budget and timings relating to the expenditure of funds to meet the objective of the PING Program and conditions in the grant agreement;
- six and 12-monthly reports against the stated activities, budget and timings;
- statements to certify that the funding has been acquitted in accordance with the grant agreement (as requested by the Department);
- certified financial or other statements for the full term of the grant (as requested by the Department).
- any supporting information as requested by the Department.

The Department will negotiate an agreement with the grantee. The grant agreement is expected to be finalised by September 2020.

Where a grantee fails to meet the obligations of the grant agreement, the Department may terminate the agreement and recover funding as per the grant agreement. Financial commitments should not be made until a grant agreement has been executed by the Department on behalf of the Commonwealth.

5. Announcement of grants

Grants awarded will be listed on the GrantConnect website not later than 21 calendar days after the date of effect as required by Section 5.3 of the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017.

6. Grant acquittal and reporting

The grantee must submit reports consistent with the requirements of the PING Program, with obligations detailed in the executed grant agreement. Reports will include:

- six and 12-monthly reports against the grantee's stated activities, budget and timings in the grant agreement;
- financial or other statements as requested by the Department that certify that grant money received during the grant period has been spent for the purposes of the objective and in accordance with conditions in the grant agreement; and
- any supporting information requested by the Department.

The grantee will also be responsible for:

- meeting the terms and conditions of the grant agreement and managing the activity efficiently and effectively; and

- complying with record keeping, reporting and acquittal requirements as set out in the grant agreement.

7. Grant evaluation

The Department will evaluate the grant program to measure how well the outcomes and objectives have been achieved. The grant agreement requires the grantee to provide information through performance reporting to help with this evaluation.

s47F

From: s47F finance.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 17 August 2020 4:07 PM
To: s47F
Cc: s47F
 s47F Makin, Mike; Ss47F
Subject: RE: Draft Guidelines and Risk Assessment - Public Interest News Gathering Program - Additional Funding [SEC=PROTECTED]
Attachments: PING Additional Funding - AAP Newswire services - Risk Assessment Sch1AB comments 16 Aug 2020.docx

PROTECTED

Hi s47F

As discussed. Thank you for providing the PING AAP guidelines and risk assessment. As discussed as this is an ad hoc process we don't need to agree the risk level before guidelines can be released.

Financial frameworks provided the attached comments on your risk assessment and requested you seek an updated AGS constitutional and legislative risk assessment for the expansion of the PING Program s47C

Based on our discussion it sounds like this has already occurred.

As you have indicated you don't need us to provide comments on the guidelines or risk assessment, we will not be providing further comments on the guidelines or risk assessment.

Kind regards,

s47F

Communications and Regional Development Agency Advice Unit
 Budget & Financial Reporting
 Department of Finance

s47F

A: One Canberra Avenue, Forrest ACT 2603

PROTECTED

From: s47F communications.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 14 August 2020 3:05 PM
To: s47F nance.gov.au>

s47F

s47F
s47F

Makin, Mike <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>; s47F

>

Subject: Draft Guidelines and Risk Assessment - Public Interest News Gathering Program - Additional Funding
[SEC=PROTECTED]

Hi s47F – for review.

s47C

Further grant proposals under the additional stream may be submitted for review.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Regards

s47F

s47F

Director / Media Markets / New and Media Industry
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

s47F

communications.gov.au

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GPO Box 594 Canberra, ACT 2601

communications.gov.au / @CommsAu

arts.gov.au / @artsculturegov

infrastructure.gov.au / @infra_regional

I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on which we meet, work and live. I recognise and respect their continuing connection to the land, waters and communities. I pay my respect to Elders past and present and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

PROTECTED

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PROGRAM GUIDELINES SELF ASSESSMENT RISK ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

Program details

Name of entity:

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

Name of grants:

Public Interest News Gathering – Additional Funding: Newswire Services

Administration hub:

Department

Name of program:

Public Interest News Gathering Program – Additional Funding: Newswire Services Program

Summary of program, including program objectives and the relevant agency outcome it contributes to:

The Australian Government has provided a total of \$55 million (GST exclusive) in grants to support the provision of public interest journalism in regional Australia. The objective of the Public Interest News Gathering Program (PING) is to support regional broadcasters and publishers to maintain or increase their production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic phase. Under the initial grants round, 107 applicants were found successful to receive a share of \$50 million funding.

Given the significant economic disruption to the entire media and broadcasting sector arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, an additional \$5 million in funding for the PING Program has been established. The objective of the additional funding is to further support regional media organisations to maintain or increase their production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional Australian during the COVID-19 pandemic phase.

The additional funding contributes to the Government's response to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's (ACCC) Digital Platforms Inquiry by replacing the remaining Regional and Small Publishers Jobs and Innovation Package.

Adding to the strong case for support already made by the ACCC is the increasing economic disruption resulting from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The enhanced program will provide direct support for the continued provision of local and regional journalism, which has never been more important than in recent times when communities across Australia need access to trusted sources of news and information.

s34(3)

Summary of activity, including operational objectives, and the relevant program objective it contributes to for grants:

The objective of the PING Program is to support public interest journalism in regional Australia.

On 3 March 2020, the shareholders of the Australian Associated Press (AAP) announced that the AAP Newswire would close. The AAP Newswire business was acquired by a new consortium on 4 August 2020. The consortium has provided a limited lifeline to allow the business to restructure and work towards financial sustainability. While this sale has now taken place, the challenge is to make sure that AAP Newswire remains in operation to continue providing high quality public interest journalism to Australian media outlets, particularly those servicing regional Australia.

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Consistent with the PING Program, AAP will be required to maintain or increase their level of public interest journalism in regional areas. AAP will achieve this in two major ways:

- providing direct support in regional news gathering via funding of local journalists; and
- providing critical indirect support through provision of newswire services to regional publishers which allows them to focus on their own investment solely on local reporting.

Funding AAP Newswire would be consistent with the objective of the PING Program to support regional journalism. The proposed funding amount to AAP would be similar in size to grants provided to large media entities under the first stream of the PING program.

s34(3)

|

|



Expenditure under the program will assist to mitigate the negative nationwide economic impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic by supporting the media sector.

Discussion of key issues and implementation risks

The Department has identified the following risks regarding the Program:

- Medium risks:
 - s42
 - Grant recipients shutting down operations following receipt of grant funding – the risk of Grant recipient’s organisation shutting down operations due to COVID-19 or other adverse events following receipt of grant funding.
 - Expenditure inconsistent with the Program – the risk that the expenditure may be spent in a manner that is inconsistent with the Program’s objectives.
- Low risks:
 - Fraud or deliberate mismanagement of grant funds – the risk of fraud or mismanagement of the grant funds by recipients, or the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications.
 - Impact of COVID-19 – the risk that the impacts of COVID-19 may affect the delivery of the program.

Further detail on the outlined risks can be found at [Attachment A](#).

Risk assessment

The Department has identified the overall risk of the Program to be **Low**. All of the residual risks in relation to the Program are characterised as being “Low” risk. The Department has implemented, or will implement, a number of measures designed to mitigate and manage identified risk, as detailed in [Attachment A](#).

Risk management: Detail on the risk management plan can be found at [Attachment A](#).

RISK ASSESSMENT – Public Interest News Gathering Program

s42

PROTECTED: Sensitive: Cabinet

Risk Title: Grant recipients shutting down operations following receipt of grant funding

Risk Owner: Assistant Secretary, News and Media Industry Branch

Description of the Risk	Impacts of risk happening		Current Risk Level (C / L)	Is this risk acceptable? (Yes / No)	Residual Risk Level (C / L)
Risk of Grant recipient's organisation shutting down operations due to COVID-19 or other adverse events following receipt of grant funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The objectives of the program may not be met, which may compromise the program (e.g. recipient organisations may become insolvent despite funding).Funding could be used to pay creditors in the case of insolvency.There may also be reputational damage for the Department and Government.		Unlikely / Moderate - Medium	Yes	Low
Sources of risk / contributing factors	Existing risk controls in place	Control assessment	Additional treatments to be implemented? If yes, provide description of treatments		Timeline, status and action officer for each treatment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Department will give appropriate due diligence prior to the provision of funding.Appropriate milestone activity to ensure accountability and that the objectives of the program are met before the final payment is made.The Department will have the capacity to undertake audit investigations as set out in the Program Guidelines and funding agreements.	Effective			Apply in program design, being progressed, Director, Media Markets Section

PROTECTED: Sensitive: Cabinet

PROTECTED: Sensitive: Cabinet

Risk Title: Fraud or Deliberate Mismanagement of Funding

Risk Owner: Assistant Secretary, News and Media Industry Branch

Description of the Risk	Impacts of risk happening		Current Risk Level (C / L)	Is this risk acceptable? (Yes / No)	Residual Risk Level (C / L)
Risk of fraud or deliberate mismanagement of funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The objectives of the program may not be met, which may compromise the program (e.g. funding may not be allocated / awarded in accordance with the funding agreement and the program guidelines).There may also be reputational damage for the Department and Government. Depending on the nature of any fraud / mismanagement, this may also expose these parties to criminal, civil or administrative remedies.		Minimal / Rare - Low	Yes	Low
Sources of risk / contributing factors	Existing risk controls in place	Control assessment	Additional treatments to be implemented? If yes, provide description of treatments		Timeline, status and action officer for each treatment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fraud or mismanagement of funding by grantees.Fraud or mismanagement of grant funds by Department staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The program guidelines will outline the eligibility criteria that must be satisfied and be assessed against prior to the allocation of funding.The Department will give appropriate due diligence prior to the provision of funding.Appropriate Governance and audit framework to be clearly set out in	Effective			Apply in program design, being progressed, Director, Media Markets Section

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PROTECTED: Sensitive: Cabinet

	<p>the program guidelines and funding agreements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Department will be responsible for monitoring the overall program, and will need to ensure compliance with the program guidelines and funding agreements.• Grant recipients are required to have appropriate insurance and fraud management policies.• The Department will have the capacity to undertake audit and fraud investigations as set out in the Program Guidelines and funding agreements.			
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Risk Title: Expenditure Inconsistent with Program Objectives

Risk Owner: News and Media Industry Branch, Media Markets Section

Description of the Risk	Impacts of risk happening		Current Risk Level (C / L)	Is this risk acceptable? (Yes / No)	Residual Risk Level (C / L)
Expenditure of funding is inconsistent with the objectives of the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The objectives of the program may not be met, which could ultimately compromise the program. There may be reputational and relationship damage for the Department and the Government. 		Rare/Moderate Medium	Yes	Low
Sources of risk / contributing factors	Existing risk controls in place	Control assessment	Additional treatments to be implemented? If yes, provide description of treatments		Timeline, status and action officer for each treatment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding is not applied in a manner which advances the program's objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The program guidelines will definitively outline the eligibility requirements that must be satisfied against prior to the allocation of funding. Ongoing compliance will be monitored via grantees' reporting against defined milestone activity as stipulated in their funding agreement. The Department will be responsible for monitoring the overall program, and will need to ensure compliance with the program guidelines and funding agreements. 	Effective			Apply in program design, being progressed. Media Markets Section Staff

Risk Title: Impact of COVID-19 on administration of program

Risk Owner: News and Media Industry Branch, Media Markets Section

Description of the Risk	Impacts of risk happening		Current Risk Level (C / L)	Is this risk acceptable? (Yes / No)	Residual Risk Level (C / L)
Risk that the impacts of COVID-19 may affect the delivery of the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department is at risk of shortages in staff due to COVID-19. There may be reputational damage for the program, Department and Government. 		Minimal / unlikely - Low	Yes	Low
Sources of risk / contributing factors	Existing risk controls in place	Control assessment	Additional treatments to be implemented? If yes, provide description of treatments		Timeline, status and action officer for each treatment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The short delivery timeframe for the PING program could be further impacted should a significant loss of staff occur due to COVID-19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department has adopted appropriate social distancing measures including staff working from home and on-site social distancing measures. The Department has revised the policies and procedures for conducting grant assessments and negotiating grant funding agreements to suit the revised working conditions. 	Effective			Director, Media Markets Section

s47F

From: s47F
Sent: Monday, 14 September 2020 12:17 PM
To: s47F
Subject: FW: letter - AAP [SEC=PROTECTED, DLM=Sensitive:Cabinet]
Attachments: s34(3)

FYI

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

From: Sullivan, Pauline <Pauline.Sullivan@communications.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 14 September 2020 12:16 PM
To: s47F @communications.gov.au
Cc: Makin, Mike <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>; s47F
 s47F communications.gov.au
Subject: s34(3)

s
 4

see attached. have tried to trim as much as possible. a brief will come through later today to close out the paperwork.

Kind regards

Pauline

Pauline Sullivan

First Assistant Secretary
 Content Division
 Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications
 P +61 2 6271 1913

s47F

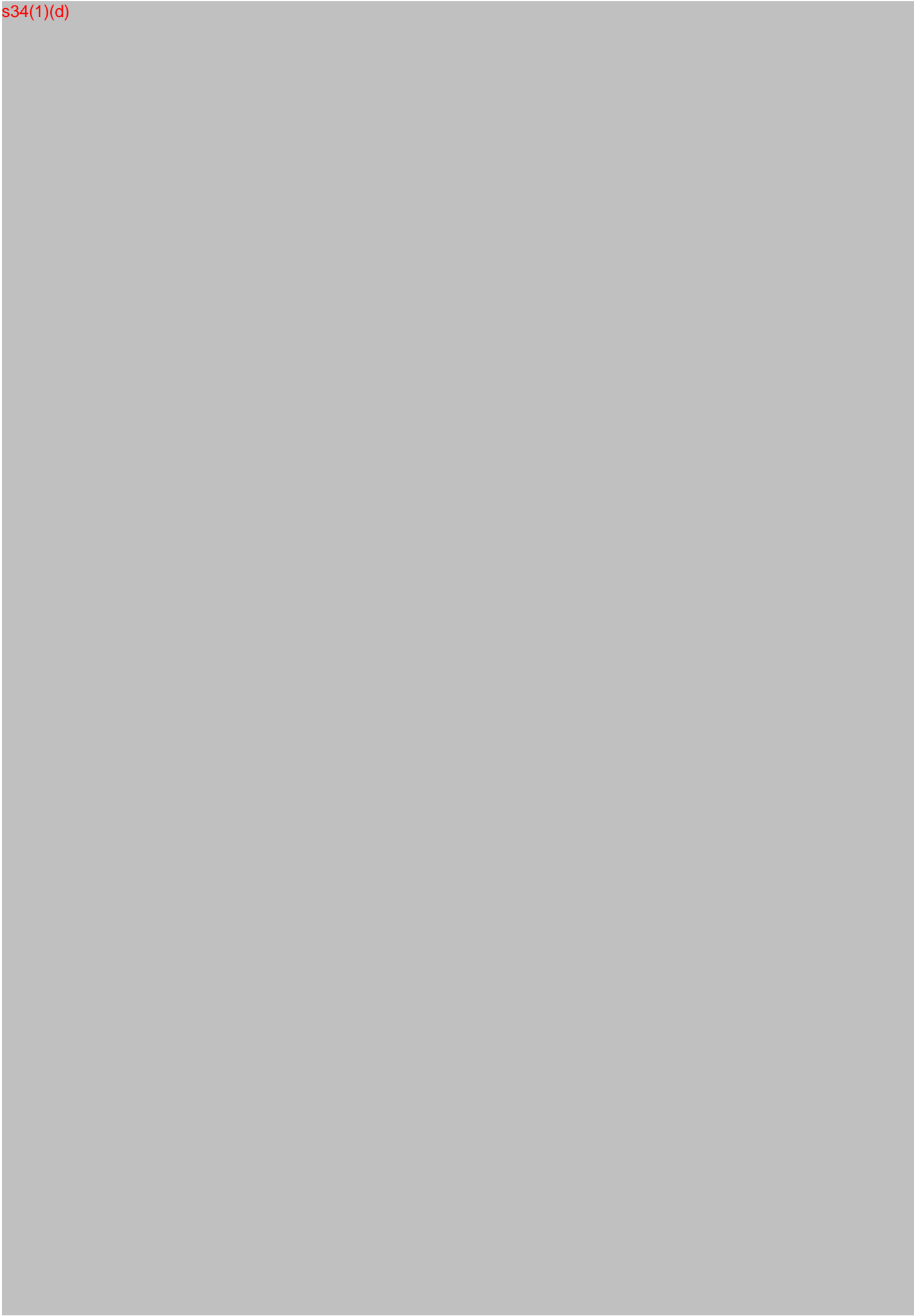
Email.pauline.sullivan@communications.gov.au

2 Phillip Law Street, Canberra ACT 2601
 GPO Box 594 Canberra, ACT 2601

communications.gov.au / @CommsAu
arts.gov.au / @artsculturegov
infrastructure.gov.au / @infra_regional

I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on which we meet, work and live. I recognise and respect their continuing connection to the land, waters and communities. I pay my respect to Elders past and present and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet



s47F

From: s47F
Sent: Wednesday, 16 September 2020 2:28 PM
To: s47F
Subject: FW: OUT - s34(3) [SEC=PROTECTED, DLM=Sensitive:Cabinet]
Attachments: OUT - s34(3).pdf

s47F – can you please file

Team – FYI. s47F

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

From: Makin, Mike <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 16 September 2020 1:04 PM
To: s47F @communications.gov.au
Subject: FW: OUT - s34(3) [SEC=PROTECTED, DLM=Sensitive:Cabinet]

Can you file this, and s47F is going to follow up getting the covering sub signed.

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

From: s47F <communications.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 16 September 2020 12:51 PM
To: Makin, Mike <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>
Subject: OUT - s34(3) [SEC=PROTECTED, DLM=Sensitive:Cabinet]

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

s47F

From: s47F
Sent: Thursday, 17 September 2020 9:37 PM
To: s47F
Subject: s34(3)
Attachments:

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Makin, Mike" <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>
Date: 17 September 2020 at 7:14:36 pm AEST
To: "s47F" <s47F@communications.gov.au>
Subject: s34(3) m
[SEC=PROTECTED, CAVEAT=SH:CABINET]

Let's get the guidelines sub up first thing tomorrow

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: s47F <s47F@pmc.gov.au>
Date: 17 September 2020 at 19:11:32 GMT+10
To: "Sullivan, Pauline" <Pauline.Sullivan@communications.gov.au>, "Makin, Mike" <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>
Cc: s47F
Subject: FW: SIGNED MC20-145706 Funding for AAP - Public Interest News Gathering Program [SEC=PROTECTED, CAVEAT=SH:CABINET]

PROTECTED//CABINET

Hi Pauline and Mike

In case it hasn't made its way to you yet, see attached s34(3)

Thanks

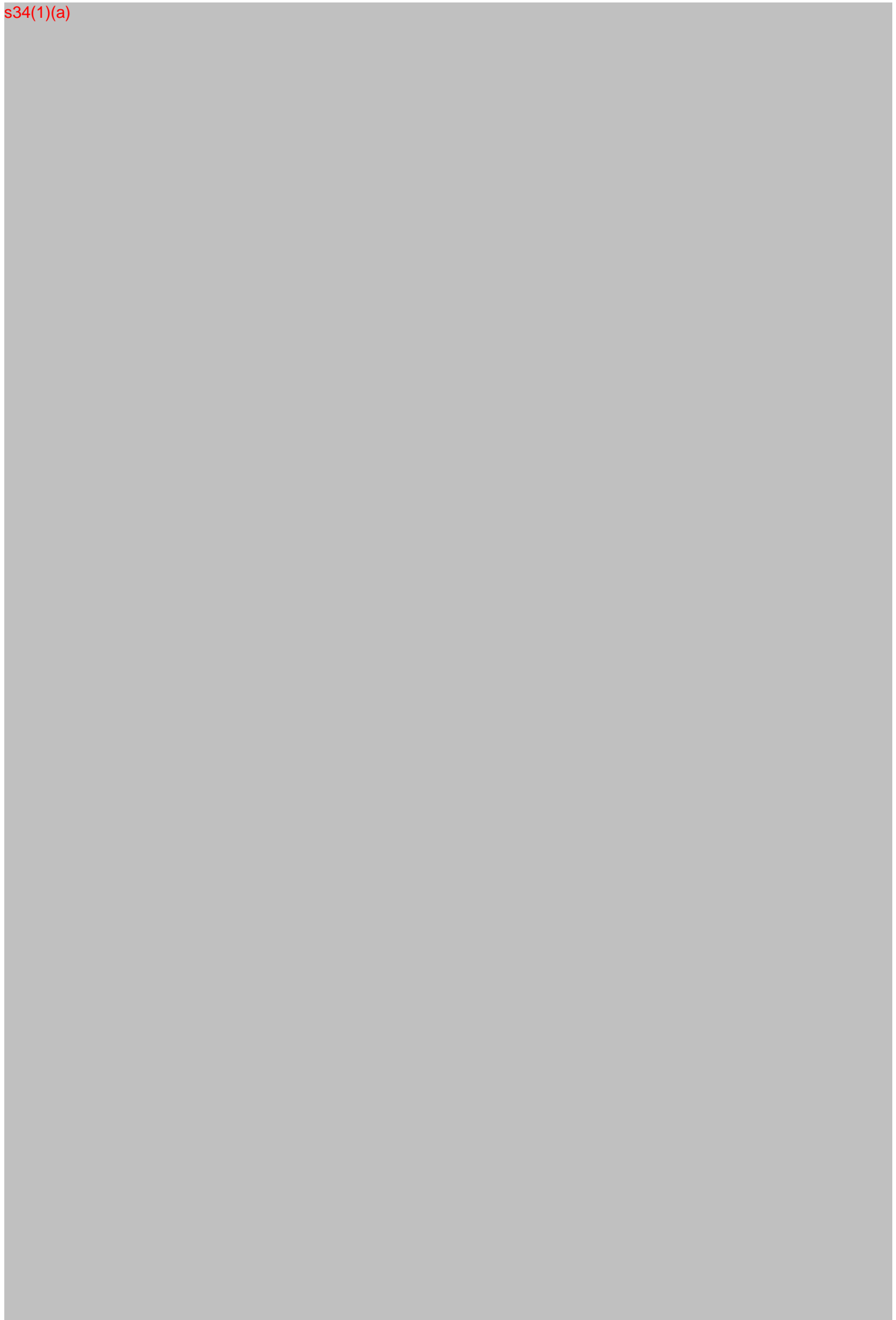
s47F

Communications, Arts and Tourism | Industry, Science and Communications Branch
 Industry, Infrastructure and Environment Division | Department of the Prime
 Minister and Cabinet

s47F

s47F

PO Box 6500 CANBERRA ACT 2600



s47F

From: s47F
Sent: Friday, 18 September 2020 9:48 AM
To: s47F
Subject: Fwd: MS20-000674 [SEC=PROTECTED, DLM=Sensitive:Cabinet]
Attachments: s34(3)

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "s47F" <s47F@communications.gov.au>
Date: 18 September 2020 at 7:58:02 am AEST
To: DLO <DLO@communications.gov.au>, s47F
 s47F <s47F@communications.gov.au>, "Makin, Mike"
 <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>, "Sullivan, Pauline"
 <Pauline.Sullivan@communications.gov.au>
Subject: RE: MS20-000674 [SEC=PROTECTED, DLM=Sensitive:Cabinet]

Also – s34(3)

s
4

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

From: s47F
Sent: Thursday, 17 September 2020 4:28 PM
To: s47F <s47F@communications.gov.au>; Makin, Mike
 <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>; Sullivan, Pauline
 <Pauline.Sullivan@communications.gov.au>
Subject: FW: MS20-000674 [SEC=PROTECTED, DLM=Sensitive:Cabinet]

Hi all – FYI signed copy MS20-000674 .

s47F

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

From: s47F <s47F@communications.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 17 September 2020 4:18 PM
To: DLO <DLO@communications.gov.au>
Cc: s47F <s47F@communications.gov.au>
Subject: MS20-000674 [SEC=PROTECTED, DLM=Sensitive:Cabinet]

Hi guys,

Please find the front of the brief attached (executed!!).

Please let me know if there are any issues ☺

Yours sincerely,

s47F

Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts

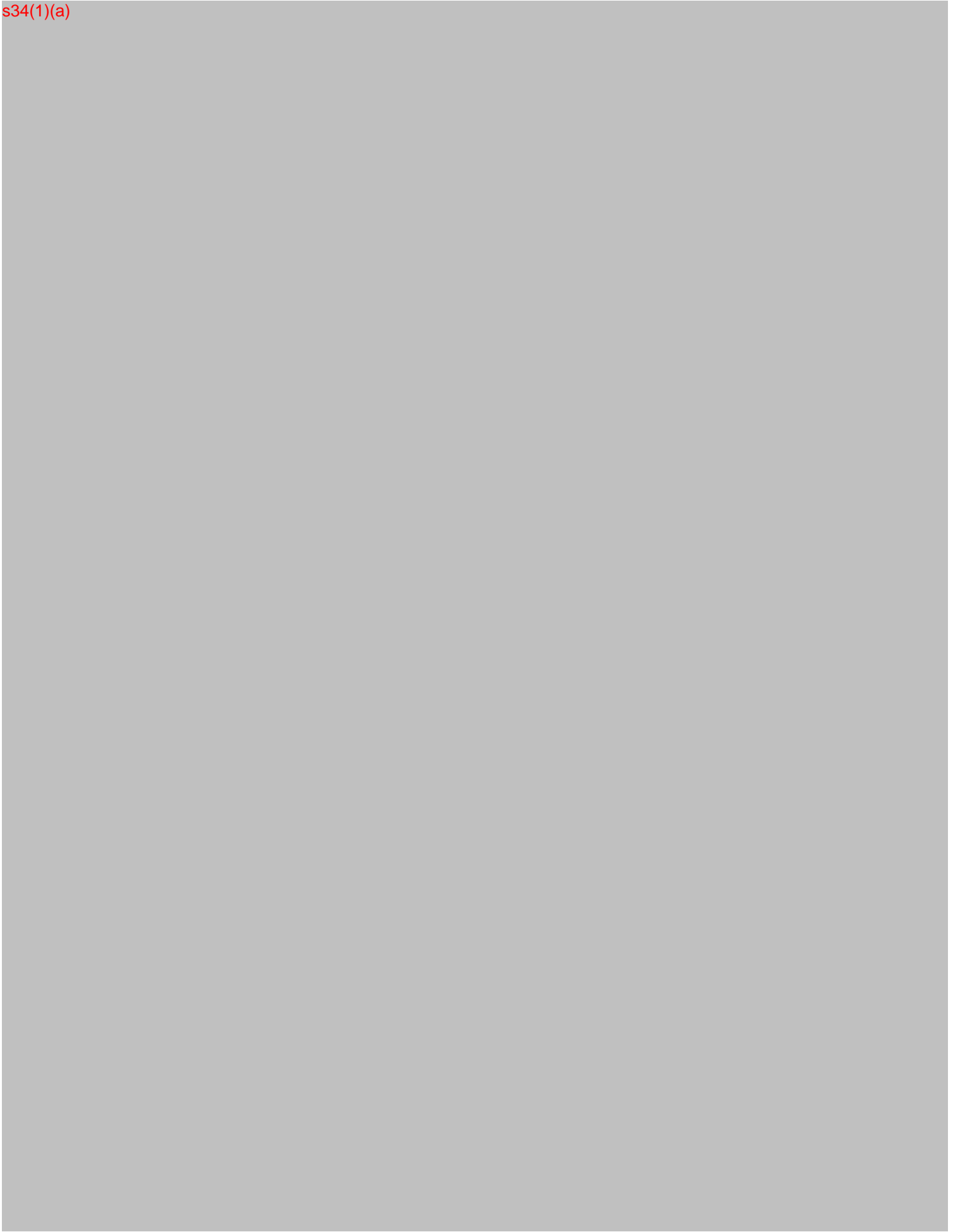
Commonwealth Parliamentary Offices | 1 Bligh Street | Sydney NSW 2000 | (02) 8289 9930
Suite MG.48 | Parliament House | Canberra ACT 2600 | (02) 6277 7480

s47F

A large grey rectangular box redacting the content of the page.

I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on which we meet, work and live. I recognise and respect their continuing connection to the land, waters and communities. I pay my respect to Elders past and present and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet



s47C



23 SEP 2020

Dispatched to MC

22 SEP 2020

Ministerial Submission

MS20-000696



Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development and Communications

To: Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP
(for decision)

s47F

Critical Date: Routine

Recommendations for Minister Fletcher: That you

s47F

Approved / Not
Approved

2. Delegate to SES officers within the Content Division of the Department your power under section 32B of the *Financial Framework (Supplementary Powers) Act 1997* (FFSP Act), to enter into an arrangement with AAP Newswire for the agreed funding amount, administer and vary those arrangements on behalf of the Commonwealth.
3. Approve the ad-hoc PING Program – Newswire Services Guidelines at Attachment A.

s47C

Approved / Not
Approved

[Handwritten Signature]

Minister's Signature:

Date: 30/9/2020

Minister's Comments

Quality Rating

s47C

1. Very Poor
2. Poor
3. Satisfactory
4. Good
5. Excellent

Purpose:

1. This submission seeks your approval to provide a grant of \$5 million (GST exclusive) to AAP Newswire under the additional funding stream of the PING Program. The submission also seeks your agreement to the PING Program – Newswire Services Guidelines at Attachment A.

s34(3)

s47C

s47C

s34(3)

s34(3)

5. As the decision-maker for this opportunity, the Department seeks your approval to provide \$5 million (GST exclusive) to AAP to fund a greater range of activities that support the objective of the PING Program to maintain or increase public interest journalism in regional areas and taking into account AAP's proposal. The Department also seeks your agreement to the updated guidelines, which reflect the increased grant allocation and have been prepared in accordance with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017. Subject to your agreement, the Department will enter into a grant agreement with AAP.

Sensitivities:

6. There may be criticism that funding is being delivered to AAP by way of an ad-hoc grant as opposed to a competitive grants process. Country Press Association has questioned the grant being provided to AAP.

Financial Implications:

7. The \$5 million additional PING funding stream was published in the Economic and Fiscal Update July 2020 as part of the Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts' COVID-19 Response Package.

Background/Issues:

8. Background is provided under **Additional Information**.

Communication/Media Activities:

9. Media release issued on 18 September 2020 announcing the Government is providing \$5 million to AAP.

Consultation: External Budgets Team, Finance.

Attachments:

Attachment A: Revised Public Interest News Gathering Program - AAP Guidelines

Attachment B: AAP Newswire Proposal

Attachment C: Prime Minister's Approval Letter

Contact Officer: s47F

Position:

Section: Media Markets

Phone/Mobile: s47F

Cleared by: Mike Makin

Position: Assistant Secretary

Branch: News and Media Industry

Phone/Mobile: 02 6271 1031/s47F

Instructions for MAPS: Nil

Responsible Adviser: s47F

Distribution CC List: Simon Atkinson, Richard Windeyer, Pauline Sullivan, s47F Sarah Godden, Carol Cote, Andrew Verdon, s47F

Additional Information***PING Program***

On 29 June 2020, you announced that 107 regional broadcasters and publishers would share to \$50 million (GST exclusive) under the first stream of the PING Program. Of the 107 grantees, five are regional television broadcasters; 13 regional radio broadcasters; and 92 regional publishers. As at 18 September 2020, 99 funding agreements have been executed and 93 grantees have received their first payment under the program. Grantee details are published on GrantConnect within 21 days of agreement being executed. The objective of the PING Program is to support regional broadcasters and publishers to maintain or increase their production and distribution of public interest journalism to regional Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic phase.

AAP would not have been found eligible to receive funding under the original PING Program as, while they are a producer of public interest journalism they would not have been considered to be a regional publisher and as such, would not have met the eligibility criteria set out in the original PING Program Guidelines.

Grant guidelines

An Ad-hoc/one-off grant is a permitted grant approach under the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017. Although the funding is being provided as an Ad-hoc/one-off grant via direct offer to AAP, the Department is required to prepare guidelines for all grant opportunities under the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017. The Guidelines are not required to be cleared by the Department of Finance or published. Consistent with all PING grantees and in accordance with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017, details of the agreement will be published on GrantConnect within 21 days of the agreement being executed.

The Department provided a draft version of the original grant guidelines to the Department of Finance who responded with confirmation that they do not have to review grant guidelines for ad hoc grants.

Selection of AAP Newswire

On 3 March 2020, the shareholders of AAP announced that the Newswire service would close. AAP was acquired by a new consortium on 4 August 2020. The consortium has provided a limited timeline to allow the business to restructure and work towards financial sustainability. AAP's business model is well placed to continue to produce and distribute high quality public interest journalism to the media industry, particularly to regional broadcasters and publishers. The funding reflects the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on AAP and the regional media sector that relies on AAP's newswire services.

AAP service is available to over 250 regional and community news outlets who in turn serve a large majority of regional Australia (53 percent of AAP's revenue is derived from regional media activities). The newswire service provides these regional outlets with core public interest content focused on national, state and regional level news. AAP is an essential piece of media infrastructure and will help Australian regional mastheads to reduce the costs of producing public interest journalism and focus on hyper-local stories relevant to regional communities.

On 10 August 2020, AAP provided the Department with a revised proposal seeking funding of up to \$5.4 million for a range of activities (table below and in Attachment B) that support the provision of public interest news to regional Australia. Subject to your agreement, the Department will work with AAP to identify those activities that meet the objective of the PING Program to maintain or increase public interest journalism in regional areas.

s47

Subject to your approval of the guidelines and the Department entering into a grant agreement with AAP, the Department will negotiate with AAP to execute a funding agreement for the proposed funding amount of **\$5 million (GST exclusive)** to fund activities that meet the objective of the PING Program.

s47C

Financial authority

Funding awarded under the PING Program is considered to be a grant for the purposes of the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017. The Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017 establish the overarching Commonwealth grants policy framework in relation to the administration of grants.

As the decision-maker under the PING Program, you are required to comply with the obligations set out in the CGRGs, the PGPA Act, and the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014* (PGPA Rule). For example, the PGPA Rule requires that where accountable authorities or officials approve a proposed commitment of relevant money, the approval must be recorded in writing as soon as practicable after the approval is given.

The Department (as the administrators of the PING Program) is also required to be aware of, and adhere to, a number of requirements in the administration of the grants and when giving recommendations about funding awards. For example, officials of the Department must consider their obligations under the PGPA Act and

Rule when undertaking grants administration (including section 16 Duty to establish and maintain systems relating to risk and control). Internal guidelines, operational guidance and grant opportunity guidelines must be consistent with these requirements, while including any additional specific provisions. Section 3214 of the *Financial Framework (Supplementary Powers) Act 1997* (FFSP Act), provides the Commonwealth with the power to enter into, vary or administer an arrangement or a grant of financial assistance if it is specified in Schedule 1AA or Schedule 1AB to the FFSP Regulations.

Under subsection 71(1) of the PGPA Act, you may only approve a proposed expenditure of Commonwealth money if you are satisfied, after making reasonable enquiries that the expenditure would be a proper use of relevant money. 'Proper' when used in relation to the use or management of public resources means, efficient, effective, economical and ethical.

In addition to this requirement, under the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017, you:

- must not approve the grants without receiving written advice from the Department on the merits of the proposed grant relative to the Guidelines, and the key principle of achieving value for money. This submission and associated attachments constitutes the Department's advice on the merits of the proposed grant; and
- must record in writing the basis for the approvals relative to the Guidelines and the key principle of achieving value for money. Your signing of this submission and approval of each particular grant recommendation, once completed, will form the written record of your approval.

You may approve grants that are not recommended by the Department. In the event that you choose to do so, you must report annually to the Minister for Finance on such grants, including a brief statement of reasons as to why you have chosen to approve the grant(s).

s47F

From: s47F
Sent: Tuesday, 6 October 2020 4:02 PM
To: Sullivan, Pauline; s47F
Subject: RE: meeting at 5pm with AAP [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Attachments: Talking points for discussion with AAP re PING 2.docx

Hi Pauline

Draft TPs for AAP discussion at 5pm.

Regards

s47F

UNCLASSIFIED

From: Sullivan, Pauline <Pauline.Sullivan@communications.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 6 October 2020 12:54 PM
To: s47F
 s47F NINFRASTRUCTURE.gov.au>
Subject: meeting at 5pm with AAP [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

hi

I have a scheduled a 5 pm meeting with AAP today – I wanted four but Emma Cowdroy was unavailable then and I didn't want it to slip any later in the week.

s47F – understand if you cannot make 5 pm at late notice but you are welcome to join us if you can.

P

Pauline Sullivan

First Assistant Secretary
 Content Division
 Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications
 P +61 2 6271 1913

s47F

Email.pauline.sullivan@communications.gov.au

2 Phillip Law Street, Canberra ACT 2601
 GPO Box 594 Canberra, ACT 2601

communications.gov.au / @CommsAu
arts.gov.au / @artsculturegov
infrastructure.gov.au / @infra_regional

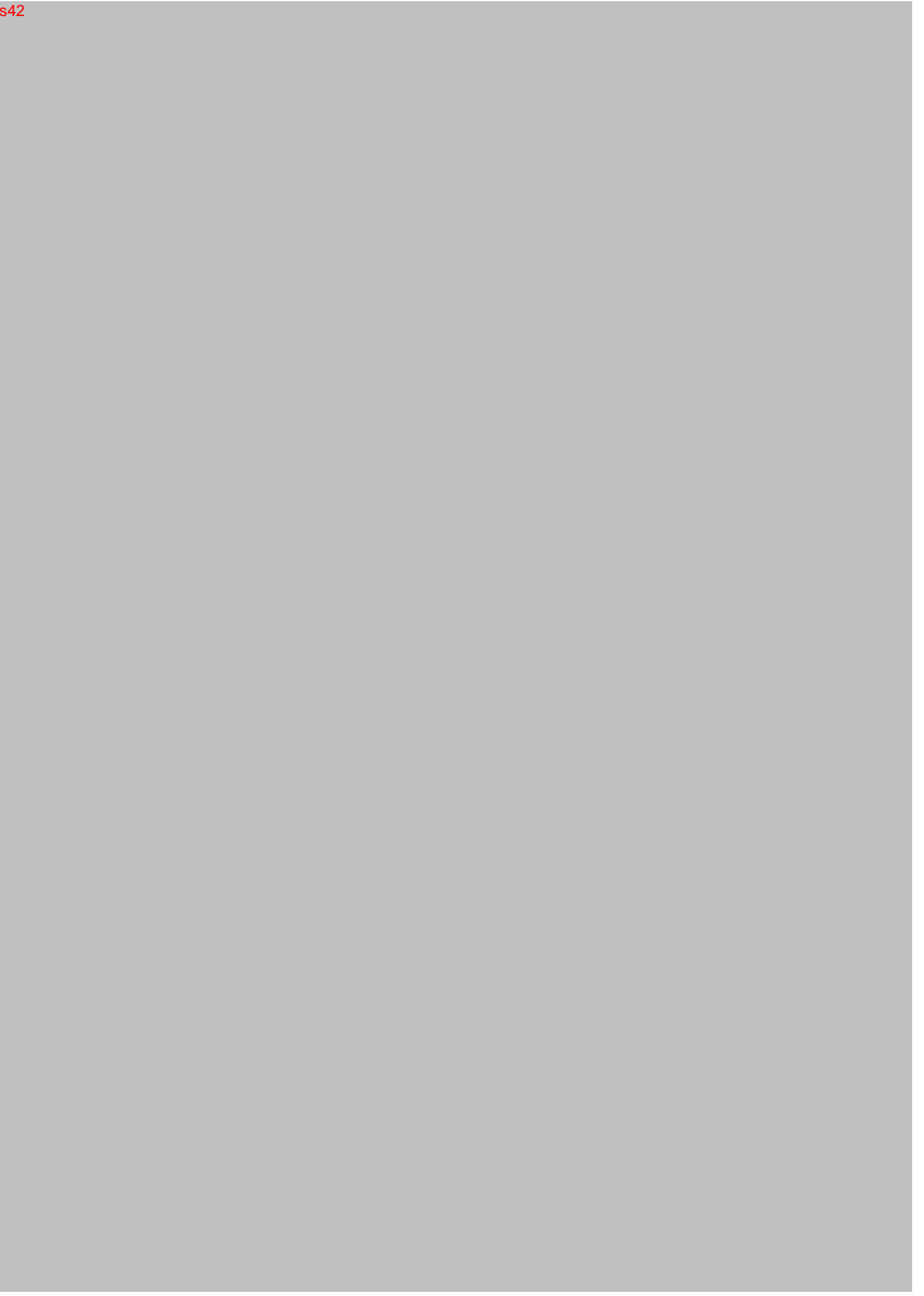
I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on which we meet, work and live. I recognise and respect their continuing connection to the land, waters and communities. I pay my respect to Elders past and present and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

UNCLASSIFIED

Talking points for discussion with AAP regarding their financial position

- As you are aware, the Minister announced on 18 September that the Government would provide \$5 million in funding to AAP under the Public Interest News Gathering (PING) Program to support public interest journalism in regional areas.
- The PING Program is designed to support media organisations to maintain or increase their production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Commonwealth Grant Rules and Guidelines 2017 (CGRGs) and Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (PGPA Act) require that a Minister must not approve proposed expenditure of relevant money unless satisfied, after reasonable inquiries, that the expenditure would be a ‘proper’ use of relevant money (value for money). ‘Proper’ when used in relation to the use or management of public resources means efficient, effective, economical and ethical.
- Applicants under the original PING Program were required to certify that their organisation was solvent at the time of application. Applicants were required to provide financial statements (e.g. profit and loss statement) which was certified by the CFO or a registered Chartered Accountant. Certification was in the form of a Statutory Declaration which indicated that the organisation was solvent as evidenced by the accompanying financial documentation.
- The \$5 million funding is a one off grant and is designed to provide short term relief only. It is not expected to be annual grant program.
- For the Minister to approve the release of funds to AAP, the Department needs to seek information on the financial status of AAP. Information sought includes:
 - Solvency status and certified financial statements (profit/loss statement; statutory declaration signed by CFO/ Chartered Accountant).
 - Status of contracts with major regional media outlets including Australian Community Media and SevenWest – including length of contracts.
 - Status and number of contracts with other broadcasters and publishers.
 - Strategies to make AAP a viable business in the longer term, including plans to attract new customer/ retain current customers.
 - Additional investment opportunities being sought to support AAP’s long-term sustainability
 - Proposed expenditure and activities to fund using the \$5 million grant (can be based on AAP’s earlier proposal provided to the Department e.g. proposed Darwin, Cairns and Townsville Bureaus).
- The Department to provide AAP with a joint application / grant activities and expenditure form that will request the information above.
- This approach is two-pronged – it will allow the Department to collect documentation regarding solvency as per the application process under the original funding stream. It will also set a benchmark for reporting purposes and allow us to ensure that the suggested activities are in line with the objectives of the PING Program.

s42

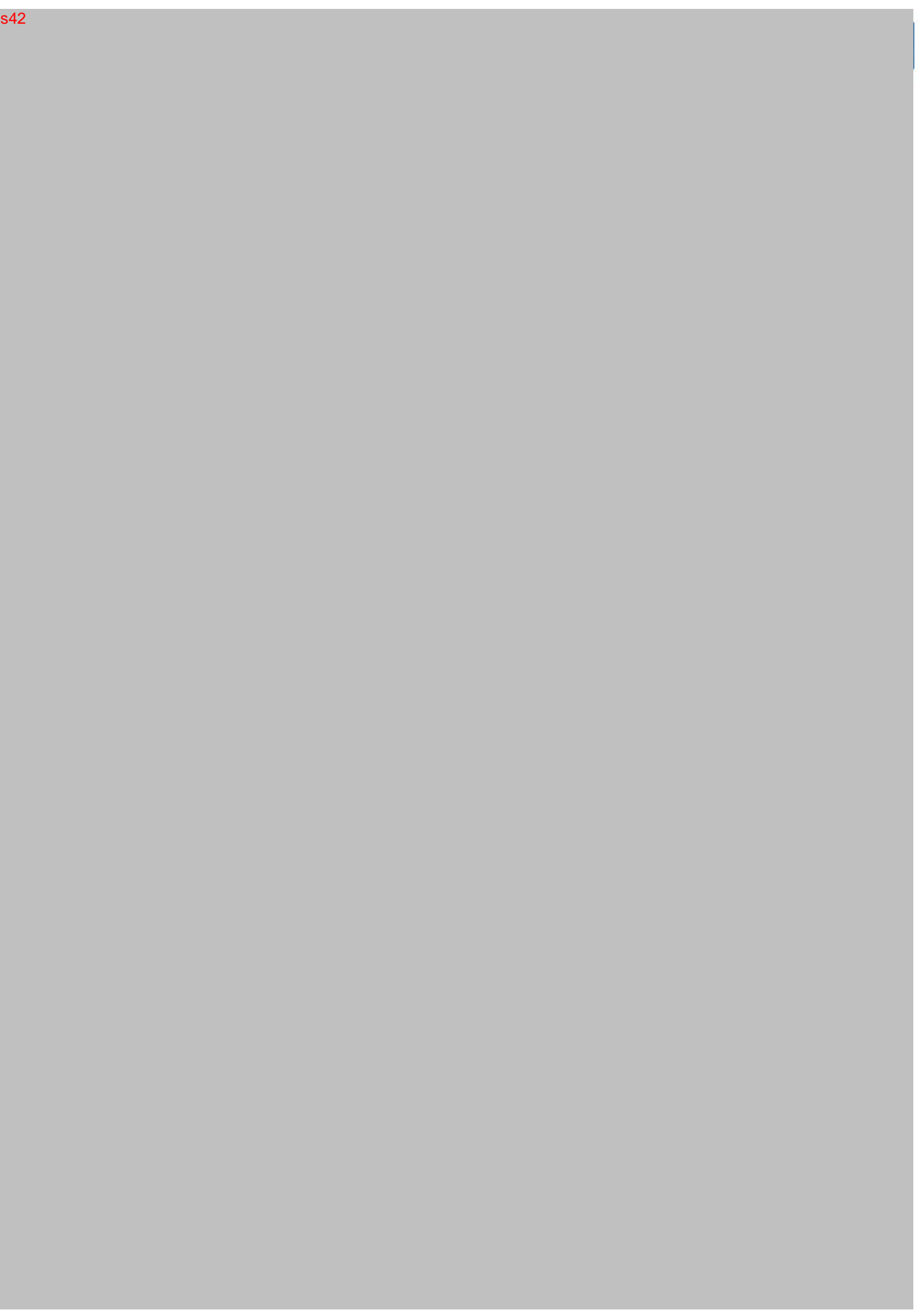


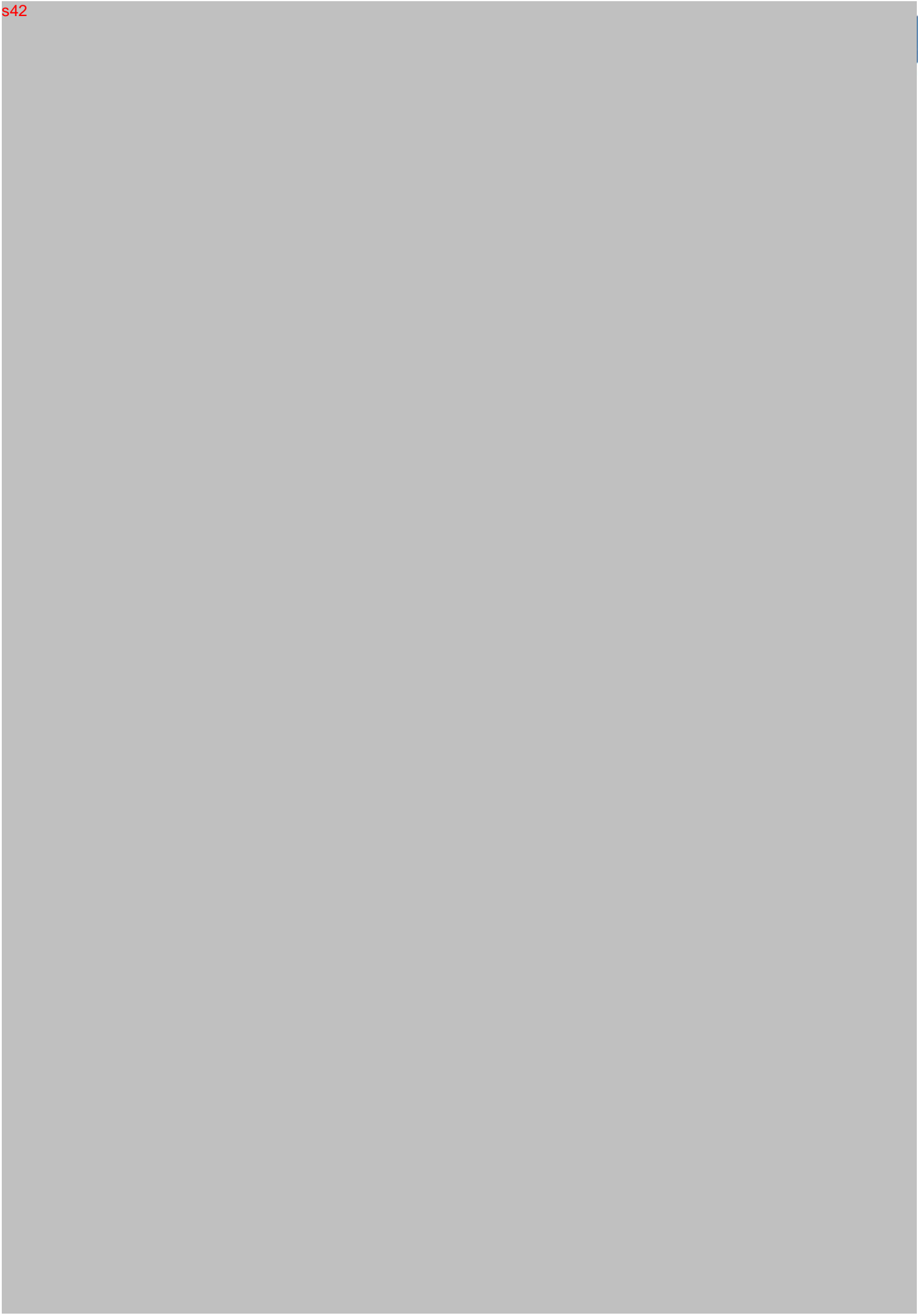




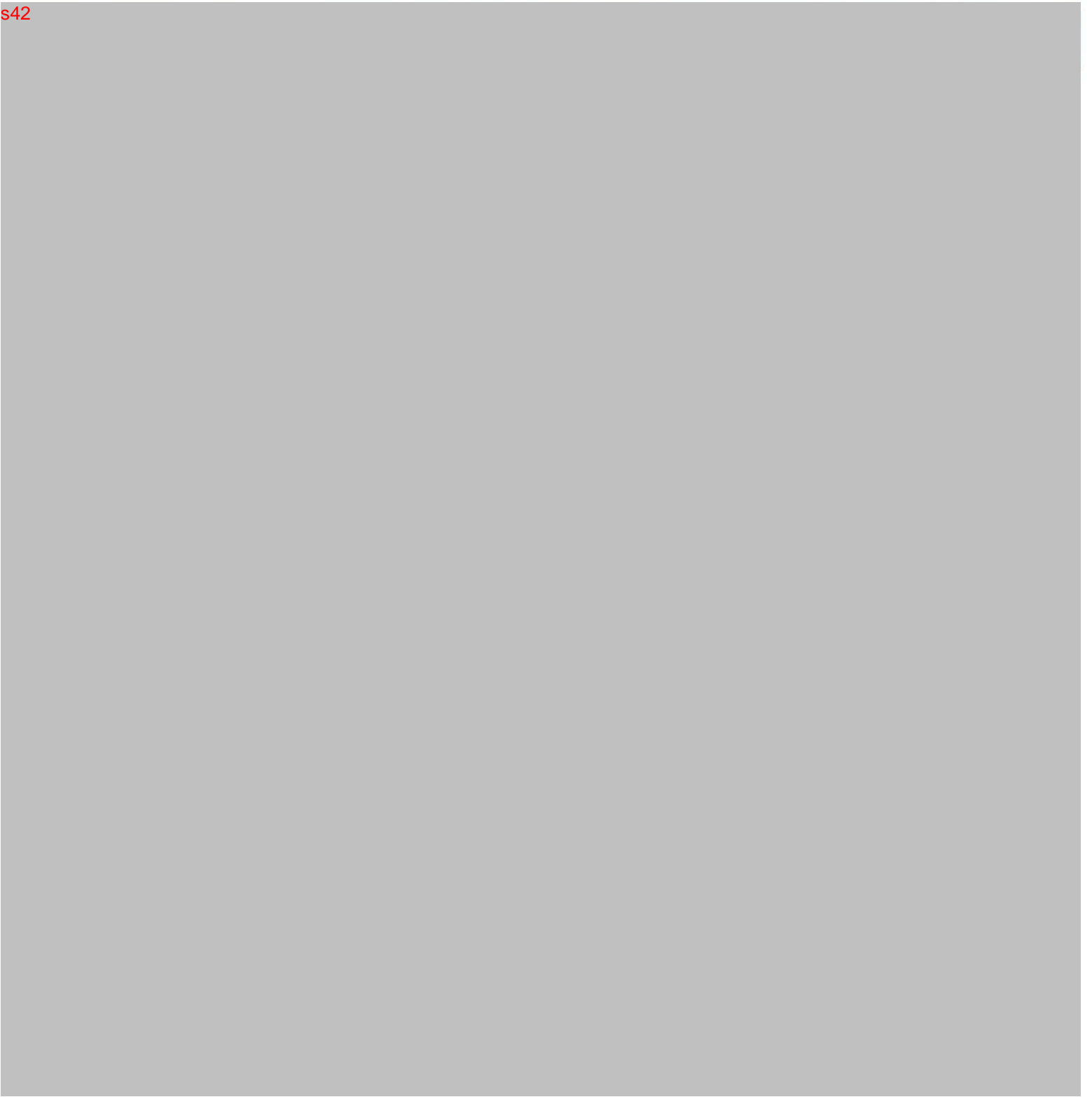


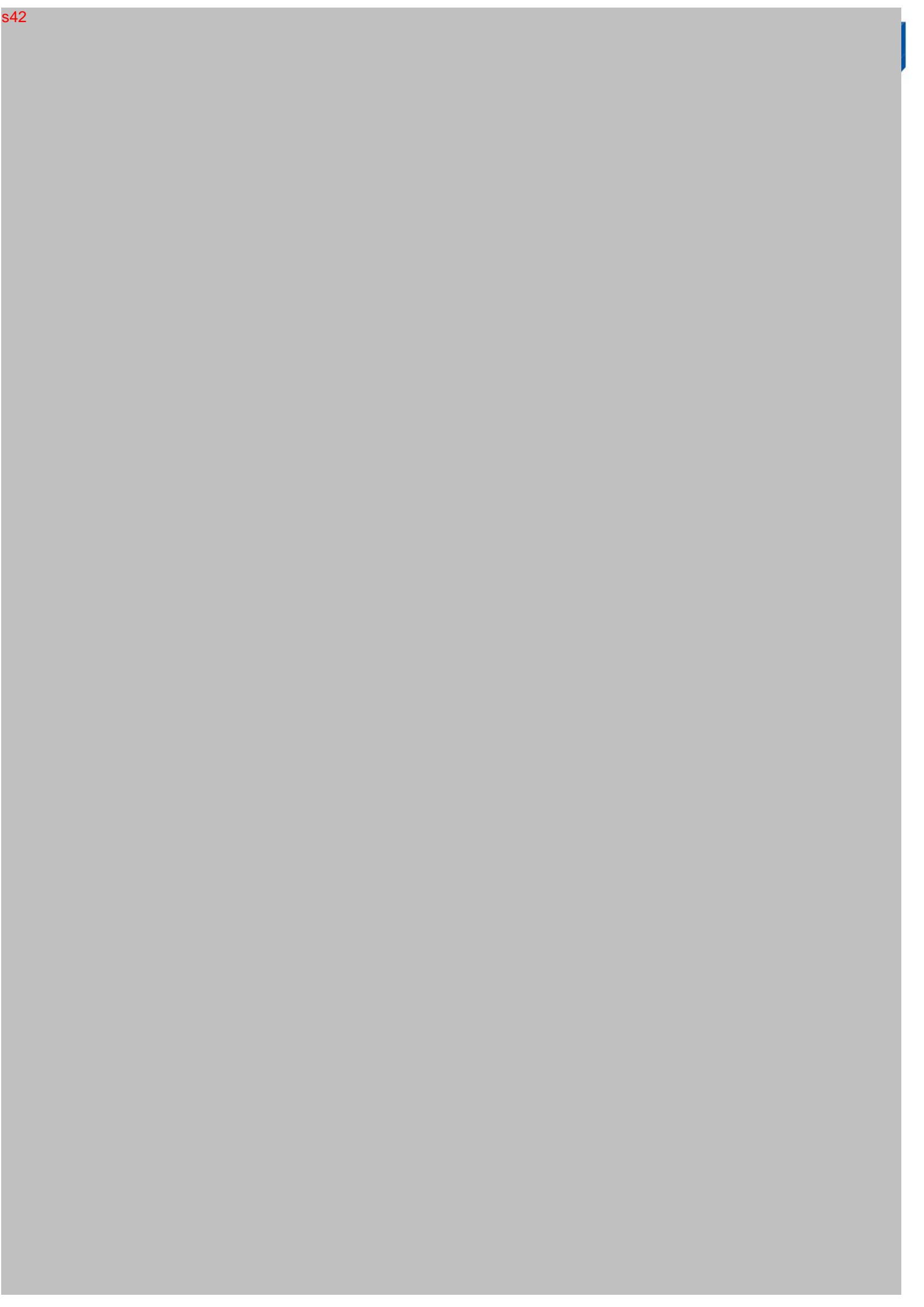




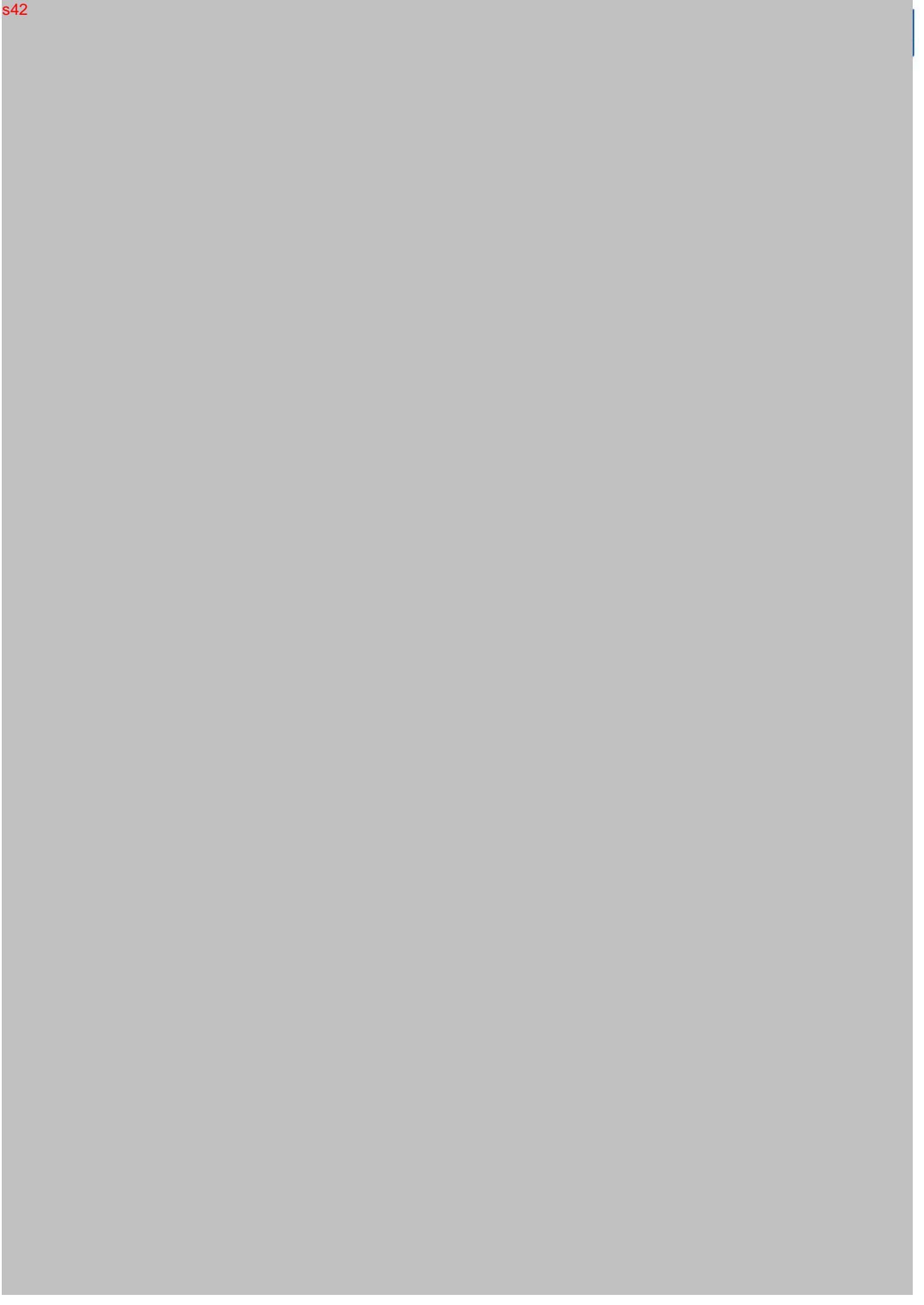












s47F

From: s47F
Sent: Friday, 9 October 2020 11:24 AM
To: s47F
Cc:
Subject: AAP Grantee Details and Activity Form v2.docx [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]
Attachments: AAP Grantee Details and Activity Form v2.docx

Hi Team,

s47F and I have finalised the Grant Details and Activity Form and it is ready to go.

Let me know if any changes need to be made.

I have also drafted an email to AAP.

Cheers,

s47F

For Official Use Only



Grantee Details and Grant Activity Form

October 2020

Public Interest News Gathering Program

The Australian Government has allocated a total of \$55 million (GST exclusive) in grants under the Public Interest News Gathering Program (PING) to support the provision of public interest journalism in regional Australia. The objective of the PING Program is to support regional broadcasters and publishers to maintain or increase their production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic phase.

On 29 June 2020, the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, announced that 107 regional broadcasters and publishers would share in \$50 million (GST exclusive) under the first stream of the PING Program. Grantees are required to enter into agreements with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (on behalf of the Commonwealth) and grant information will be published on GrantConnect within 21 days of agreements being executed.

Given the significant economic disruption to the entire media and broadcasting sector arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, an additional \$5 million (GST exclusive) of funding has been made available under the PING Program to provide support to major media businesses who were ineligible to apply for funding under the first stream of the PING Program.

The Australian Associated Press (AAP) Newswire will receive \$5 million (GST exclusive) of the additional funding to support its news services into regional Australia.

Consistent with the objective of the PING Program, the expected outcome of this grant will support AAP Newswire to maintain its production and distribution of public internet journalism in regional areas during the COVID-19 pandemic phase. A secondary benefit will enable AAP Newswire to continue to provide a vital service to regional media outlets that rely on AAP Newswire for breaking, national and regional news.

The grant will be undertaken in accordance with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017.

Privacy Statement

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (The Department) will treat your personal information according to the Australian Privacy Principles and the *Privacy Act 1988*. We will use the information collected in this form to administer this grant under the Public Interest News Gathering program. The information you provide in this form may also be disclosed to the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts under this Program.

The names of individuals, contact details and other personal information will not be provided to any other person or organisation unless it is required by law. For further information about our privacy obligations, (including in relation to how to access or collect personal information or make a complaint) and our contact details for privacy matters, please see our [Privacy Policy](#).

Confidentiality

NOTE

Information provided by AAP Newswire in this form (once completed and returned) will be treated as confidential by the Department only if the particular information is expressly identified or designated as confidential. Automatically generated confidentiality statements or disclaimers appended to an email do not suffice for this purpose. Confidential information will be kept securely and will only be disclosed in the following circumstances:

- (a) in response to a request by a Commonwealth Minister;
- (b) where required by a House or a Committee of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia; or
- (c) where required by law.

Word limits indicative only

The word limits indicated in parenthesis in parts of this form are indicative only and you should provide complete information.

Grantee Details

Organisation Details

Grantee Organisation Name

Grantee Primary Address

Grantee Postal Address

Grantee Website

Grantee Organisation ABN

ABN:

Entity Name:

ABN Status:

Entity Type:

Goods & Services Tax (GST):

DGR Endorsed:

ATO Charity Type:

ACNC Registration:

Tax Concessions:

Main Business Location:

Grantee Contact Person

Title First Name Last Name

Position

Phone Number

Email

Organisation Description

Please describe your organisation (200 words)

Solvency

Is your organisation currently insolvent?

YES / NO

Please provide a financial statement of the year to date (e.g. a profit and loss statement) certified with a [statutory declaration](#) under the *Statutory Declarations Act 1959* (Cth) by your Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent) or registered Chartered Accountant indicating that your organisation is currently solvent.

Conflicts of Interest

Are there potential perceived or actual conflicts of interest arising from applying for a grant under this opportunity?

YES / NO

If yes, provide a statement addressing the potential perceived or actual conflicts of interest (100 words):

Affiliations

Is your organisation formally affiliated with a political party, union, financial institution, Non-Government Organisation or policy lobby group where that affiliation would influence, or might be seen to influence, the content produced by your organisation?

YES / NO

If yes, please explain the affiliation.

Public Interest Journalism

Public interest journalism seeks to inform and engage the general public—whether at a local, regional or national level—about important issues of the day. Journalism that investigates, reports on and explains public policy or matters of local or public significance, engages citizens in public debate, or informs democratic decision-making is defined as public interest journalism. For the purpose of the PING program, applicants need to demonstrate how they regularly produce public interest journalism

Public Interest Journalism Test

YES / NO

[illegible][illegible]

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Please indicate the regions that your news and journalistic output targets. (Add rows as needed)

Please provide details of your current subscribers. (Add rows as needed)

*[OR]

Please provide the total value of your subscriber contracts:

Please provide the total value of your regional subscriber contracts:

Revenue

What is your total revenue in the year to date?

\$ _____

Provide details on what portion of your total revenue is attributed to your regional services.

Please provide financial statements showing your revenue for the year to date.

Grant Activity and Expenditure Details

In order to finalise drafting of your Grant Agreement and to establish your organisation in the financial system as a Payee, we require;

- A Work Plan
- An updated budget
- Bank details for the account that the grant will be paid into

Now that you know your Grant Amount, please confirm and/or amend the activities you intend the grant opportunity to fund and how much these activities will cost.

Please take your time to carefully consider and cost your intended grant activities, as this will form part of your Grant Agreement.

The Grant Agreement will detail the conditions of the grant, including:

- Grant Amount
- Agreement to disclose Grant Amount and Organisation Name
- Agreement to maintain or increase all public interest journalism over the grant period

The deliverables, activities and expenditure must be as accurate as possible because they will be considered in your six month and final report to monitor your progress and acquit the grant. See section 6 of the Grant Guidelines for further information on reporting requirements.

After submission of this form, the Department will agree to these activities or ask you to make amendments to ensure your intended deliverables, activities and expenditure are in line with the Grant Guidelines.

Grants awarded under this Opportunity will be expected to meet the objectives of the program as set out in section 1 of the Grant Guidelines, including the continued production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional Australia during the grant period.

Once the Department accepts this form, we will forward a Grant Agreement for your signature.

Maintaining or Increasing Production and Distribution of Public Interest Journalism in regional Australia

Grant Funding

How will grant funding support your organisation to maintain or increase your production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional Australia during the grant period? (300 words)

Regional Journalism Employees

It is a condition of the grant that you a minimum, maintain regional journalist staffing until the Activity Completion Date, unless there are exceptional circumstances identified which would affect this level not being maintained. Changes to journalist staffing that would affect you meeting this condition must be conveyed to the Department in writing as soon as possible.

For the purposes of this term, 'journalist' means employees engaged by the Grantee to investigate, collect, write and present information as a news story.

Please provide details of the number of regional 'journalists' at your organisation.

Full time journalists

Part time journalists

Casual journalists

Total ongoing journalists (excluding freelance)

Freelance journalists

Regional Bureaus

Please provide details on the regional bureaus that will be funded under the Grant Program. (Add rows as needed)

Bureau Location	State	Postcode	Number of Staff (Total)	Number of Journalist Staff	Regional Areas Serviced	Intended Output of Bureau (e.g. service regional NT with international news bulletins etc.)

Service Offering

Please provide details on the service you offer your subscribers. This could include hours of content, number of articles, average number of news stories provided and / or labour hours. (300 words)

Work Plan

Please provide information in this Work Plan on how you will achieve any key deliverables in line with the Grant Guidelines.

What service does this activity relate to?	Key Deliverable	Outcome - what will be achieved	Planned date of completion
XYZ Radio	Salary of 3 Part-time Journalists	We will use the grant to pay 20% of the salaries of our journalists allowing them to attend and report on local events, local council and community issues.	30/06/2021
			Add more if appropriate

Approved Grant Budget Expenditure

Approved Grant Funding

Amount (GST Exclusive)

\$ 5,000,000.00

Approved Grant Budget Expenditure

Please list all of the activities you will use this grant to fund and how much you intend to spend on each item.

Eligible expenditure must primarily be for the applicant's production and distribution of public interest news journalism during the Grant period.

Without limitation, this includes the following **Cost Categories**:

- purchase or lease of assets and equipment
- acquisition of relevant content, intellectual property or other rights
- the costs of acquiring technology to assist with production or distribution of content
- salaries for employees that are directly connected to the production of public interest journalism or to the generation of revenue to fund the production of public interest journalism
- costs to assist journalists with content production and distribution
- costs of staff training
- office and travel costs related to public interest journalism
- other costs that directly support the production and distribution of public interest journalism.

There are several categories of expenses that are not appropriate for funding through a grant made under the Program. These are expenses that are unlikely to align with, or further the achievement of the objective and outcomes of the Program.

The following non-exhaustive list provides some examples of activities that cannot be funded by grant money:

- general leadership or administrative staffing costs
- projects that will devolve grants to other bodies
- activities for which the applicant has already received funding from the Australian Government (including from a previous round of the Regional and Small Publishers Innovation Fund)
- costs related to preparing the grant application, preparing any project reports (except costs of independent audit reports) and preparing any project variation requests
- costs of purchasing, leasing, depreciation or development of land
- building acquisition or modification
- financial costs, including interest
- costs related to obtaining resources used on the project, including job advertising and recruiting and contract negotiations
- site preparation activities which are not directly related to public interest journalism
- routine operational expenses that are not directly related to the production of public interest journalism including communications, accommodation, office computing facilities, printing, stationery, postage, legal and accounting fees and bank charges
- activities paid for using cash/in-kind consideration
- activities involving the acquisition of other businesses by the applicant
- to pay any creditors and other debts owed by the Grantee in the event that the Grantee is insolvent, entered into a scheme of arrangement with creditors, or come under any form of external administration or the winding up of the Grantee's business.

Grant Activity or Expenditure Item	Cost Category	Amount
<i>Title of Activity</i>	<i>Relevant category from above list</i>	<i>\$ amount</i>

If any of your intended activities are part funded by other government grants or payments, please explain.

When providing the dollar figure for how much an activity will cost only include the money from this grant, which you intended to spend on the activity. If an activity is part funded by other government funding only include the money from this grant which will contribute to the activity. This includes Job Keeper and other government subsidies.

E.g. Grantee A intends to use the grant money for the cost for staff training. The cost of staff training is \$8500. Grantee A receives \$4000 from a different Commonwealth grant for this activity. Grantee A therefore can only put \$4500 of their PING grant towards costs for staff training. Grantee A lists the costs of staff training as \$4500 in the form below.

Bank Details

Details of the bank account that the funding is to be paid into

Evidence is required that the bank details provided belong to you. A copy of the top section of a bank statement that shows Bank, BSB and Account Name (please don't include transaction history or other financial details) is sufficient. Alternatively you provide a letter from the Bank, on letterhead, confirming the bank account details.

Bank Name

Branch

BSB

Account Number

Account Name

Please provide evidence that the bank details provided belong to the organisation entering the funding agreement. This may be the header from a bank statement (no balance required) or a letter from the bank.

Certification

Statutory Declaration

Please upload a [statutory declaration](#) under the *Statutory Declarations Act 1959* (Cth) from your Chief Financial Officer, or registered Chartered Accountant, indicating that all financial information provided in this application is true and accurate.

Details on how to complete and download a Commonwealth Statutory Declaration can be found [here](#).

I, the Grantee Representative, am authorised by my group/organisation to complete this application and certify that:

- ☒ I acknowledge that the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications may refer this application, or any part of it, to external independent assessors or other government agencies for assessment, reporting, advice or comment.
- ☒ I acknowledge that contact details provided in this application may be disclosed to the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts and other Members of Parliament.
- ☒ To the best of my knowledge the statements made in this application are true.
- ☒ If approved, I will be required to accept the terms of the funding agreement.
- ☒ If approved, I will only spend the grant funds in accordance with the funding agreement.
- ☒ If approved, I will utilise the grant as described in this application.
- ☒ I acknowledge that I cannot change the approved grant activity without prior approval and I will notify the Department as early as possible to seek approval for a variation if required.
- ☒ If approved, I will provide reports to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications in accordance with the requirements of the funding agreement.
- ☒ My organisation is able to comply with the Privacy Act 1988, including the Australian Privacy Principles.
- ☒ If successful the same privacy obligations will be imposed on any subcontractors engaged to assist with the activity.
- ☒ I acknowledge that it is a serious offence under section 137.1 of the Schedule to the Criminal Code Act 1995, to give false or misleading information to the Commonwealth.

Date of Certification

s47F

From: s47F
Sent: Monday, 19 October 2020 10:36 AM
To: s47F
Subject: FW: PING Program - AAP Proposal [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

Security Classification:
 For Official Use Only

For Official Use Only

From: s47F
Sent: Monday, 10 August 2020 12:34 PM
To: 'Emma Cowdroy' s47F
Cc: s47F
Subject: RE: PING Program - AAP Proposal [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

Hi Emma

Thank you for revised proposal.

We will aim to review and come back to you shortly.

Regards

s47F

For Official Use Only

From: Emma Cowdroy s47F
Sent: Monday, 10 August 2020 10:31 AM
To: s47F <s47F@communications.gov.au>
Cc: s47F
Subject: Re: PING Program - AAP Proposal [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

Good morning s47F

I apologise for the delay in getting back to you on this. Please find attached a revised proposal from AAP taking into account the comments in your email of 29 July 2020. I have also attached our original proposal for ease of reference.

We look forward to progressing this with you and can be available at short notice if you would like a call to discuss it further.

Best regards
 Emma

Emma Cowdroy | Chief Executive Officer



Australian Associated Press

s47F | www.aap.com.au

On Mon, 10 Aug 2020 at 10:04, s47F <[REDACTED]> [communications.gov.au](mailto:[REDACTED]@communications.gov.au)> wrote:

Hi s47F

Just hoping to get an update on your revised proposal?

Hope the transition to the new structure all went well too.

Regards

s47F

s47F

Director / Media Markets / New and Media Industry

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

s47F

[communications.gov.au](mailto:[REDACTED]@communications.gov.au)

2 Phillip Law Street, Canberra ACT 2601

GPO Box 594 Canberra, ACT 2601

communications.gov.au / @CommsAu

arts.gov.au / @artsculturegov

infrastructure.gov.au / @infra_regional

I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on which we meet, work and live. I recognise and respect their continuing connection to the land, waters and communities. I pay my respect to Elders past and present and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

For Official Use Only

From: s47F
Sent: Friday, 31 July 2020 7:37 PM
To: s47F >
Cc: s47F Makin, Mike <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>; Emma Cowdroy s47F
Subject: Re: PING Program - AAP Proposal [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

Hi s47F and Mike,

A brief update to let you know that our revised proposal is progressing well. We plan on sending it to you early next week.

We are on track to complete the transaction on Tuesday.

Kind regards,

s47F

s47F



Australian Associated Press
Level 5, 3 Rider Boulevard, Rhodes NSW 2138, Australia
PO Box 3411, Rhodes NSW 2138, Australia

s47F

On Wed, 29 Jul 2020 at 13:33, s47F wrote:

Hi s47F and Mike,

Many thanks for your initial feedback on our proposal. We will revise our proposal and get this back to you as soon as possible.

Kind regards

s47F



Australian Associated Press

Level 5, 3 Rider Boulevard, Rhodes NSW 2138, Australia
PO Box 3411, Rhodes NSW 2138, Australia

s47F

On Wed, 29 Jul 2020 at 13:22, s47F <s47F@communications.gov.au> wrote:

Dear s47F

Thank you for submitting your initial proposal for the PING program.

The objective of the PING Program is to maintain or increase the production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional areas.

s47C

It would be appreciated if you were able to provide a revised proposal as soon as practical so we can progress the funding process.

Please let me know if you have any queries.

Regards

s47F

s47F

Director / Media Markets / New and Media Industry

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

s47F

communications.gov.au

2 Phillip Law Street, Canberra ACT 2601

GPO Box 594 Canberra, ACT 2601

communications.gov.au / @CommsAu

arts.gov.au / @artsculturegov

infrastructure.gov.au / @infra_regional

I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on which we meet, work and live. I recognise and respect their continuing connection to the land, waters and communities. I pay my respect to Elders past and present and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

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PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

 <p>Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications</p>	<p>Ministerial Submission MS20-000469</p>
---	--

To: Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP
(for decision)

s34(3)

Critical Date: Routine

Recommendations for Minister Fletcher: That you

s34(3)

Minister's Signature:	Date:/..../ 2020
Minister's Comments	Quality Rating
	1. Very Poor 2. Poor 3. Satisfactory 4. Good 5. Excellent

s34(3)

s34(3)

4. On 10 August 2020, AAP Newswire provided the Department with a revised proposal seeking funding of up to \$5.9 million (**Attachment B**) for a range of activities that support the provision of public interest news to regional Australia.

s47C

Sensitivities:

8. There may be criticism that funding is being delivered to AAP Newswire by way of an ad-hoc grant as opposed to a competitive grants process.

Financial Implications:

9. The \$5 million additional PING funding stream was published in the Economic and Fiscal Update July 2020 as part of the Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts' COVID-19 Response Package.

Background/Issues:

10. Background is provided under **Additional Information**.

Communication/Media Activities: N/A

Consultation:

11. External Budgets Team, Finance.

Attachments:

Attachment A: Public Interest News Gathering Program - Newswire Services Guidelines

Attachment B: AAP Newswire Proposal

Contact Officer: Mike Makin
Position: Assistant Secretary
Branch: News and Media Industry
Phone/Mobile: 02 6271 1031 / s47F

Cleared by: Pauline Sullivan
Position: First Assistant Secretary
Branch: Content
Phone/Mobile: 02 6271 1913 / s47F

Instructions for MAPS: Nil

Responsible Adviser s47F

Distribution CC List: Simon Atkinson, Richard Windeyer, s47F, Sarah Godden, Carol Cote, s47F
s47F

Additional Information:

PING Program

On 29 June 2020, you announced that 107 regional broadcasters and publishers would share in \$50 million (GST exclusive) under the first stream of the PING Program. Of the 107 grantees, five are regional television broadcasters; 13 regional radio broadcasters; and 92 regional publishers. As at 20 August 2020, 86 funding agreements have been executed. Grantee details are published on GrantConnect within 21 days of agreements being executed. The objective of the PING Program is to support regional broadcasters and publishers to maintain or increase their production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic phase.

AAP Newswire would not have been found eligible to receive funding under the original PING Program as, while they may be considered to be a distributor of public interest journalism as they provide news content to other media outlets, for the purposes of the original PING Program, they would not have been considered to be a regional publisher and as such, would not have met the eligibility criteria set out in the original PING Program Guidelines.

Grant guidelines

Although the funding is being provided as an Ad-hoc / one-off grant via direct offer to AAP Newswire, the Department is required to prepare guidelines for all grant opportunities under the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017. The Department provided the Guidelines at **Attachment A** and associated Risk Register to the Department of Finance. The Department of Finance provided comment on the Risk Register only. The Guidelines are not required to be published.

Selection of AAP Newswire

On 3 March 2020, the shareholders of AAP announced that the AAP Newswire would close. The AAP Newswire business was acquired by a new consortium on 4 August 2020. The consortium has provided a limited lifeline to allow the business to restructure and work towards financial sustainability. AAP Newswire's business model is well placed to continue to produce and distribute high quality public interest journalism to the media industry, particularly to regional broadcasters and publishers. The funding reflects the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on AAP Newswire and the regional media sector that relies on AAP's newswire services.

AAP Newswire currently services over 100 regional and community news outlets who in turn serve a large majority of regional Australia. The Newswire provides these regional outlets with core public interest content focused on national, state and regional level news. AAP is an essential piece of media infrastructure and will help Australian regional mastheads to reduce the costs of producing public interest journalism.

On 10 August 2020, AAP Newswire provided the Department with a revised proposal seeking funding of up to \$5.9 million for a range of activities that support the provision of public interest news to regional Australia. The Department recommends the \$1 million in funding be provided to AAP Newswire for their proposed activities that directly meet the objective of the PING Program to maintain or increase public interest journalism in regional areas (shaded green).

s47

s47



Description of proposed activities recommended by the Department for funding:

1. Production and distribution of public interest journalism through maintenance of regional bureaus

AAP Newswire recently had to close its Darwin, Cairns and Townsville Bureaus. These closures mean that Far North Queensland and Australia's top end have lost a critical source of media coverage for the area. Funding will allow AAP Newswire to reopen these bureaus and cover the salaries and technology required to operate these bureaus.

2. Production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional areas through freelance arrangements

AAP has traditionally had an extensive network of freelance journalists providing coverage of and to regional areas. The model provides numerous benefits to both AAP and the wider media industry including providing regional employment opportunities for local journalists, promoting regional Australian communities to a wider audience and providing coverage of news and events to Australian regional audiences. This content is distributed into regional areas as part of the supply of the AAP Newswire to AAP's regional customer base, which comprises 259 mastheads.

AAP had to scale back the use of regional freelancers. Funding will be used to support the use of regional journalism freelancers to increase the production of public interest journalism in regional areas. This amount includes part of the producers, editors and planners time required to effectively manage the freelancers' content to ensure it meets the AAP quality.

s47C



Financial authority

Funding awarded under the PING Program is considered to be a grant for the purposes of the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017. The Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017 establish the overarching Commonwealth grants policy framework in relation to the administration of grants.

As the decision-maker under the PING Program, you are required to comply with the obligations set out in the CGRGs, the PGPA Act, and the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014* (PGPA Rule). For example, the PGPA Rule requires that where accountable authorities or officials approve a proposed commitment of relevant money, the approval must be recorded in writing as soon as practicable after the approval is given.

The Department (as the administrators of the PING Program) is also required to be aware of, and adhere to, a number of requirements in the administration of the grants and when giving recommendations about funding awards. For example, officials of the Department must consider their obligations under the PGPA Act and Rule when undertaking grants administration (including section 16, Duty to establish and maintain systems relating to risk and control). Internal guidelines, operational guidance and grant opportunity guidelines must be consistent with these requirements, while including any additional specific processes. Section 32B of the *Financial Framework (Supplementary Powers) Act 1997* (FFSP Act), provides the Commonwealth with the power to enter into, vary or administer an arrangement or a grant of financial assistance if it is specified in Schedule 1AA or Schedule 1AB to the FFSP Regulations.


Under subsection 71(1) of the PGPA Act, you may only approve a proposed expenditure of Commonwealth money if you are satisfied, after making reasonable enquiries that the expenditure would be a proper use of relevant money. ‘Proper’ when used in relation to the use or management of public resources means efficient, effective, economical and ethical.

In addition to this requirement, under the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017, you:

- must not approve the grants without receiving written advice from the Department on the merits of the proposed grant relative to the Guidelines, and the key principal of achieving value for money. This submission and associated attachments constitutes the Department’s advice on the merits of the proposed grant; and
- must record in writing the basis for the approvals relative to the Guidelines and the key principle of achieving value for money. Your signing of this submission and approval of each particular grant recommendation, once completed, will form the written record of your approval.

You may approve grants that are not recommended by the Department. In the event that you choose to do so, you must report annually to the Minister for Finance on such grants, including a brief statement of reasons as to why you have chosen to approve the grant(s).

Public Interest News Gathering Program – Newswire services Guidelines

Commonwealth policy and administering entity:	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications
Enquiries:	<p>If you have any questions, please contact:</p> <p>Director, Media Markets Section, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications</p> <p>Phone: s47F </p>
Date guidelines released:	August 2020
Type of Grant Opportunity	One off ad-hoc process

Contents

1. Public Interest News Gathering Program: overview and objective	3
2. Grant selection process	3
3. Who will approve the grant?	5
4. The grant agreement	5
5. Announcement of grants	6
6. Grant acquittal and reporting	6
7. Grant evaluation	7

1. Public Interest News Gathering Program: overview and objective

The Australian Government has allocated a total of \$55 million (GST exclusive) in grants under the Public Interest News Gathering Program (PING) to support the provision of public interest journalism in regional Australia. The objective of the PING Program is to support regional broadcasters and publishers to maintain or increase their production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic phase.

On 29 June 2020, the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, announced that 107 regional broadcasters and publishers would share in \$50 million (GST exclusive) under the first stream of the PING Program. Grantees are required to enter into agreements with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (on behalf of the Commonwealth) and grant information will be published on GrantConnect within 21 days of agreements being executed.

Given the significant economic disruption to the entire media and broadcasting sector arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, an additional \$5 million (GST exclusive) of funding has been made available under the PING Program to provide support to major media businesses who were ineligible to apply for funding under the first stream of the PING Program.

s47C

Consistent with the objective of the PING Program, the expected outcome of this grant will support AAP Newswire to maintain its production and distribution of public internet journalism in regional areas during the COVID-19 pandemic phase. A secondary benefit will enable AAP Newswire to continue to provide a vital service to regional media outlets that rely on AAP Newswire for breaking, national and regional news.

The grant will be undertaken in accordance with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017.

2. Grant selection process

This grant opportunity has been established as an *Ad-Hoc* grant. The Government considers that this offers value for money and is an appropriate type of selection process considering the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the entire media sector. The Ad-Hoc grant approach is an available option under the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017.

AAP Newswire has been selected to receive funding via an Ad-Hoc grant process as its business model is well placed to continue to produce and distribute high quality public interest journalism to the media industry, particularly to regional broadcasters and publishers. The funding reflects the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on AAP Newswire and the regional media sector that relies on AAP's newswire services.

On 3 March 2020, the shareholders of AAP announced that the AAP Newswire would close. The AAP Newswire business was acquired by a new consortium on 4 August 2020. The consortium has provided a limited lifeline to allow the business to restructure and work towards financial sustainability. While this sale has now taken place, the challenge is to make sure that AAP Newswire remains in operation to continue providing high quality public interest journalism to Australian media outlets, particularly those servicing regional Australia.

AAP Newswire currently services over 100 regional and community news outlets who in turn serve a large majority of regional Australia. The Newswire provides these regional outlets with core public interest content focused on national, state and regional level news. AAP is an essential piece of media infrastructure and will help Australian regional mastheads to reduce the costs of producing public interest journalism.

All content produced and distributed by AAP constitutes public interest journalism as it seeks to inform and engage the general public at a local, regional and national level about important issues. AAP's reporting, covering courts, federal and state politics, breaking news, economics, sport and world news, is fact-based reporting by skilled journalists covering matters that are of importance to the people of Australia. AAP Newswire is a key source of public information for many Australians, including, most relevantly, its regional customers and their audiences.

To be found eligible to receive funding under the original PING Program, media outlets had to fall into one of the following categories

- Stream funding pool 1: Regional Television Broadcasters
- Stream funding pool 2: Regional Radio Broadcasters
- Stream funding pool 3: Regional Publishers

AAP Newswire would not have been found eligible to receive funding under the original PING Program as, while they may be considered to be a distributor of public interest journalism as they provide news content to other media outlets, for the purposes of the original PING Program, they would not have been considered to be a regional publisher and as such, would not have met the eligibility criteria set out in the original PING Program Guidelines.

Consistent with the PING Program, AAP will be required to maintain or increase their level of public interest journalism in regional areas. AAP will achieve this in two major ways:

- providing direct support in regional news gathering via funding of local journalists; and
- providing critical indirect support through provision of newswire services to regional publishers which allows them to focus on their own investment solely on local reporting.

This will be achieved in the following ways:

Production and distribution of public interest journalism through maintenance of regional bureaus

AAP recently had to close its Darwin, Cairns and Townsville Bureaus. These closures mean that Far North Queensland and Australia's top end have lost a critical source of media

coverage for the area. Funding will allow AAP to reopen these bureaus and cover the salaries and technology required to operate these bureaus.

Production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional areas through freelance arrangements

AAP has traditionally had an extensive network of freelance journalists providing coverage of and to regional areas. The model provides numerous benefits to both AAP and the wider media industry including providing regional employment opportunities for local journalists, promoting regional Australian communities to a wider audience and providing coverage of news and events to Australian regional audiences. This content is distributed into regional areas as part of the supply of the AAP Newswire to AAP's regional customer base, which comprises 259 mastheads.

AAP had to scale back the use of regional freelancers. Funding will be used to support the use of regional journalism freelancers to increase the production of public interest journalism in regional areas. This amount includes part of the producers, editors and planners time required to effectively manage the freelancers' content to ensure it meets the AAP quality.

3. Who will approve the grant?

The Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts will make the final decision to approve a grant.

The Minister's decision is final in all matters, including:

- the approval of the grant;
- the grant funding amount to be awarded; and
- the terms and conditions of the grant.

The Minister must not approve funding if he reasonably considers the program funding available will not accommodate the funding offer, and/or if the commitment does not represent value for money.

There is no appeal mechanism for decisions to approve or not approve a grant.

4. The grant agreement

The funding recipient must enter into a legally binding grant agreement with the Commonwealth represented by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (the Department). Consistent with the first stream of the PING Program, the Department will use the *Commonwealth Low-Risk Grant Agreement Template*. Standard terms and conditions for the grant agreement will apply and cannot be changed. A schedule may be used to outline the specific grant requirements. Any additional conditions attached to the grant will be identified in the grant offer or during the grant agreement negotiations.

Consistent with the objective of the PING Program, the grantee will be required to maintain or increase the production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional areas during the grant period (12 months from the date of execution of the grant agreement). The Department will request information from the Grantee, which will include the following:

- details of the activities, budget and timings relating to the expenditure of funds to meet the objective of the PING Program and conditions in the grant agreement;
- six and 12-monthly reports against the stated activities, budget and timings;
- statements to certify that the funding has been acquitted in accordance with the grant agreement (as requested by the Department);
- certified financial or other statements for the full term of the grant (as requested by the Department).
- any supporting information as requested by the Department.

The Department will negotiate an agreement with the grantee. The grant agreement is expected to be finalised by September 2020.

Where a grantee fails to meet the obligations of the grant agreement, the Department may terminate the agreement and recover funding as per the grant agreement. Financial commitments should not be made until a grant agreement has been executed by the Department on behalf of the Commonwealth.

5. Announcement of grants

Grants awarded will be listed on the GrantConnect website not later than 21 calendar days after the date of effect as required by Section 5.3 of the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017.

6. Grant acquittal and reporting

The grantee must submit reports consistent with the requirements of the PING Program, with obligations detailed in the executed grant agreement. Reports will include:

- six and 12-monthly reports against the grantee's stated activities, budget and timings in the grant agreement;
- financial or other statements as requested by the Department that certify that grant money received during the grant period has been spent for the purposes of the objective and in accordance with conditions in the grant agreement; and
- any supporting information requested by the Department.

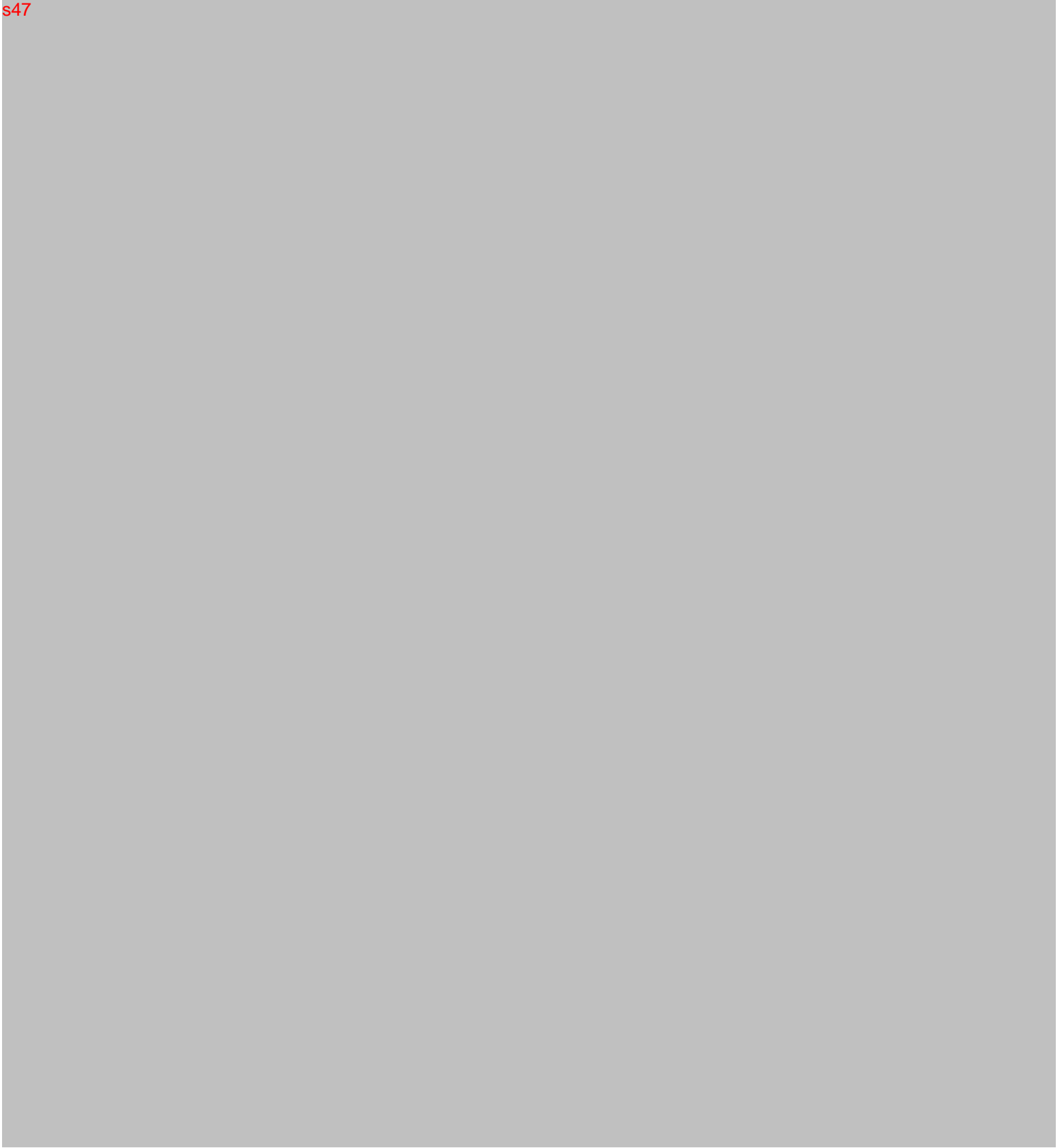
The grantee will also be responsible for:

- meeting the terms and conditions of the grant agreement and managing the activity efficiently and effectively; and

- complying with record keeping, reporting and acquittal requirements as set out in the grant agreement.

7. Grant evaluation

The Department will evaluate the grant program to measure how well the outcomes and objectives have been achieved. The grant agreement requires the grantee to provide information through performance reporting to help with this evaluation.



 <p>Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications</p>	<p>Ministerial Submission MS20-000696</p>
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To: Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP
(for decision)

s34(3)

Critical Date: Routine

Recommendations for Minister Fletcher: That you

s34(3)

	Approved / Not Approved
	Approved / Not Approved
	Approved / Not Approved
Minister's Signature:	Date: .../.../ 2020
Minister's Comments	Quality Rating
	1. Very Poor 2. Poor 3. Satisfactory 4. Good 5. Excellent

s34(3)

s34(3)

5. As the decision-maker for this opportunity, the Department seeks your approval to provide \$5 million (GST exclusive) to AAP to fund a greater range of activities that support the objective of the PING Program to maintain or increase public interest journalism in regional areas and taking into account AAP's proposal. The Department also seeks your agreement to the updated guidelines, which reflect the increased grant allocation and have been prepared in accordance with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017. Subject to your agreement, the Department will enter into a grant agreement with AAP.

Sensitivities:

6. There may be criticism that funding is being delivered to AAP by way of an ad-hoc grant as opposed to a competitive grants process. Country Press Association has questioned the grant being provided to AAP.

Financial Implications:

7. The \$5 million additional PING funding stream was published in the Economic and Fiscal Update July 2020 as part of the Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts' COVID-19 Response Package.

Background/Issues:

8. Background is provided under **Additional Information**.

Communication/Media Activities:

9. Media release issued on 18 September 2020 announcing the Government is providing \$5 million to AAP.

Consultation: External Budgets Team, Finance.

Attachments:

Attachment A: Revised Public Interest News Gathering Program - AAP Guidelines

Attachment B: AAP Newswire Proposal

Attachment C: Prime Minister's Approval Letter

Contact Officer: s47F

Position:

Section:

Phone/Mobile:

Cleared by:

Position:

Branch

Phone/Mobile:

Mike Makin

Assistant Secretary

News and Media Industry

02 6271 1031/ s47F

Instructions for MAPS: Nil

Responsible Adviser s47F

Distribution CC List: Simon Atkinson, Richard Windeyer, Pauline Sullivan, s47F

Sarah Godden, Carol Cote,

Additional Information:

PING Program

On 29 June 2020, you announced that 107 regional broadcasters and publishers would share in \$50 million (GST exclusive) under the first stream of the PING Program. Of the 107 grantees, five are regional television broadcasters; 13 regional radio broadcasters; and 92 regional publishers. As at 18 September 2020, 99 funding agreements have been executed and 93 grantees have received their first payment under the program. Grantee details are published on GrantConnect within 21 days of agreements being executed. The objective of the PING Program is to support regional broadcasters and publishers to maintain or increase their production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic phase.

AAP would not have been found eligible to receive funding under the original PING Program as, while they are a producer of public interest journalism they would not have been considered to be a regional publisher and as such, would not have met the eligibility criteria set out in the original PING Program Guidelines.

Grant guidelines

An Ad-hoc/one-off grant is a permitted grant approach under the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017. Although the funding is being provided as an Ad-hoc / one-off grant via direct offer to AAP, the Department is required to prepare guidelines for all grant opportunities under the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017. The Guidelines are not required to be cleared by the Department of Finance or published. Consistent with all PING grantees and in accordance with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017, details of the agreement will be published on GrantConnect within 21 days of the agreement being executed.

The Department provided a draft version of the original grant guidelines to the Department of Finance who responded with confirmation that they do not have to review grant guidelines for ad hoc grants.

Selection of AAP Newswire

On 3 March 2020, the shareholders of AAP announced that the Newswire service would close. AAP was acquired by a new consortium on 4 August 2020. The consortium has provided a limited lifeline to allow the business to restructure and work towards financial sustainability. AAP's business model is well placed to continue to produce and distribute high quality public interest journalism to the media industry, particularly to regional broadcasters and publishers. The funding reflects the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on AAP and the regional media sector that relies on AAP's newswire services.

AAP service is available to over 250 regional and community news outlets who in turn serve a large majority of regional Australia (53 percent of AAP's revenue is derived from regional media activities). The newswire service provides these regional outlets with core public interest content focused on national, state and regional level news. AAP is an essential piece of media infrastructure and will help Australian regional mastheads to reduce the costs of producing public interest journalism and focus on hyper-local stories relevant to regional communities.

On 10 August 2020, AAP provided the Department with a revised proposal seeking funding of up to \$5.9 million for a range of activities (table below and at **Attachment B**) that support the provision of public interest news to regional Australia. Subject to your agreement, the Department will work with AAP to identify those activities that meet the objective of the PING Program to maintain or increase public interest journalism in regional areas.

Subject to your approval of the guidelines and the Department entering into a grant agreement with AAP, the Department will negotiate with AAP to execute a funding agreement for the proposed funding amount of **\$5 million (GST exclusive)** to fund activities that meet the objective of the PING Program.

Legislative authority

Item 416 in Schedule 1AB to the *Financial Framework (Supplementary Powers) Regulations 1997* establishes legislative authority for government spending on the original Program, which is to be administered by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications.

The relevant item in Schedule 1AB is as follows: To provide financial assistance to or for media organisations (including print, digital, radio or television) to support and encourage original, high quality public interest journalism, including such financial assistance to mitigate the adverse effects of the coronavirus known as COVID-19 on the media sector.

Financial authority

Funding awarded under the PING Program is considered to be a grant for the purposes of the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017. The Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017 establish the overarching Commonwealth grants policy framework in relation to the administration of grants.

As the decision-maker under the PING Program, you are required to comply with the obligations set out in the CGRGs, the PGPA Act, and the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014* (PGPA Rule). For example, the PGPA Rule requires that where accountable authorities or officials approve a proposed commitment of relevant money, the approval must be recorded in writing as soon as practicable after the approval is given.

The Department (as the administrators of the PING Program) is also required to be aware of, and adhere to, a number of requirements in the administration of the grants and when giving recommendations about funding awards. For example, officials of the Department must consider their obligations under the PGPA Act and

Rule when undertaking grants administration (including section 16, Duty to establish and maintain systems relating to risk and control). Internal guidelines, operational guidance and grant opportunity guidelines must be consistent with these requirements, while including any additional specific processes. Section 32B of the *Financial Framework (Supplementary Powers) Act 1997* (FFSP Act), provides the Commonwealth with the power to enter into, vary or administer an arrangement or a grant of financial assistance if it is specified in Schedule 1AA or Schedule 1AB to the FFSP Regulations.


Under subsection 71(1) of the PGPA Act, you may only approve a proposed expenditure of Commonwealth money if you are satisfied, after making reasonable enquiries that the expenditure would be a proper use of relevant money. ‘Proper’ when used in relation to the use or management of public resources means efficient, effective, economical and ethical.

In addition to this requirement, under the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017, you:

- must not approve the grants without receiving written advice from the Department on the merits of the proposed grant relative to the Guidelines, and the key principal of achieving value for money. This submission and associated attachments constitutes the Department’s advice on the merits of the proposed grant; and
- must record in writing the basis for the approvals relative to the Guidelines and the key principle of achieving value for money. Your signing of this submission and approval of each particular grant recommendation, once completed, will form the written record of your approval.

You may approve grants that are not recommended by the Department. In the event that you choose to do so, you must report annually to the Minister for Finance on such grants, including a brief statement of reasons as to why you have chosen to approve the grant(s).

Public Interest News Gathering Program – AAP Newswire services Guidelines

Commonwealth policy and administering entity:	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications
Enquiries:	<p>If you have any questions, please contact:</p> <p>Director, Media Markets Section, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications</p> <p>Phone: s47F </p>
Date guidelines prepared:	September 2020
Type of Grant Opportunity	One off ad-hoc process

Contents

1. Public Interest News Gathering Program: overview and objective	3
2. Grant selection process	3
3. Who will approve the grant?	5
4. The grant agreement	6
5. Announcement of grants	6
6. Grant acquittal and reporting	6
7. Grant evaluation	7

1. Public Interest News Gathering Program: overview and objective

The Australian Government has allocated a total of \$55 million (GST exclusive) in grants under the Public Interest News Gathering Program (PING) to support the provision of public interest journalism in regional Australia. The objective of the PING Program is to support regional broadcasters and publishers to maintain or increase their production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic phase.

On 29 June 2020, the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, announced that 107 regional broadcasters and publishers would share in \$50 million (GST exclusive) under the first stream of the PING Program. Grantees are required to enter into agreements with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (on behalf of the Commonwealth) and grant information will be published on GrantConnect within 21 days of agreements being executed.

Given the significant economic disruption to the entire media and broadcasting sector arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, an additional \$5 million (GST exclusive) of funding has been made available under the PING Program to provide further support in the provision of public interest journalism in regional Australia.

The Australian Associated Press Newswire (**AAP**) will receive \$5 million (GST exclusive) to support its newswire services into regional Australia.

Consistent with the objective of the PING Program, the expected outcome of this grant will support AAP to maintain its production and distribution of public internet journalism in regional areas during the COVID-19 pandemic phase. A secondary benefit will enable AAP to continue to provide a vital service to regional media outlets that rely on AAP Newswire for breaking, national and regional news, and allow regional outlets to focus on hyper-local news stories.

The grant will be undertaken in accordance with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017.

2. Grant selection process

This grant opportunity has been established as an *Ad-Hoc* grant. The Government considers that this offers value for money and is an appropriate type of selection process considering the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the entire media sector. The Ad-Hoc grant approach is an available option under the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017.

AAP has been selected to receive funding via an Ad-Hoc grant process as its business model is well placed to continue to produce and distribute high quality public interest journalism to the media industry, particularly to regional broadcasters and publishers. The funding reflects the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on AAP and the regional media sector that relies on AAP's newswire services.

On 3 March 2020, the shareholders of AAP announced that the AAP would close. The AAP business was acquired by a new consortium on 4 August 2020. The consortium has provided a limited lifeline to allow the business to restructure and work towards financial sustainability. While this sale has now taken place, the challenge is to make sure that AAP remains in operation to continue providing high quality public interest journalism to Australian media outlets, particularly those servicing regional Australia.

AAP currently services over 250 regional and community news outlets who in turn serve a large majority of regional Australia. The Newswire provides these regional outlets with core public interest content focused on national, state and regional level news. AAP is an essential piece of media infrastructure and will help Australian regional mastheads to reduce the costs of producing public interest journalism.

All content produced and distributed by AAP constitutes public interest journalism as it seeks to inform and engage the general public at a local, regional and national level about important issues. AAP's reporting, covering courts, federal and state politics, breaking news, economics, sport and world news, is fact-based reporting by skilled journalists covering matters that are of importance to the people of Australia. AAP is a key source of public information for many Australians, including, most relevantly, its regional customers and their audiences.

To be found eligible to receive funding under the original PING Program, media outlets had to fall into one of the following categories

- Stream funding pool 1: Regional Television Broadcasters
- Stream funding pool 2: Regional Radio Broadcasters
- Stream funding pool 3: Regional Publishers

AAP would not have been found eligible to receive funding under the original PING Program as, while they are a producer of public interest journalism they would not have been considered to be a regional publisher and as such, would not have met the eligibility criteria set out in the original PING Program Guidelines.

Consistent with the PING Program, AAP will be required to maintain or increase their level of public interest journalism in regional areas. AAP will achieve this in two key ways:

- providing direct support in regional news gathering via funding of local journalists; and
- providing critical indirect support through provision of newswire services to regional publishers which allows them to focus on their own journalist resources on local reporting.

Production and distribution of public interest journalism through maintenance of regional bureaus

AAP recently had to close its Darwin, Cairns and Townsville Bureaus. These closures mean that Far North Queensland and Australia's top end have lost a critical source of media coverage for the area. Funding will allow AAP to reopen these bureaus and cover the salaries and technology required to operate these bureaus.

Production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional areas through freelance arrangements

AAP has traditionally had an extensive network of freelance journalists providing coverage of and to regional areas. The model provides numerous benefits to both AAP and the wider media industry including providing regional employment opportunities for local journalists, promoting regional Australian communities to a wider audience and providing coverage of news and events to Australian regional audiences. This content is distributed into regional areas as part of the supply of the AAP to AAP's regional customer base, which comprises 259 mastheads.

AAP has recently had to scale back the use of regional freelancers. Funding will be used to support production of public interest journalism in regional areas. This amount includes part of the producers, editors and planners time required to effectively manage the freelancers' content to ensure it meets the AAP quality.

Maintenance of production and distribution of public interest journalism to regional areas as core AAP operations

AAP's content constitutes public interest journalism as it seeks to inform and engage the general public at a local, regional and national level about issues of significance to Australia. AAP's reporting, covering courts, federal and state politics, breaking news, economics, sport and world news, is fact-based, unbiased reporting by highly skilled and trained journalists covering matters that are of importance to the people of Australia. AAP is a key source of public information for many Australians, including, regional audiences. Funding will be used to support AAP's core business which will, in turn, enable regional media outlets to focus on producing hyper-local stories relevant to their communities.

3. Who will approve the grant?

The Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts will make the final decision to approve a grant.

The Minister's decision is final in all matters, including:

- the approval of the grant;
- the grant funding amount to be awarded; and
- the terms and conditions of the grant.

The Minister must not approve funding if he reasonably considers the program funding available will not accommodate the funding offer, and/or if the commitment does not represent value for money.

There is no appeal mechanism for decisions to approve or not approve a grant.

4. The grant agreement

The funding recipient must enter into a legally binding grant agreement with the Commonwealth represented by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (the Department). Consistent with the first stream of the PING Program, the Department will use the *Commonwealth Low-Risk Grant Agreement Template*. Standard terms and conditions for the grant agreement will apply and cannot be changed. A schedule may be used to outline the specific grant requirements. Any additional conditions attached to the grant will be identified in the grant offer or during the grant agreement negotiations.

Consistent with the objective of the PING Program, the grantee will be required to maintain or increase the production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional areas during the grant period (12 months from the date of execution of the grant agreement). The Department will request information from the Grantee, which will include the following:

- details of the activities, budget and timings relating to the expenditure of funds to meet the objective of the PING Program and conditions in the grant agreement;
- six and 12-monthly reports against the stated activities, budget and timings;
- statements to certify that the funding has been acquitted in accordance with the grant agreement (as requested by the Department);
- certified financial or other statements for the full term of the grant (as requested by the Department).
- any supporting information as requested by the Department.

The Department will negotiate an agreement with the grantee. The grant agreement is expected to be finalised by October 2020.

Where a grantee fails to meet the obligations of the grant agreement, the Department may terminate the agreement and recover funding as per the grant agreement. Financial commitments should not be made until a grant agreement has been executed by the Department on behalf of the Commonwealth.

5. Announcement of grants

Grants awarded will be listed on the GrantConnect website not later than 21 calendar days after the date of effect as required by Section 5.3 of the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017.

6. Grant acquittal and reporting

The grantee must submit reports consistent with the requirements of the PING Program, with obligations detailed in the executed grant agreement. Reports will include:

- six and 12-monthly reports against the grantee's stated activities, budget and timings in the grant agreement;

- financial or other statements as requested by the Department that certify that grant money received during the grant period has been spent for the purposes of the objective and in accordance with conditions in the grant agreement; and
- any supporting information requested by the Department.

The grantee will also be responsible for:

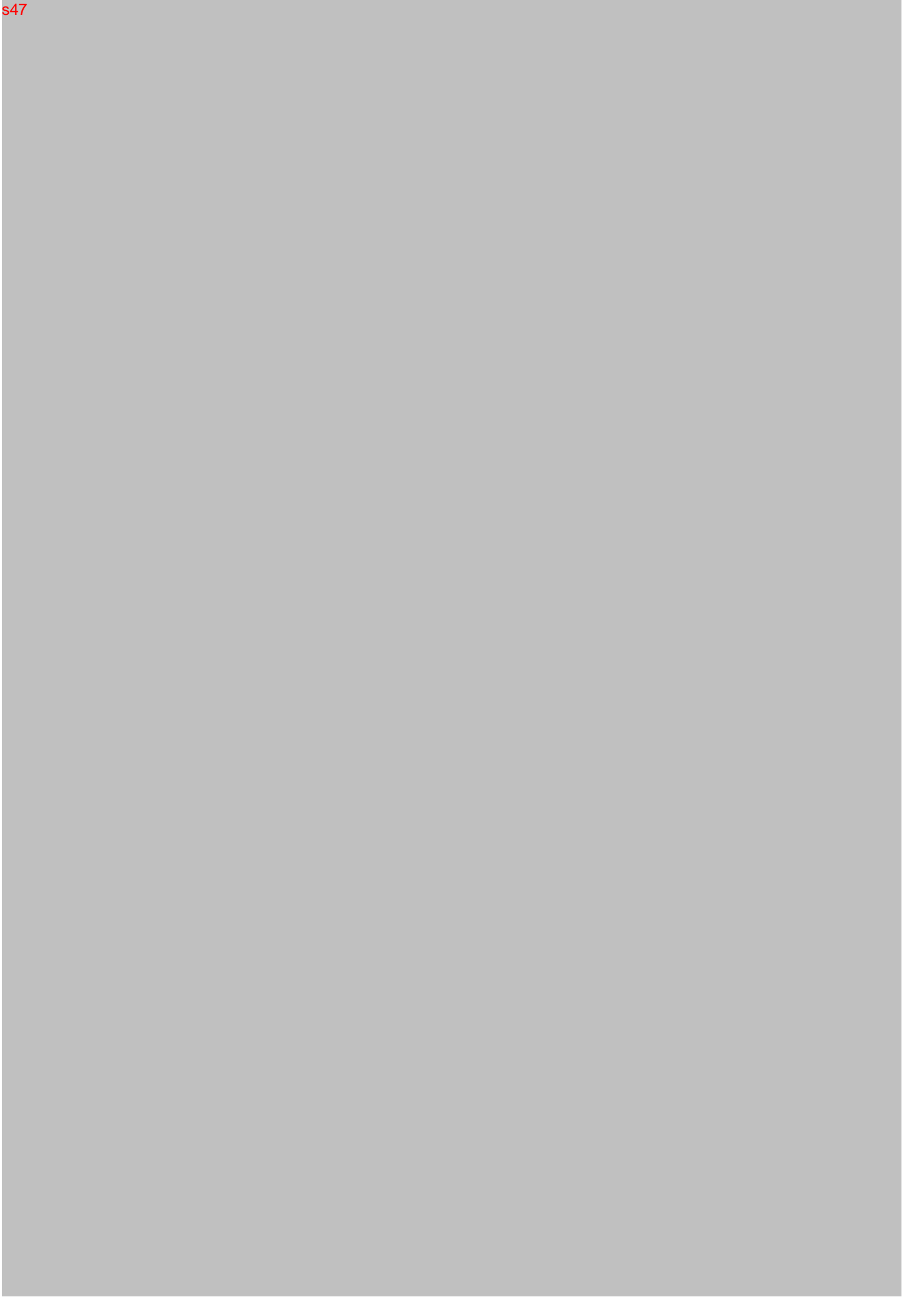
- meeting the terms and conditions of the grant agreement and managing the activity efficiently and effectively; and
- complying with record keeping, reporting and acquittal requirements as set out in the grant agreement.

7. Grant evaluation

The Department will evaluate the grant program to measure how well the outcomes and objectives have been achieved. The grant agreement requires the grantee to provide information through performance reporting to help with this evaluation.









 <p>Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications</p>	<p>Ministerial Submission MS20-000674</p>
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To: Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP
(for decision)

34(3)

Critical Date: Routine

34(3)

Agreed / Not Agreed

Signed / Not Signed

Noted / Please Discuss

Minister's Signature:.....

Date:.../.../ 2020

Minister's Comments	Quality Rating
	1. Very Poor 2. Poor 3. Satisfactory 4. Good 5. Excellent

34(3)

34(3)

s47C

34(3)

Sensitivities:

7. On 7 September 2020, AAP launched a crowd funding appeal to raise money amid the economic impact of COVID-19 and closure of regional media.

Financial Implications:

8. The \$5 million additional PING funding stream was published in the Economic and Fiscal Update July 202 as part of the Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts COVID-19 Response Package.

Background/Issues:

9. Background is provided under **Additional Information**.

Communication/Media Activities: N/A

Consultation: N/A

Attachments:

Attachment A: Draft Letter to the Prime Minister

Attachment B: Australian Associated Press Proposal

Contact Officer:

s47F

Position:

Branch:

Phone/Mobile:

Cleared by:

Position:

Branch

Phone/Mobile:

Pauline Sullivan

First Assistant Secretary

Content

02 6271 1913 / s47F

Instructions for MAPS: Nil

Responsible Adviser

s47F

Distribution CC List: Simon Atkinson, Richard Windeyer,

s47F

Carol Cote, Mike Makin,

s47F

s47F

Additional Information:

PING Program

On 29 June 2020, you announced that 107 regional broadcasters and publishers would share in \$50 million (GST exclusive) under the first stream of the PING Program. Of the 107 grantees, five are regional television broadcasters; 13 regional radio broadcasters; and 92 regional publishers. As at 20 August 2020, 86 funding agreements have been executed. Grantee details are published on GrantConnect within 21 days of agreements being executed. The objective of the PING Program is to support regional broadcasters and publishers to maintain or increase their production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic phase.

AAP would not have been found eligible to receive funding under the original PING Program as, while they may be considered to be a distributor of public interest journalism as they provide news content to other media outlets, for the purposes of the original PING Program, they would not have been considered to be a regional publisher and as such, would not have met the eligibility criteria set out in the original PING Program Guidelines.

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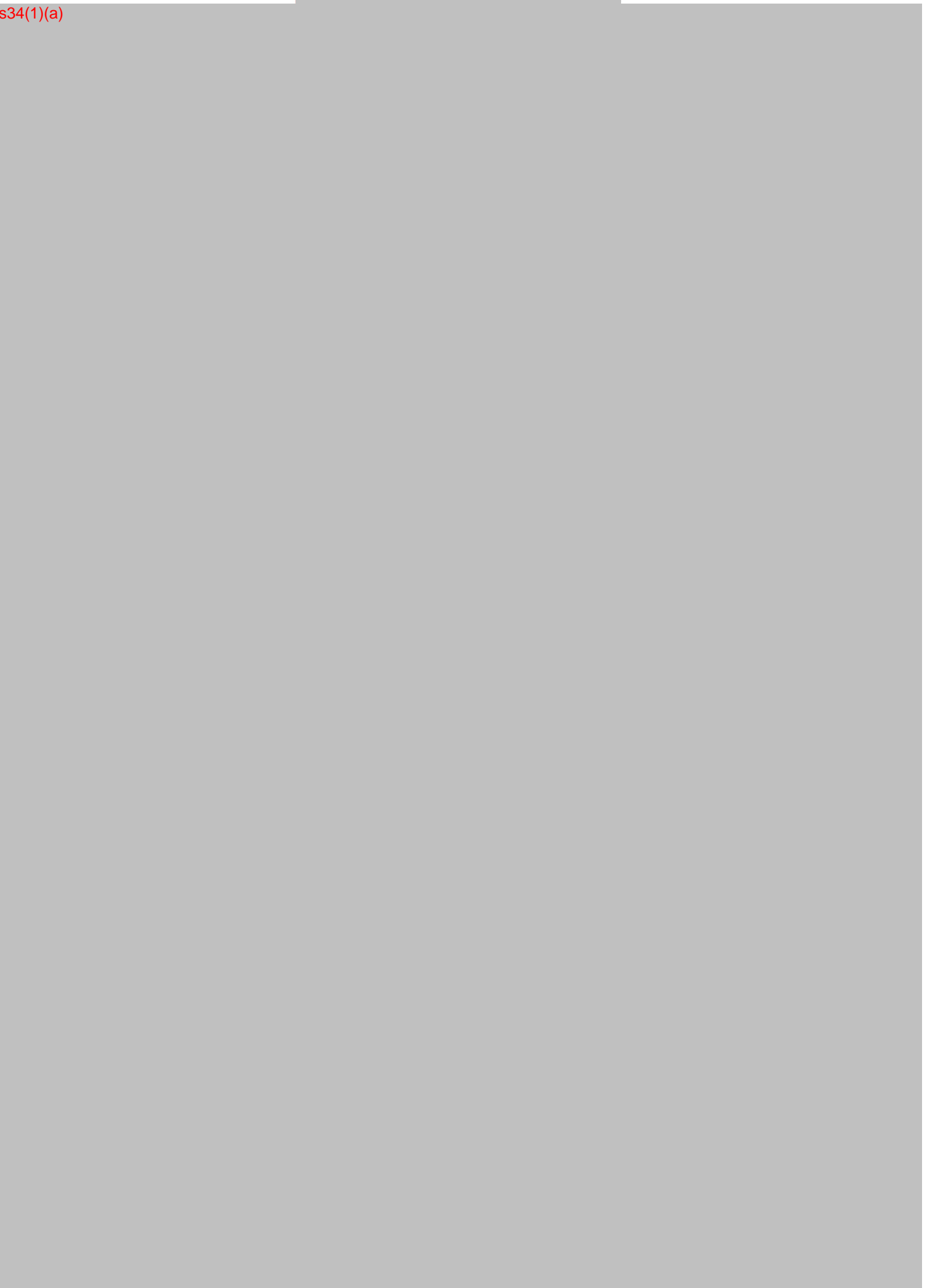


34(1)(d)





s34(1)(a)

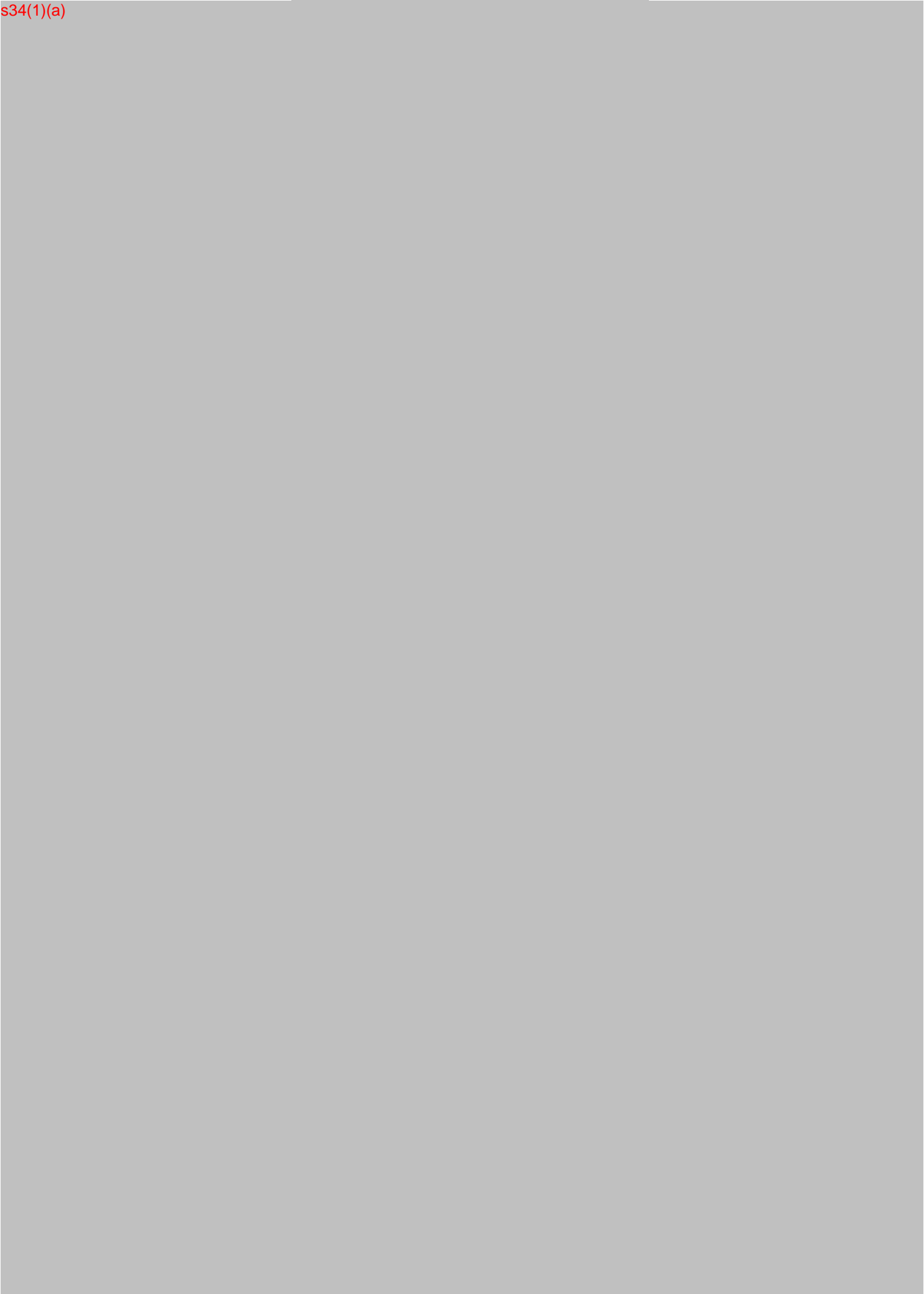


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34(1)(a)

[Redacted content]

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

 <p>Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications</p>	<p align="right">Ministerial Submission MS20-000473</p>
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To: Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP
(for decision)

s34(3)

s34(3)

Recommendations for Minister Fletcher: That you

1. s34(3)	Signed / Not Signed
2. Note the information provided in this brief	Noted / Please Discuss
Minister's Signature:.....	Date:....../.... / 2020
Minister's Comments	Quality Rating
	1. Very Poor 2. Poor 3. Satisfactory 4. Good 5. Excellent

34(3)

Key Issues:

34(3)

s47

s34(3)

s47C

Financial Implications:

7. Funding of \$5 million would be expended in the 2020-21 financial year.

Background/Issues:

8. The initial PING program is a grants program worth a total of \$50 million that aims to support regional broadcasters and publishers to continue to provide high quality news in regional and remote areas of Australia. The program operated with clear eligibility criteria to allocate grant funds between the eligible applicants in a manner proportional to their relative revenues. On 29 June 2020, you announced that 107 applicants were found eligible to receive funding. The Department is currently negotiating grant agreement with these entities.

9. On 3 March 2020, the shareholders of AAP announced that the AAP Newswire would close on 30 June 2020. On 29 June 2020, the AAP Newswire and Factcheck businesses were acquired from the previous shareholders with a formal transaction date of 1 August 2020.

Communication/Media Activities: N/A

Consultation: N/A

Attachments:

Attachment A: Draft letter to the Prime Minister

s47C

Attachment C: AAP Newswire Proposal

Contact Officer: s47F
Position: s47F

Cleared by: Pauline Sullivan
Position: First Assistant Secretary
Division: Content
Phone/Mobile: 02 6271 1913 / s47F

Instructions for MAPS: Nil

Responsible Adviser: s47F

Distribution CC List: Simon Atkinson, Richard Windeyer, Pauline Sullivan, s47F, Mike Makin, Carol Cote, s47F

34(1)(d)



34(1)(d)










PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

 <p>Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications</p>	<p>Dispatched to MO 15 SEP 2020</p>	<p>Ministerial Submission MS20-000674 15 SEP 2020</p>
<p>To: Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP (for decision)</p>		

s34(3)

Critical Date: Routine**16 SEP 2020**Agreed / Not AgreedSigned / Not SignedNoted / Please Discuss

3. Note the information provided in this brief

Minister's Signature:.....

Date: 17.9 / 2020

Minister's Comments

Quality Rating

1. Very Poor
2. Poor
3. Satisfactory
4. Good
5. Excellent

s34(3)

s34(3)

s47C

s34(3)

Sensitivities:

7. On 7 September 2020, AAP launched a crowd funding appeal to raise money amid the economic impact of COVID-19 and closure of regional media.

Financial Implications:

8. The \$5 million additional PNG funding stream was published in the Economic and Fiscal Update July 202 as part of the Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts COVID-19 Response Package.

Background/Issues:

9. Background is provided under **Additional Information**.

Communication/Media Activities: N/A

Consultation: N/A

Attachments:

Attachment A: Draft Letter to the Prime Minister

Attachment B: Australian Associated Press Proposal

Contact Officer: s47F

Position:

Branch:

Phone/Mobile:

Cleared by:

Position:

Branch

Phone/Mobile:

Pauline Sullivan

First Assistant Secretary

Content

02 6271 1913 s47F

Instructions for MAPS: Nil

Responsible Adviser s47F

Distribution CC List: Simon Atkinson, Richard Windeyer, s47F

Carol Cote, Mike Makin, s47F


Additional Information:

PING Program

On 29 June 2020, you announced that 107 regional broadcasters and publishers would share in \$50 million (GST exclusive) under the first stream of the PING Program. Of the 107 grantees, five are regional television broadcasters; 13 regional radio broadcasters; and 92 regional publishers. As at 20 August 2020, 86 funding agreements have been executed. Grantee details are published on GrantConnect within 21 days of agreements being executed. The objective of the PING Program is to support regional broadcasters and publishers to maintain or increase their production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic phase.

AAPI would not have been found eligible to receive funding under the original PING Program as, while they may be considered to be a distributor of public interest journalism as they provide news content to other media outlets, for the purposes of the original PING Program, they would not have been considered to be a regional publisher and as such, would not have met the eligibility criteria set out in the original PING Program Guidelines.

Public Interest News Gathering Program – Newswire services Guidelines

Commonwealth policy and administering entity:	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications
Enquiries:	<p>If you have any questions, please contact:</p> <p>Director, Media Markets Section, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications</p> <p>Phone: s47F </p>
Date guidelines released:	September 2020
Type of Grant Opportunity	One off ad-hoc process

Contents

1. Public Interest News Gathering Program: overview and objective	3
2. Grant selection process	3
3. Who will approve the grant?	5
4. The grant agreement	6
5. Announcement of grants	6
6. Grant acquittal and reporting	7
7. Grant evaluation	7

1. Public Interest News Gathering Program: overview and objective

The Australian Government has allocated a total of \$55 million (GST exclusive) in grants under the Public Interest News Gathering Program (PING) to support the provision of public interest journalism in regional Australia. The objective of the PING Program is to support regional broadcasters and publishers to maintain or increase their production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic phase.

On 29 June 2020, the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, announced that 107 regional broadcasters and publishers would share in \$50 million (GST exclusive) under the first stream of the PING Program. Grantees are required to enter into agreements with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (on behalf of the Commonwealth) and grant information will be published on GrantConnect within 21 days of agreements being executed.

Given the significant economic disruption to the entire media and broadcasting sector arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, an additional \$5 million (GST exclusive) of funding has been made available under the PING Program to provide support to major media businesses who were ineligible to apply for funding under the first stream of the PING Program.

The Australian Associated Press (AAP) Newswire will receive \$5 million (GST exclusive) of the additional funding to support its news services into regional Australia.

Consistent with the objective of the PING Program, the expected outcome of this grant will support AAP Newswire to maintain its production and distribution of public internet journalism in regional areas during the COVID-19 pandemic phase. A secondary benefit will enable AAP Newswire to continue to provide a vital service to regional media outlets that rely on AAP Newswire for breaking, national and regional news.

The grant will be undertaken in accordance with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017.

2. Grant selection process

This grant opportunity has been established as an *Ad-Hoc* grant. The Government considers that this offers value for money and is an appropriate type of selection process considering the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the entire media sector. The Ad-Hoc grant approach is an available option under the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017.

AAP Newswire has been selected to receive funding via an Ad-Hoc grant process as its business model is well placed to continue to produce and distribute high quality public interest journalism to the media industry, particularly to regional broadcasters and publishers. The funding reflects the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on AAP Newswire and the regional media sector that relies on AAP's newswire services.

On 3 March 2020, the shareholders of AAP announced that the AAP Newswire would close. The AAP Newswire business was acquired by a new consortium on 4 August 2020. The consortium has provided a limited lifeline to allow the business to restructure and work towards financial sustainability. While this sale has now taken place, the challenge is to make sure that AAP Newswire remains in operation to continue providing high quality public interest journalism to Australian media outlets, particularly those servicing regional Australia.

AAP Newswire currently services over 100 regional and community news outlets who in turn serve a large majority of regional Australia. The Newswire provides these regional outlets with core public interest content focused on national, state and regional level news. AAP is an essential piece of media infrastructure and will help Australian regional mastheads to reduce the costs of producing public interest journalism.

All content produced and distributed by AAP constitutes public interest journalism as it seeks to inform and engage the general public at a local, regional and national level about important issues. AAP's reporting, covering courts, federal and state politics, breaking news, economics, sport and world news, is fact-based reporting by skilled journalists covering matters that are of importance to the people of Australia. AAP Newswire is a key source of public information for many Australians, including, most relevantly, its regional customers and their audiences.

To be found eligible to receive funding under the original PING Program, media outlets had to fall into one of the following categories

- Stream funding pool 1: Regional Television Broadcasters
- Stream funding pool 2: Regional Radio Broadcasters
- Stream funding pool 3: Regional Publishers

AAP Newswire would not have been found eligible to receive funding under the original PING Program as, while they may be considered to be a distributor of public interest journalism as they provide news content to other media outlets, for the purposes of the original PING Program, they would not have been considered to be a regional publisher and as such, would not have met the eligibility criteria set out in the original PING Program Guidelines.

Consistent with the PING Program, AAP will be required to maintain or increase their level of public interest journalism in regional areas. AAP will achieve this in two major ways:

- providing direct support in regional news gathering via funding of local journalists; and
- providing critical indirect support through provision of newswire services to regional publishers which allows them to focus on their own investment solely on local reporting.

This will be achieved in the following ways:

Production and distribution of public interest journalism through maintenance of regional bureaus

AAP recently had to close its Darwin, Cairns and Townsville Bureaus. These closures mean that Far North Queensland and Australia's top end have lost a critical source of media

coverage for the area. Funding will allow AAP to reopen these bureaus and cover the salaries and technology required to operate these bureaus.

Production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional areas through freelance arrangements

AAP has traditionally had an extensive network of freelance journalists providing coverage of and to regional areas. The model provides numerous benefits to both AAP and the wider media industry including providing regional employment opportunities for local journalists, promoting regional Australian communities to a wider audience and providing coverage of news and events to Australian regional audiences. This content is distributed into regional areas as part of the supply of the AAP Newswire to AAP's regional customer base, which comprises 259 mastheads.

AAP had to scale back the use of regional freelancers. Funding will be used to support the use of regional journalism freelancers to increase the production of public interest journalism in regional areas. This amount includes part of the producers, editors and planners time required to effectively manage the freelancers' content to ensure it meets the AAP quality.

Maintenance of production and distribution of public interest journalism to regional areas as core AAP operations

All of AAP's content constitutes public interest journalism as it seeks to inform and engage the general public at a local, regional and national level about issues of significance to Australia. AAP's reporting, covering courts, federal and state politics, breaking news, economics, sport and world news, is fact-based, unbiased reporting by highly skilled and trained journalists covering matters that are of importance to the people of Australia. AAP Newswire is a key source of public information for many Australians, including, regional audiences.

The majority of AAP's customers publish news regionally. AAP content is available to approximately 259 regional news mastheads, all of whom rely on AAP to deliver national, state and regional news to regional readers. Furthermore, 53% of AAP's Newswire revenue comes from providers of regional publications.

The core of AAP's news gathering operations service regional Australia. Funding will allow AAP to maintain the production and distribution of public interest journalism to regional areas through the 259 mastheads.

3. Who will approve the grant?

The Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts will make the final decision to approve a grant.

The Minister's decision is final in all matters, including:

- the approval of the grant;
- the grant funding amount to be awarded; and

- the terms and conditions of the grant.

The Minister must not approve funding if he reasonably considers the program funding available will not accommodate the funding offer, and/or if the commitment does not represent value for money.

There is no appeal mechanism for decisions to approve or not approve a grant.

4. The grant agreement

The funding recipient must enter into a legally binding grant agreement with the Commonwealth represented by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (the Department). Consistent with the first stream of the PING Program, the Department will use the *Commonwealth Low-Risk Grant Agreement Template*. Standard terms and conditions for the grant agreement will apply and cannot be changed. A schedule may be used to outline the specific grant requirements. Any additional conditions attached to the grant will be identified in the grant offer or during the grant agreement negotiations.

Consistent with the objective of the PING Program, the grantee will be required to maintain or increase the production and distribution of public interest journalism in regional areas during the grant period (12 months from the date of execution of the grant agreement). The Department will request information from the Grantee, which will include the following:

- details of the activities, budget and timings relating to the expenditure of funds to meet the objective of the PING Program and conditions in the grant agreement;
- six and 12-monthly reports against the stated activities, budget and timings;
- statements to certify that the funding has been acquitted in accordance with the grant agreement (as requested by the Department);
- certified financial or other statements for the full term of the grant (as requested by the Department).
- any supporting information as requested by the Department.

The Department will negotiate an agreement with the grantee. The grant agreement is expected to be finalised by September 2020.

Where a grantee fails to meet the obligations of the grant agreement, the Department may terminate the agreement and recover funding as per the grant agreement. Financial commitments should not be made until a grant agreement has been executed by the Department on behalf of the Commonwealth.

5. Announcement of grants

Grants awarded will be listed on the GrantConnect website not later than 21 calendar days after the date of effect as required by Section 5.3 of the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017.

6. Grant acquittal and reporting

The grantee must submit reports consistent with the requirements of the PING Program, with obligations detailed in the executed grant agreement. Reports will include:

- six and 12-monthly reports against the grantee's stated activities, budget and timings in the grant agreement;
- financial or other statements as requested by the Department that certify that grant money received during the grant period has been spent for the purposes of the objective and in accordance with conditions in the grant agreement; and
- any supporting information requested by the Department.

The grantee will also be responsible for:

- meeting the terms and conditions of the grant agreement and managing the activity efficiently and effectively; and
- complying with record keeping, reporting and acquittal requirements as set out in the grant agreement.

7. Grant evaluation

The Department will evaluate the grant program to measure how well the outcomes and objectives have been achieved. The grant agreement requires the grantee to provide information through performance reporting to help with this evaluation.

s47F

From: Emma Cowdroy s47F
Sent: Friday, 24 July 2020 1:16 PM
To: Pauline Sullivan
Cc: s47F Richard Windeyer1; Makin, Mike
Subject: Re: FW: AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Good afternoon Pauline

Thanks for your email. A quick update to let you know that we are just over a week away from completion of the sale of the Newswire to AAP 2.0 and all is progressing well. We are finalising our short to medium term coverage plans for the new AAP, some of which are contingent upon the response to our PING proposal, and look forward to hearing back from you as soon as you are able. Please let me know if there is anything else I can do to assist.

Best regards
Emma

Emma Cowdroy | Incoming CEO



Australian Associated Press
Level 6, 3 Rider Boulevard, Rhodes NSW 2138, Australia
PO Box 3411, Rhodes NSW 2138, Australia

s47F

On Thu, 23 Jul 2020 at 15:56, Sullivan, Pauline <Pauline.Sullivan@communications.gov.au> wrote:

Emma, s47F

apologies for the delayed response.

Thanks again for your time on the 10th and for sending through your proposal. We are considering and will be in touch in the near future to discuss further.

In the interim, do not hesitate to contact me (and I will respond faster than I have on this occasion!).

Kind regards

Pauline

UNCLASSIFIED

From: s47F
Sent: Monday, 20 July 2020 11:29 AM
To: s47F
Cc: Sullivan, Pauline <Pauline.Sullivan@communications.gov.au>; Windeyer, Richard <Richard.Windeyer@communications.gov.au>; Makin, Mike <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>; Emma Cowdroy <s47F>
Subject: Re: FW: AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal

Hi Pauline, Richard & Mike,

I hope you are both well.

I'd like to follow up on our PING funding proposal that s47F shared with you after our meeting on the 10th. Have you had a chance to consider it and is there anything we can do to assist in progressing it?

Kind regards

s47F

s47F

On Sat, 11 Jul 2020 at 17:03, Ps47F wrote:

Richard/Pauline/Mike

Thanks a lot for your time yesterday.

I attach, in this email, the proposal that we put to the Minister's office. We would welcome the opportunity to work with you on how we can best ensure the provision of independent public interest journalism – it will clearly be a journey of discovery for both of us.

Best regards

s47F

From: s47F
Date: Tuesday, 7 July 2020 at 10:54 pm
To: s47F
Cc: Emma Cowdroy s47F
Subject: AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal

Dear s47F

Thank you for your time last week. We appreciated the opportunity to introduce Emma and s47F and to update you on our recent progress.

Please find attached our short-term funding proposal in line with the PING Funding Program priorities. We thank you in advance for your consideration and support.

Should you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact Emma or myself.

Kind regards

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s47F

From: Pauline Sullivan
Sent: Monday, 20 July 2020 4:16 PM
To: Richard Windeyer1
Cc: Makin, Mike; s47F
Subject: Re: AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal [SEC=PROTECTED, DLM=Sensitive:Cabinet]

Thanks. Will do.

P

Sent from my iPhone

On 20 Jul 2020, at 4:12 pm, Windeyer, Richard
 <Richard.Windeyer@communications.gov.au> wrote:

Pauline

This approach to AAP sounds sensible to me. Happy for you to go back on this basis.

Thanks

Richard

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

From: Sullivan, Pauline <Pauline.Sullivan@communications.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 20 July 2020 2:16 PM
To: Windeyer, Richard <Richard.Windeyer@communications.gov.au>; Makin, Mike
 <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>
Cc: s47F @communications.gov.au>
Subject: FW: FW: AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal [SEC=PROTECTED, DLM=Sensitive:Cabinet]

RW

s47C

- thanks for your email;
- currently under consideration;
- will come back to you later this week.

let me know if you have any concerns.

P

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

From: s47F
Sent: Monday, 20 July 2020 11:29 AM
To: s47F
Cc: Sullivan, Pauline <Pauline.Sullivan@communications.gov.au>; Windeyer, Richard <Richard.Windeyer@communications.gov.au>; Makin, Mike <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>; Emma Cowdroy s47F <s47F@aap.com.au>
Subject: Re: FW: AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal

Hi Pauline, Richard & Mike,

I hope you are both well.

I'd like to follow up on our PING funding proposal that s47F shared with you after our meeting on the 10th. Have you had a chance to consider it and is there anything we can do to assist in progressing it?

Kind regards

s47F

<image001.jpg>

Australian Associated Press
Level 5, 3 Rider Boulevard, Rhodes NSW 2138, Australia
PO Box 3411, Rhodes NSW 2138, Australia

s47F

On Sat, 11 Jul 2020 at 17:03, s47F wrote:

Richard/Pauline/Mike

Thanks a lot for your time yesterday.

I attach, in this email, the proposal that we put to the Minister's office. We would welcome the opportunity to work with you on how we can best ensure the provision of independent public interest journalism – it will clearly be a journey of discovery for both of us.

Best regards

s47F

From: s47F

Date: Tuesday, 7 July 2020 at 10:54 pm

To: s47F

s47F

[m](#)>

Subject: AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal

Dear s47F

Thank you for your time last week. We appreciated the opportunity to introduce Emma and s47F and to update you on our recent progress.

Please find attached our short-term funding proposal in line with the PING Funding Program priorities. We thank you in advance for your consideration and support.

Should you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact Emma or myself.

Kind regards

s47F

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This email may contain information that is confidential. If you receive an email in error please delete it immediately.

s47F

From: Pauline Sullivan
Sent: Wednesday, 8 July 2020 10:12 AM
To: Makin, Mike
Subject: Re: AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal [SEC=PROTECTED, DLM=Sensitive:Cabinet]

s47C

Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

From: s47F <[redacted]@communications.gov.au>
Date: 8 July 2020 at 8:55:32 am AEST
To: "Makin, Mike" <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>, "Sullivan, Pauline" <Pauline.Sullivan@communications.gov.au>
Subject: RE: AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal [SEC=PROTECTED, DLM=Sensitive:Cabinet]

I think she's having time off over the school holidays so I doubt it will be before next Monday.

s47F

Office of the Hon Paul Fletcher MP
Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts

Commonwealth Parliamentary Offices | 1 Bligh Street | Sydney NSW 2000
Suite MG.48 | Parliament House | Canberra ACT 2600

I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on which we meet, work and live. I recognise and respect their continuing connection to the land, waters and communities. I pay my respect to Elders past and present and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

From: Makin, Mike <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 8 July 2020 8:52 AM
To: s47F <s47F@communications.gov.au>; Sullivan, Pauline <Pauline.Sullivan@communications.gov.au>
Subject: RE: AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal [SEC=PROTECTED, DLM=Sensitive:Cabinet]

Thanks s47F we'll review and will call to discuss in context of PING later. Do you know when s47F will come back to you?

Mike

PROTECTED Sensitive: Cabinet

From: s47F <s47F@communications.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 7 July 2020 10:57 PM
To: Sullivan, Pauline <Pauline.Sullivan@communications.gov.au>; Makin, Mike <Mike.Makin@communications.gov.au>
Subject: Fwd: AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal [DLM=Sensitive]

Sensitive

This just arrived in my inbox.

s47F

Sensitive

From: s47F
Date: Tuesday, 7 July 2020 at 10:54:14 pm
To: s47F
s47F
Cc: "Emma Cowdroy" s47F
s47F
Subject: AAP 2.0 PING Funding Proposal

Dear s47F

Thank you for your time last week. We appreciated the opportunity to introduce Emma and s47F and to update you on our recent progress.

Please find attached our short-term funding proposal in line with the PING Funding Program priorities. We thank you in advance for your consideration and support.

Should you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact Emma or myself.

Kind regards

s47F

Australian Associated Press

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