



MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday, January 21, 2025

ACM axes more jobs amid AI fears

The axing of more experienced journalists by Australian Community Media (ACM) is another blow to communities who rely on local papers for critical and relevant information.

Last week the company told employees and the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA) that as many as nine staff from the print production team will be made redundant. The union is also concerned about the future of several mastheads as daily printed newspapers amid concerns they could be reduced to Saturday-only printed editions.

The union is extremely concerned these print producers could be replaced by artificial intelligence (AI) tools, given there is evidence that ACM is already using AI tools in the business.

MEAA acting Chief Executive Adam Portelli called on ACM to consult with its editorial staff about the implications of using AI and its impact on the quality of news and the workforce.

“AI in Australia is still unregulated, and given Australians want strong laws to manage AI risks, any move by ACM to do this would be out of touch with community expectations,” Mr Portelli said.

The new cuts come just three months after ACM axed 35 jobs across 11 newsrooms, and stopped printing eight newspapers. And in August 2024 the company ceased printing a swag of country News South Wales papers such as the *Moree Champion* and the *Tenterfield Star*, and photographers and journalists at these publications were made redundant.

The union understands about one third of the small, but important ACM print production team will be gutted under ACM’s latest restructure.

The team includes some of the longest standing and most experienced sub editors and journalists in the company.

Their role includes quality control and tasks such as creating international and national pages for many ACM papers, which hundreds of thousands of Australians read and rely on.

MEAA’s National Media Section have passed a motion condemning ACM’s actions (see next page).

MEAA is campaigning for laws governing the use of AI on behalf of the communities who deserve strong local stories produced by journalists whose experience and skills are being sacrificed for untested and potentially dangerous AI tools.

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NMS statement on ACM redundancies

The MEAA National Media Section committee has passed the following statement:

We are deeply disappointed at Australian Community Media's (ACM) decision to cut jobs in the print production team.

We stand in solidarity with those highly valuable media professionals, some of whom are the most experienced sub editors and journalists across ACM, and who have dedicated their careers to regional journalism.

We stand in solidarity with regional Australian communities who have been let down by ACM's continued disregard for quality journalism. These communities deserve better — to be served by regional journalists who know and love working for the people who live in their patch. These journalists play a crucial role in sorting fake news from verified news which matters greatly to these communities.

It's particularly important in a federal election year to protect and foster quality journalism at all levels.

The Federal Government must take responsibility for the regional media crisis, after the unwinding of media ownership laws has allowed big corporations to buy local mastheads, exploiting journalists by giving them unreasonable workloads with no support, selling assets, cutting jobs and closing papers. It is the local communities who lose out.

We call on the ACM management to:

- Be transparent about the use of AI in its organisation.
- Consult in a meaningful way with affected staff and communities.
- Meet with the union to outline its plan for providing quality news to regional communities that doesn't involve more jobs cuts.
- Explain where the \$10.46 million in government grants during COVID was spent and how they fulfilled their obligation to provide quality news to regional communities.