



MEDIA RELEASE

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Government must act to force Meta to pay for journalism

Meta's announcement today that it will seek to avoid its obligations to pay Australian news outlets for their content is a damaging blow to the public's right to be informed by trusted, quality journalism that requires strong action by the federal government, says the union for Australia's journalists, the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance.

Meta's decision to abandon its deals with Australian outlets is likely to result in reduced coverage of public interest news as journalism goes unfunded by the social media platforms that profit from it, says MEAA.

The News Media Bargaining Code introduced in 2021 provides for compensation by digital platforms for republishing news content to bring audiences and advertisers to their products.

Under the Code, the federal government has the power to "designate" digital platforms if they refuse to strike deals with media organisations.

"This is an arrogant act by a company with too much power that thinks it is beyond the reach of any government," said MEAA Media Federal President Karen Percy.

"Meta and Google make billions of dollars each year by monetising the traffic generated by news content on their sites and until the News Media Bargaining Code was in place, there was no compensation to media outlets.

"Abandoning support for news by social media platforms leaves their users vulnerable to even more misinformation at a time when reliable and credible public interest journalism is needed to prevent it.

"This is another reason why Meta should not be allowed to walk away from its obligations."

Ms Percy said the announcement by Meta highlighted the vulnerability of public interest journalism in Australia after years of cutbacks.

To address this crisis, MEAA is calling for the federal government to use its News Media Assistance Program to provide systemic, long-term support to ensure the viability of Australian journalism and to promote a diverse media landscape. That support should include annual funding of \$250 million to the Public Interest News Gathering program.

"The News Media Bargaining Code is far from perfect – it lacks transparency and favours big players while leaving independent and regional media on the outer – but since 2021 it has helped to fund public interest journalism and employ more journalists," she said.

"Meta should compensate news organisations for making money from their journalism – if it won't do it voluntarily, the federal government must use the powers it has to force it to."

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