



MEDIA RELEASE

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MEAA welcomes Ben Roberts-Smith defamation judgement

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance welcomes today's decision by Justice Besanko in the Ben Roberts-Smith defamation case.

The judgement in favour of the journalists Nick McKenzie and Chris Masters and the media organisations they work for is an important affirmation of the role of journalism to investigate and report on serious matters of public interest.

However, at five years and tens of millions of dollars outlaid on legal fees, not to mention stresses placed upon the journalists, the case also demonstrates how Australia's uniform defamation system has inherent deficiencies.

It is hoped that the recent defamation reforms (which did not apply in this case), especially the shift to requiring 'serious harm' and a clearer, more orderly public interest defence, will provide a safer route for critical public interest journalism.

MEAA Media Federal President Karen Percy welcomed the outcome of the case.

"This is an important case upholding the media's important role in undertaking public interest investigations and the public's right to know," she said.

"But it highlights how Australia's defamation laws have worked to constrain investigative journalism and attack legitimate reporting.

"This case began in 2018 and has come at immense personal cost to both Nick McKenzie and Chris Masters, and at great financial cost to their media outlets. Yet today's finding is a vindication of their journalism."

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