



MEDIA RELEASE

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Media union welcomes government scheme to force tech giants to pay for journalism

The union for Australian journalists cautiously welcomes moves by the federal government to force global digital platforms to compensate media outlets for content shared on their platforms or face hefty penalties.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance says the new mechanism to be introduced by the Albanese Government would end the deadlock created by the refusal of Meta, owner of Facebook, to renegotiate deals under the News Media Bargaining Code.

MEAA Media Federal President Karen Percy said these reforms would ensure that digital giants like Facebook and Google paid their fair share for the Australian news content they get for free but monetise for their own profits.

But Ms Percy said the News Bargaining Incentive must be accompanied by greater transparency and better assurances that any revenue that is raised – either through a levy on digital platforms or via deals negotiated with media outlets – is invested back into journalism.

MEAA also calls for small and independent media outlets to be provided with greater access to compensation from digital platforms.

“The production of quality journalism is essential to a functioning democracy, but it doesn’t come cheap and nor should it be free,” Ms Percy said.

“Multinational tech giants, including Meta, have made billions of dollars monetising the work produced by professional journalists and it is only right and fair that they should pay for it.

“MEAA has been advocating long and hard for sanctions for companies that shirk their responsibilities, and this is a step in the right direction for accountability.

“The News Bargaining Incentive should provide a strong incentive through tax offsets for digital platforms to negotiate with media outlets, but if they refuse to do so they will be forced to pay a new levy regardless of whether they shut off news or not.”

Ms Percy said MEAA was keen to see the details of the proposed new scheme, emphasising the need for greater transparency and broader coverage than the previous Code.

“An effective scheme will have greater transparency and accountability at the core of deals that are struck and payments made to news outlets.

“The funds must be used to support the work journalists do in Australia – it should not be used to reward shareholders or for corporate bonuses or inflating company profits.

📍 PO Box 723 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012 📞 1300 656 513

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“Smaller regional and rural outlets should also be included under the revised code as their newsrooms have arguably been hit the hardest as a result of structural changes in the industry in recent years.

“Making tech giants pay to profit from content produced by Australian news outlets and their journalists should go some way to helping to rebuild a significantly diminished industry, but only if proceeds are invested back into editorial operations and jobs for journalists.”

MEAA welcomes that the new mechanism will be broadened to all major digital platforms that meet the \$250 million revenue threshold, not only Google and Facebook for whom the News Media Bargaining Code was established.

Media Contact: Rebecca Urban, 0411 790 304