

PIJI WELCOMES ACCC REPORT BUT CALLS FOR ACTION ON TAX OFFSETS

The Public Interest Journalism Initiative [PIJI] welcomes the final report of the ACCC Inquiry into Digital Platforms, as an important document that puts a stake in the ground in the battle to sustain public interest journalism.

‘The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has clarified the meaning of public interest journalism¹, validated its vital role and quantified its disturbing decline in Australia.²’ PIJI Board Member Dr Margaret Simons, Associate Professor of Journalism at Monash University says.

‘It shows beyond doubt that public interest journalism is in crisis and in need of intervention to protect it.

‘However, we think that the dismissal the option of tax offsets for public interest journalism is premature and requires further research before it is ruled out.’ Dr Simons says.

The report argued it would be too difficult to ensure extra journalists employed would be working on public interest journalism, unlike tax offsets in the film industry, which are project specific.

‘We see no reason why public interest journalism could not also be judged on a project by project basis,’ Dr Simons says.

PIJI welcomes many of the ACCC recommendations that include:

- A \$50 million annual program of direct grants to support local public interest journalism
- Amended tax settings to encourage philanthropic support for journalism with a new category for Deductible Gift Recipient status for journalism
- A government funded program to improve digital media literacy in schools and the community
- The ACCC to investigate and enforce issues in markets in which digital platforms operate
- A mandatory Australian Communications and Media Authority code for the take-down of content that infringes copyright
- Designated digital platforms (e.g. Facebook, Google) to provide codes of conduct governing relationships between digital platforms and media businesses to the ACMA
- A new, platform neutral media regulatory framework to include digital platforms and news media outlets
- Stable and adequate funding for the ABC and SBS

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The Public Interest Journalism Initiative is a not for profit group that aims to raise awareness of the loss of public interest journalism and to influence public policy that will help sustain it.

piji.com.au

¹ “Journalism with the primary purpose of recording, investigating and explaining issues of public significance in order to engage citizens in public debate and inform democratic decision making at all levels of government.” - Definition of public interest journalism from the ACCC Inquiry into Digital Platforms final report p. 285

² See Appendix F of report ACCC Inquiry into Digital Platforms, *Appendix F: Local and regional newspaper closures – 2008-09 to 2017-18*, p. 561