

# ALP response to PIJI survey on public interest journalism in Australia

April 2025

## Section 1: Importance and Value of PIJ

### 1. How important do you believe public interest journalism is to a functioning democracy?

Public interest journalism is critical to the proper functioning of Australia's democratic systems of government, the health and cohesion of its communities, and the liberties enjoyed by its citizens.

That is why the Albanese Labor Government has committed additional funding and five-year funding terms for the ABC, announced a News Bargaining Incentive to strengthen the News Media Bargaining Code, and made a \$153.5 million funding commitment to a News Media Assistance Program, all of which recognise the importance of supporting public interest journalism and media diversity in a healthy democracy.

## Section 2: Threats to PIJ and Democracy

### 2. What do you perceive as the biggest threats to the economic sustainability of public interest journalism today

Journalism is facing systemic pressures that threaten Australians' access to quality, public interest reporting, and further consolidate control over production and distribution of news in an already concentrated sector.

Increasing choice of media platforms and services fragments audiences and revenues. A key challenge to the economic sustainability of public interest journalism is maintaining the scale needed for local newsgathering and public interest journalism while also maintaining a focus on local issues.

### 3. How concerned are you about the impact of the declining amount of public interest journalism and its diversity?

The Albanese Government is concerned about the systematic pressures that challenge public interest journalism and media diversity. That's why we developed the News Media Assistance Program (News MAP) and funded its implementation. The News MAP framework is an unprecedented step in developing a cohesive, principles-based and evidence-informed approach.

The Australian Government recognises the challenges facing the media sector, but also that government intervention in public interest journalism needs to be carefully balanced. Government intervention can risk undermining press freedom and editorial independence essential to the role played by journalists. This is why government intervention will be guided by a principles-based and evidence-informed framework, formulated and implemented consistent with best practice.

We also recognise the excellent work of the Australian media sector which continues to shine a light on important matters of public interest and keep Australians informed on the issues affecting their lives.

### Section 3: Policy Positions

**4. The Australian Government committed to investing in a package of measures to preserve the provision of the local news including:**

- **\$99.1 million over three years from 2025–26 in grants for the news sector;**
- **\$33 million over 3 years from 2025–26 to support the financial sustainability of the Australian Associated Press;**
- **\$3.0 million per year for two years from 2025-26 for regional newspaper advertising across the total Commonwealth media advertising spend;**
- **\$15 million in 2024–25 for the News Media Relief Program with grants available to eligible regional, independent, suburban, multicultural and First Nations news publishers creating online news content;**
- **and \$10.5 million over four years to the Australian Communications and Media Authority to implement the Media Diversity Measurement Framework.**

**Do you support these commitments in full?**

The Albanese Government announced and committed to a range of measures to contribute to the sustainability of the media sector for all Australians in December 2024 as part of the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook 2024–25.

The Government announced that it will invest a further \$335.6 million to support public interest journalism and media diversity in Australia. This includes funding for the News Media Assistance Program, including additional support for the Australian Associated Press, increased funding for community broadcasting, ongoing stable funding for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and a 1-year suspension of the Commercial Broadcasting Tax to provide relief to the commercial television and radio broadcasting sector.

**5. What measures will you take to ensure transparency and accountability of this funding over the next term of Government?**

Established governance processes for the Government, Department, national broadcasters and community broadcasters will be utilised to provide transparency and accountability for this funding. These include Senate Estimates and annual reporting as well as adherence to Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles.

As recognised in the News MAP policy framework, transparency is essential for government policies impacting news and journalism. It is a necessary safeguard against overreach, whether deliberate or inadvertent, and an important means of creating greater trust. It also underpins and enables the role played by news and journalism, and reflects the transparency expected of news producers.

The News MAP policy framework is a critical component of this commitment to transparency, serving to clearly and publicly outline government's expected role, and explain the implications it may have for news organisations and the freedom of the press.

#### **Section 4: Sustainable Funding Options**

##### **6. Would you support tax incentives or subsidies for media organisations producing PIJ? Why or why not?**

The Albanese Government is focused on delivering the key measures outlined in responses to Questions 1 and 4, and will continue to examine a range of mechanisms to support news media and public interest journalism as needed.

##### **7. What alternative funding models (e.g. levies, grants) do you think are viable for sustaining PIJ in Australia?**

The News MAP as announced includes support for a range of measures, including support for the AAP, direct grants and government advertising, as well as the establishment of an expert advisory panel to advise the Minister on matters under News MAP, including attracting philanthropy.

The public consultation on the News Media Assistance Program sought comment on a range of measures, as well as input on the key advantages and disadvantages of various measures, including:

- direct government funding, through grants programs
- tax incentives to encourage investment in research and development
- government advertising to support sustainability.

Ultimately, the news and journalism landscape will continue to evolve and policy decisions should be based on the best available evidence, including evaluation of programs and interventions to date.

#### **Section 5: Advertising Levies and Media Bargaining Code**

##### **8. How effective do you believe the News Media Bargaining Code has been in triggering the bargaining power imbalance between digital platforms?**

The News Media Bargaining Code was introduced in 2021 to incentivise digital platforms to enter into commercial deals with news publishers.

Treasury reviewed the first year of operation of the News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code (the Code). The review concluded that the Code had been a success in its first year, with over 30 commercial agreements inked between digital platforms Google and Meta, and a cross-section of news businesses. The review found that the agreements that were highly unlikely to have been made without the Code.

However, the code has limitations. It allows platforms to avoid their obligations by removing news. This is not in the best interest of Australians. A significant proportion of Australians use digital platforms to access news, and we want this to continue.

The Albanese Government is acting to address this, by establishing a News Bargaining Incentive to encourage digital platforms to enter into or renew commercial deals with news publishers. The Government continues to consult with stakeholders on the development of the News Bargaining Incentive.

**9. What do you think should be the primary focus for the future development of the News Media Bargaining Code?**

See Question 8

**10. What are the biggest challenges you foresee in maintaining the effectiveness of the News Media Bargaining Code?**

See Question 8

**11. What is your view of the Government’s News Bargaining Incentive proposed in December 2024?**

See Question 8

**12. Should the new bargaining initiative be held back as a result of actual or potential objections from the US government?**

In a 3 April 2025 statement on US tariffs, the Prime Minister said the Government stands by our Media Bargaining Code.

The Government continues to consult with stakeholders on the development of the News Bargaining Incentive.

**Section 6:  
Local Journalism**

**13. How important do you believe is it to increase reporting on local government and community issues?**

Local reporting is important to holding power to account, fostering social cohesion and the local market, and reflecting and maintaining identity. Local news reporting is the lifeblood of communities around Australia.

That is why the Albanese Government has supported the Local and Independent News Association, which is an industry association supporting digital, hyperlocal and independent news publishers.

**14. What measures would you like to see implemented to address the decline in local news coverage?**

The Albanese Government has announced a comprehensive suite of funding, policy and reform to support the media sector and news coverage including:

- Stable five-year funding terms for the national broadcasters
- Increased funding for community broadcasting
- Increased funding for the Indigenous Broadcasting and Media Program
- Long-term funding for the Viewer Access Satellite Television (VAST) service
- Commercial Broadcasting Tax relief for commercial radio and television broadcasters
- The News Media Assistance Program (News MAP) including new policy framework and direct funding for the AAP and a grants program as well as funding for the ACMA to implement a new Media Diversity Measurement Framework
- Legislated new Television Prominence regime and reformed anti-siphoning scheme and list
- Legislation to promote access to television in regional Australia and more efficient broadcasting transmission arrangements
- Legislation to streamline community broadcasting regulation and keep community television on air.