

# ACCC - Mandatory news media bargaining code

## Response to Draft Code

### McPherson Media Group

28<sup>th</sup> August, 2020

The McPherson Media Group (“MMG”) strongly supports the draft code, which provides a robust framework within which it can seek fair remuneration for the value it provides to the platforms – and continue to produce public interest journalism for its regional communities as it transitions through multi-platform publishing towards a viable digital publishing model. In particular:

- It sees the collective bargaining provisions as an opportunity for regional and independent publishers to save time and expense in negotiating an outcome, noting the Commission’s preparedness to modify the draft bill to allow for a non-publisher agent such as Country Press Australia to negotiate on its behalf;
- While it envisages that the definition of “core news content” may not specifically embrace some aspects of the kind of news and information needed to assist regional communities in being informed, included and effective, it welcomes the Commission’s preparedness to adjust and revise the code as circumstances require, in which regard the initial 12-month limit on bargaining agreements is appropriate;
- MMG’s interest in the code is pragmatic: remuneration is of much greater significance than, for examples, provisions around minimum standards;
- MMG shares the concerns of other regional publishers regarding the challenges of demonstrating indirect value but accepts that, following strong public statements from the Commission regarding a range of remuneration striking a balance between the impact of the platforms on the capacity of publishers to provide public interest journalism, on the one hand, and not placing undue burden on the platforms, on the other, there exists a sufficiently-defined pathway to enable acceptable bargains to be concluded.

- MMG is comfortable with the \$150,000 revenue hurdle itself but would like to see some provision allowing for start-up publishers, such as those emerging to replace mastheads which have closed, to participate in the code despite lacking the financial history.

MMG acknowledges the profound importance of ground-breaking initiative by the Commission and is grateful for the opportunity to participate and provide feedback. It accepts the need to put the code in practice, observe the results and make adjustments over time. MMG supports the draft code in that spirit.