

From: [Peri Strathearn](#)
To: [bargainingcode](#)
Subject: Feedback on draft news media bargaining code
Date: Tuesday, 4 August 2020 5:06:38 PM

Hi ACCC,

This email sets out my personal feedback, and that of Murray Bridge News Pty Ltd, on the Treasury Laws Amendment (News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code) Bill 2020 - the draft news media bargaining code.

I applaud the general intent of the legislation, in seeking to take a slice of the revenue from the global corporations which dominate information dissemination in this day and age and distribute it among the news organisations which, until recently, have been able to depend upon traditional methods of advertising, by and large, to produce their own revenue. I am also a big fan of S52S, which mandates an ability to turn off commenting on certain Facebook posts. This will reduce liability for small, understaffed news organisations which cannot spare the resources needed to monitor every comment. I know well the stifling effect this liability has had on my own reporting in the past - in a previous job, more than once I was instructed not to post a story to Facebook unless I could sit there and monitor the comments for the rest of the day. At a one-person newspaper, printing two editions per week, this was absolutely impossible.

Whether the legislation will work as intended is yet to be seen, though that is outside the ACCC's - and federal government's - control. A more effective solution might be to tax such corporations more effectively, and to provide direct support (public funds) to registered news businesses through ACMA or another agency. However, if such an option is not politically viable at this time, the proposed legislation is a decent attempt.

I suggest slight amendments to the eligibility rules. I would reduce the revenue rule in S52G from \$150,000 to \$75,000, the same threshold at which businesses must register for GST, both for simplicity's sake and to make that threshold easier to reach for businesses such as my own recent start-up. It would be a shame if the proposed legislation contributed to entrenching existing news providers and stifling innovation. I also suggest broadening the professional standards test in S52K. It is not practical for my news outlet to join the Press Council in its present, embryonic, form, and I suspect other newcomers around the nation would be in the same basket. I use membership of the MEAA - and the ethical code which membership obliges me to follow - as a "court of appeal" for any journalistic failings on my part. I leave it to the ACCC and the drafters to decide whether to broaden S52K so far as to include any registered editorial/complaints policy, or simply to include membership of MEAA or "an equivalent body".

Thanks for the opportunity to comment. Please do not hesitate to call or email if you require any further information.

Cheers,

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