



Australian Government

**Australian Government response to the Senate
Environment and Communications References
Committee report:**

Media Diversity in Australia

August 2024

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Overview

The report of the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee into media diversity in Australia was tabled on 8 February 2022. The Government's responses to the Report's recommendations is below.

Australian Government response

The Australian Government's response to Media Diversity in Australia is set out in detail below.

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the Commonwealth initiate a judicial inquiry, with the powers of a royal commission, to determine whether the existing system of media regulation is fit-for-purpose and to investigate the concentration of media ownership in Australia. The committee believes that media convergence due to technological change has greatly strengthened the argument in favour a single regulator across all platforms. As a consequence, the committee further recommends that the judicial inquiry's terms of reference include consideration of a single, independent media regulator to harmonise news media standards and oversee an effective process for remedying complaints.

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate. This recommendation has been overtaken by public consultation on the News Media Assistance Program.

Recommendation 2

It is the Parliament's responsibility to ensure that the nation's news media are sufficiently diverse, in ownership and in opinion, to maintain a vigorous democracy. In support of this goal, the committee recommends:

- That Australia's two public broadcasters, the ABC and SBS, be sustainably and adequately funded. The ABC's Enhanced Newsgathering funding should be renewed in its upcoming budget.
- That the Government commit to long-term and adequate funding of Australia's only independent newswire, Australian Associated Press.
- That the Government release its final proposals for reform that have been developed through the Media Reform Green Paper consultation process.
- That the Government establish an independent and permanent trust to assist emerging news ventures, especially in regional areas. The trust's responsibilities should include funding journalism traineeships.
- That the National Broadband Network remain in public ownership and be upgraded to a fit-for-purpose standard as originally intended, to provide crucial communications infrastructure for as broad a range of new media ventures as possible, especially those engaging in public interest journalism.
- That concessional rates of taxation, modelled on the existing Research and Development Tax Incentive, be made available to new ventures investing in public interest journalism. The terms of reference for the judicial inquiry called for in Recommendation 1 should include consideration of how best to implement this tax measure.
- That the Government extend Deductible Gift Recipient status for appropriate ventures in public interest journalism.

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate. This recommendation has been overtaken by public consultation on the News Media Assistance Program.

Dissenting Report – Senator Bragg

Recommendation 1

There should be no inquiry into a private media organisation.

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 2

The Press Council should be reformed by its members to be more responsive and adopt stronger powers of self-regulation.

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 3

3 Any outlet which publishes consumer media should consider having an independent Ombudsman, appointed by the board of the organisation.

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Dissenting Report – Senator McMahon

Recommendation 1

Reject the proposed judicial inquiry, with Royal Commission powers, to determine whether the existing system of media regulation is fit-for-purpose and to investigate the concentration of media ownership in Australia.

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 2

The Commonwealth should continue to actively encourage and ensure media diversity in remote and regional Australia by providing similar incentives to those made available to other industries.

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 3

The Australian Communications and Media Authority should be given a stronger role of regulating the ABC and SBS.

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 4

The Australian Communications and Media Authority should be given the ability to apply penalties to media organisations found breaching the code.

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 5

Internet and Social Media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Google should be prevented from censoring mainstream Australian media and news content.

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.

Recommendation 6

ABC complaints handling process should be reformed to allow more accountability.

The Government **notes** this recommendation. However, given the passage of time since this report was tabled, a substantive Government response is no longer appropriate.