

# OurNews Pty Ltd

*The Clifton Courier - The Allora Advertiser - The Oakey Champion*

*The Pittsworth Sentinel - On Our Selection News*



OurNews Pty Ltd – ABN 16 126 494 308

## **Submission to the Australian Government's Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, and the Arts News Media Assistance Program Consultation Paper**

OurNews Pty Ltd is a small privately-owned company which publishes five weekly newspapers on the Darling Downs in Queensland. The current owners see their role as caretakers of a community asset and strive to ensure that staff, particularly journalists, appreciate the important role we play in each of the communities we serve. These communities are based on the towns of Allora, Clifton, Pittsworth and Oakey and the developing residential areas immediately west, southwest and south of the city of Toowoomba.

Local newspapers serve as the lifeblood of regional communities and provide a vital medium through which local and regional communities connect with issues directly affecting their lives. Local journalists' deep understanding of the socio-political landscape ensures that coverage is deeply rooted in context and relevance.

Local newspapers, characterised by their steadfast adherence to rigorous editorial standards, emerge as bastions of reliable and balanced reporting.

Local newspapers, acting as fundamental elements of democratic infrastructure, contribute not merely by reporting news but also by playing a crucial role in holding local authorities accountable, addressing community concerns, and championing initiatives that drive positive change. In this context, government support becomes not just beneficial but imperative to sustain the vital role of these newspapers in fostering a well-informed and engaged community.

Government support, in the form of financial incentives, such as advertising guarantees, play a pivotal role in advancing media diversity. We respectfully suggest that an initiative such as a minimum level of weekly advertising in regional and local newspapers, will go beyond ensuring financial stability. It will also contribute to cultivating a media landscape that reflects a wide array of voices and perspectives.

A local news survey conducted by Deakin University stated: “Audiences believe local newspapers should be collaboratively funded by a range of relevant stakeholders including media companies, advertisers, subscribers, government and philanthropy to ensure their future.” The survey revealed that: “Audiences overwhelmingly view a printed copy of their newspaper as an essential service for their community. This accords with our previous research that has advocated for recognition at the policy level of the vital importance of the printed paper.”

In order to sustain the standards to meet the expectation of readers, we believe support from Government is critical.

Beyond regular advertising we submit that a program of grants, particularly journalism cadetship grants, would be a strategic investment in the future of journalism and community engagement. Cadetship grants can play a pivotal role in nurturing emerging talents in journalism, contributing to the development of a skilled workforce dedicated to covering local news.

In conclusion, we refer to a comprehensive submission made by the Queensland Country Press Association (QCPA), of which OurNews Pty Ltd is a member, and submit that the recommendations therein provide a sound basis for ensuring that country and regional newspapers can continue to provide a vital platform for legitimate and factual coverage of local news.