

ACM urges support for local newspapers as dozens of non-daily titles resume printing

MONDAY, June 29, 2020 - Dozens of local newspapers temporarily suspended in April due to shortages of work resulting from the coronavirus pandemic will resume printing this week, media company ACM has announced.

Key ACM titles will be back in circulation in regional centres across NSW, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland as the company begins a phased return to print publication based on the work that is expected to return.

ACM chief executive officer Allen Williams urged audiences and advertisers to support their local newspaper by buying a copy, taking out a digital subscription or booking an advertisement.

"We are showing our commitment to regional media and the important role our local newspapers play in keeping their areas informed, however as we've seen with recent closures by other publishers these titles need support to prosper," Mr Williams said.

"We're certainly grateful for the many supportive messages ACM's trusted mastheads have received from loyal readers, customers and community leaders who say they have missed the local newspaper.

"Now we need those communities to rally around the local paper and our dedicated journalists and advertising sales staff so these titles can return to sustainably serving regional readers and advertisers."

Due to the economic impact of government COVID-19 control measures, ACM announced in mid-April that it was facing stoppages in work beyond its control, and as a result the production of a number of non-daily newspapers would be suspended and employees associated with print sites and products stood down.

Many other non-daily newspapers continued to publish and ACM's 14 daily newspapers, such as The Canberra Times and Newcastle Herald, and agricultural journals such as The Land in NSW and Queensland Country Life, were not affected by the stoppages.

Non-daily mastheads such as the Goulburn Post, Wimmera Mail-Times, the Maitland Mercury, Southern Highland News, North West Star, The Area News, Armidale Express and Port Macquarie News continued to deliver local news coverage online and attract new digital subscribers while printed editions halted.

These key titles are among the dozens of ACM publications resuming newspaper production in coming days, with advertising sales staff and editors engaging directly with local customers and subscribers ahead of the return.

Back in print today, the Goulburn Post, Southern Highland News, The Area News, Wimmera Mail Times and Port Macquarie News use their front pages to thank their community and urge audiences and advertisers to support local news by buying a copy of the paper, subscribing online or booking an advertisement.

ACM Chief Marketing Officer Paul Tyrrell said the publications returning in print would ensure the important messages of national as well as local advertisers could once again reach ACM's highly engaged audiences in major regional population centres.

“As local, regional and national businesses get back to business and continue their recovery, key ACM publications will be there alongside them, ready to help connect them with our audiences across print and digital platforms,” Mr Tyrrell said.

According to the latest EMMA (Enhanced Media Metrics Australia) readership figures, ACM recorded a combined network audience of 8.4 million readers across digital and print for the month of March, up 35 per cent year-on-year.

Mr Williams said ACM would “continue to review our ability to return other suspended titles subject to advertising recovery”.

He welcomed federal government relief measures such as JobKeeper and the confirmation yesterday that ACM is eligible for a grant under the government’s \$50 million Public Interest News Gathering program.

“I am pleased to say that the amount of the proposed grant to ACM reflects the scale of our commitment to regional media in Australia,” Mr Williams said. “We will now work through the details of the grant offer and what it means for our business.”

“We are grateful to the government and to Minister Fletcher for providing support that recognises the vital role we play in regional communities.”

“We are also grateful to the Judith Neilson Institute for its initiatives to support journalism, including journalism projects to serve ACM’s audiences in regional areas.”

WHAT REGIONAL COMMUNITIES HAVE SAID ABOUT THEIR LOCAL ACM NEWSPAPER

Cr RJ (Bob) Kirk, Mayor of Goulburn Mulwaree Council:

“The Goulburn Post is an important part of the culture and historic value of this community and thus its continuation, in this council’s opinion, is vital. The Goulburn Post is an institution of Goulburn and more importantly is a well-established entity for the recording of history of this great city and region of ours. Despite the move to more technology the paper version of our day to day lives is still a very important part of a dynamic community and I do not believe will change significantly into the future. Books and newspapers, in my opinion, will continue to be a significant part of our lives.”

Cr Mark Radford, Mayor of Horsham Rural City Council:

“The Wimmera Mail-Times has had a long and proud history in our community to keep people both informed and entertained. The value of a local newspaper should never be underestimated. We appreciate the fact that our council has a good working relationship with the local journalists and hope that, when possible in the future, the printed version of the Wimmera Mail-Times will return. The publishing, printing and delivery of the Wimmera Mail-Times, I am confident, will be once again supported and appreciated by our community.”

Cr Bob Pynsent, Mayor of Cessnock City Council:

“[The Cessnock Advertiser] is a vital source of information for our community members. In times of distress people turn to their local news outlet, in periods of prolonged drought, bushfires and flooding ... It is critical to the sharing of information that is relevant to our local area that other media outlets do not cover. It is essential the stories of our community are told, from sporting club triumphs, community events or changes by decision makers that impact our locals.”

For more information, please contact ACM Chief Marketing Officer Paul Tyrrell on 0416 124 568.

Source: emma CMV Apr 2019 - Mar 2020, Total combined monthly print and digital readership