

Publishers welcome Vic government advertising guarantee for regional newspapers

December 1, 2022: Regional newspaper publisher ACM and industry body the Country Press Association (CPA) have welcomed an advertising commitment by the Victorian Government.

Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews has guaranteed no less than one full page of government advertising each week in every regional newspaper in Victoria.

ACM and the CPA, which together account for more than 320 regional newspapers, have jointly described the guarantee as exactly the kind of support the sector needs, saying it would provide certainty around revenue without the need for publishers to continually go cap-in-hand to governments for grants to support the vital service regional newspapers provide.

The two groups have strongly urged the Federal Government and other state governments around the country to follow suit, and for opposition parties to commit to matching the move.

“As an industry, we want a leg up, not a handout,” ACM managing director Tony Kendall said. “Regional newspapers are essential to the communities they serve. But massive cost increases for newsprint are threatening these lifelines of information and connection. Diverting a modest portion of an otherwise huge government advertising budget is an elegant way of helping newspapers overcome their challenges and stay in business.”

CPA president Andrew Manuel said it was time for real change to help an essential industry. “This would be a huge boost for the sector and for public interest journalism. Multiple federal inquiries have been held into regional media but no findings have been implemented or even discussed in a meaningful way.”

In announcing the move, Victorian Premier Dan Andrews said: “Whether it is a bushfire, a flood emergency or a global pandemic, time and time again we have seen regional newspapers step up and serve their communities in incredibly important ways.”

Mr Kendall and Mr Manuel each acknowledged the Public Interest News Gathering (PING) grants from the Federal Government, which had helped the sector through the COVID pandemic and, most recently, provided emergency short-term relief after a huge jump in paper prices.

Mr Manuel said the PING funding had been the difference between survival and closure for many regional newspapers. “We are extremely grateful for the short-term support, but deeper change is needed,” he said. “We need all governments and political parties to recognise the importance of regional media and commit to preserving it.”

“We don’t want to keep asking for grants,” Mr Kendall said. “Regional newspapers need a stable footing on which to build for their future success. It is all well and good to hold discussions and inquiries, but this need is urgent. If governments don’t move quickly to save regional newspapers, there will be far fewer of them to save.”

About ACM

ACM publishes many of Australia’s most respected regional newspapers. Its 140 titles include The Courier in Ballarat, The Standard in Warrnambool, the Central Western Daily in Orange and The Daily Advertiser in Wagga.

About the CPA

The Country Press Association represents 190 titles across all States of Australia.

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