



REGIONAL AND SMALL PUBLISHERS INNOVATION FUND

As part of the landmark reforms being made to Australia's media laws, the Turnbull Government will provide much needed support to regional and small publishers through the \$60 million *Regional and Small Publishers Jobs and Innovation Package*. This Package includes:

- > The \$50 million **Regional and Small Publishers Innovation Fund**;
- > The Regional and Small Publishers Cadetship Program, which will support 200 cadetships; and
- > 60 regional journalism scholarships.

Why do we need these programs?

The Government recognises that the media industry is in significant transition and that this poses great challenges for small publishers and small regional newspapers in particular. The business models that have traditionally supported journalism—particularly those funded by advertising revenue—are being challenged, and the need to adapt successful subscriber and revenue models is proving especially demanding for smaller publications. The provision of quality journalism is under pressure.

- > Quality journalism is an important underpinning of our democracy, and access to locally relevant factual journalism is important to developing and maintaining strong regional communities.
- > Effective journalism also plays a vital role in holding our institutions to account and creates a framework in which complex issues can be understood, offering the public reliable information to support decisions in political, economic and social life.

The *Regional and Small Publishers Jobs and Innovation Package* will assist small publishers to adapt to the challenges of the contemporary media environment, create employment opportunities for cadet journalists, and support regional students to study journalism.

What is the Regional and Small Publishers Innovation Fund?

The Regional and Small Publishers Innovation Fund will provide \$16.7 million in grants per year over three years to support these publishers to transition and compete more successfully in the evolving media environment. One of the core objectives of the Fund will be to support these publishers to put themselves on a sustainable commercial footing, better enabling businesses to develop new business models and practices. To support this aim, the grants will be able to be used by publishers for initiatives that support the continuation, development, growth and innovation of Australian civic journalism (journalism that investigates and explains public policy and issues of public significance, engages citizens in public debate, and informs democratic decision-making).

How will the Fund work?

Grants will be made via a competitive application process for initiatives that will support the availability of Australian civic journalism. The types of projects that may receive funding includes purchasing or upgrading equipment and software, development of apps, business activities to drive revenue and readership, and training. However, payment of salaries will not be permitted under the Fund.

To be able to apply for a grant under the Fund, applicants will need to meet eligibility criteria. One requirement will be meeting annual turnover thresholds of not less than \$300,000 revenue and not more than \$30 million in revenue. Additional criteria will include:

- > a primary purpose test (of producing civic and public interest journalism with an Australian perspective);
- > an Australian residence test (being incorporated under Australian law and having central management in Australia);
- > an independence test (not affiliated with a political party, union, superannuation fund, financial institution, non-government organisation or policy lobby group);
- > a control test (being an entity that is majority controlled by Australian residents);
- > being a member of the Australian Press Council or having a robust and transparent complaints process; and
- > having in place editorial guidelines, a code of conduct or similar framework relating to the provision of quality journalism.

Grants will be capped at a maximum of \$1 million per year for any media group, and at least two thirds of total funding must go to regional publishers and not less than 25 per cent for non-regional publishers.

How will the Program be administered?

The Fund will be administered independently of Government by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA). The ACMA will seek input from an Advisory Committee comprised of—at a minimum—representatives invited from each of the Australian Press Council, The Walkley Foundation and the Country Press Association, who will give advice on the distribution of the grants. The Advisory Committee's recommendations will be made public, and the ACMA will report on the administration of the Fund through its Annual Report.

When will funding be available?

It is expected that the first round of grants recipients will be announced by 1 June 2018, with the first grant payments to be made from 1 July 2018. The fund will provide grants of \$50 million over three years from 2018-19 to 2020-21.

How can I find out more?

The administration and design of the Fund will be further developed over the coming months, and more information on how to apply will be made available through the Department and ACMA's websites in early 2018.