

Inquiry into the Communications Legislation Amendment (Regional and Small Publishers Innovation Fund) Bill 2017

We thank the Senate's Selection of Bills Committee for the invitation to make a submission regarding the above Bill.

By way of background, this submission is made by Schwartz Media Pty Ltd and Schwartz Publishing Pty Ltd, both owned and operated by Morry Schwartz AM.

Schwartz Media publishes a national weekly newspaper, The Saturday Paper, and a current affairs magazine, The Monthly.

Schwartz Publishing publishes two periodicals, Quarterly Essay and Australian Foreign Affairs.

These four publications are all focussed on civic journalism, and constitute an important voice in the Australian polity.

We strongly support the Bill, and are confident that it will have a beneficial effect on the operations of regional and small publishers, and thereby press diversity in Australia.

We have no significant comments on the proposed Bill. The following few points are only in the interests of clarification for our application:

- In the criteria for eligibility there is a requirement that a publication needs to be a member of the Australian Press Council or have a robust and transparent complaints process. What is meant by 'robust and transparent complaints process'? Does this mean a provision for letters to the editor? A clear address to which complaints may be sent?
- What is meant by the requirement to have in place 'editorial guidelines' and 'a code of conduct or similar framework relating to the provision of quality journalism'? Does this requirement call for a written manifesto, or is proof by practice sufficient?
- Payment of journalists' salaries are not permitted, but can grants include the salaries of people developing 'applications

for the delivery of news', 'initiatives to promote civic journalism' etc., be claimed?

- Will there be one grant round per year, or more?
- Will there be a requirement to provide an overview of a publisher's programme for the 3 year period, or should applications relate to one year at a time only?

And we have only one general question/comment:

- Will there be any relationship between the size of grants and the size of a business receiving those grants? (eg can a company turning over \$300,000 receive a \$1million grant in one year?).

Further to this submission, we are happy to provide further information/advice at any time should the Committee so request.