

75% REACH RULE COMMITTEE

OPENING STATEMENT

Seven West Media has shown a longstanding commitment to Australian content, to quality news and to local content.

Our regional licensee, Seven Queensland, employs 176 people. 84 of them work in the news department.

We provide 6 local nightly news bulletins in the Sunshine Coast, Wide Bay, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton and Cairns local markets. We maintain local offices, journalists and news production facilities in each of those areas.

Seven Local News is the most watched program in regional Queensland.

We are proud of the commitment we show to our local communities through the content we produce, the advertisers we serve and the engagement we have with community groups and our viewers.

We have consistently said that we neither seek the removal of the 75% reach rule nor oppose it.

Nothing has changed.

But it is clear there has not been nearly enough public debate about the implications of removing the rule and what should replace it if we did. So we are saying that it should be a matter for a much longer conversation about how important public goods like local news content, local presence and local diversity can be protected.

This should not be a debate about winners and losers, about who stands to gain the most or whether people have changed their corporate positions on the issue.

It should be about regional Australians and what they should be able to expect from their local media services.

It should not of itself be about whether particular media companies should be allowed to do a deal. It should be about what that deal, and any others that might result from removal of the reach rule, will mean to regional Australians.

And if they are going to be worse off as a result, how do we ensure that is not the case.

I'm very happy to take questions from the Committee.