

7 March 2024

The Hon Chris Minns MP
Premier
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney, NSW 2000

Via email:

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Dear Premier,

As leaders of the two peak bodies representing regional print media in New South Wales, we wish to bring to your attention the severe economic outlook facing our industry.

The widely reported decision this week by Facebook parent company, Meta, to discontinue funding to regional media as compensation for using our locally generated news content will have an immediate and devastating effect – it removes a critical income stream that had been widely expected to continue for at least another three years.

The Meta announcement comes as regional print media continues to slide downwards due to the shrinking of government advertising activity at State level, and the almost complete disappearance of public messaging investment by the Commonwealth.

Country Press NSW and Australian Community Media comprise 95 per cent of existing print media located outside of Sydney.

Collectively, we service one-third of all NSW residents for their local news reporting – and providing a conduit for official public information messaging – but our industry is still not receiving anything near to a fair allocation of NSW Government advertising in either print or online mediums.

Whilst the \$1m of incremental NSW Government advertising spend that was part of your governments' election commitment was welcomed, sadly, this promised expenditure has not occurred.

In fact NSW Government advertising spend in regional newspapers has fallen by over 40% in the last 12 months.

Despite repeated approaches to various Ministers and the NSW Government advertising agency, OMD, our publications, our audiences and the communities we serve are being ignored by NSW Government messaging.

Sadly, the resulting lack of government advertising spend and Meta's decision has, this week, forced the closure of four ACM titles on the South Coast of NSW which follow the closure of the Cessnock Advertiser two months ago.

Without a return of government advertising these will only be the first of many communities that will become news deserts given we will be forced to close more titles in the coming months and years.

We request that the Minns Government considers allocating significant and ongoing funding for official advertising in regional mastheads, in print and online mediums, and we further seek an assurance that this be included in the forthcoming State Budget.

Premier, in closing, we urgently seek your urgent attention towards the economic circumstances facing regional print media – it is no exaggeration to state that our industry stands at the precipice.

Both Tony and I are available to meet with you at your convenience to discuss this important issue.

Yours sincerely

Lucie Peart
President
Country Press NSW Inc

Tony Kendall
Managing Director
Australian Community Media