

Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee

Answers to Questions on Notice

Communications Portfolio

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

Topic: Broadcasting Legislation Amendment (2021 Measures No. 1) Bill 2021

Hansard Ref: Page 45, 07/06/2021

Senator URQUHART asked:

In the final report of the Digital Platforms Inquiry, which was in June 2019, the ACCC recommended that there be grants for local journalism, recommending \$50 million per year for three years, after which the program should be reviewed. The government supported this recommendation in principle. Can you tell me precisely how much the government has committed in grants for local journalism since the June 2019 report?

How much has been committed in total, once you account for the underspends and the re-announcement of this funding? Is that around \$70 million?

Answer:

In December 2019, the Government supported in principle Recommendation 10 of the ACCC's Digital Platforms Inquiry (DPI). In its response, the Government stated that it will enhance the Regional and Small Publishers Jobs and Innovation Package to better support the production of high quality news, particularly in regional and remote areas of Australia, with a particular focus on the production of public interest journalism that is at greatest risk of being under-provided. In its response the Government did not specify an annual grant spend for local journalism

Since the June 2019 release of the Digital Platforms Inquiry Report, \$85.6 million in funding has been committed to support public interest journalism mainly in regional areas.

Program	Funding Round	Amount Committed
Regional and Small Publishers Innovation Fund Rounds	2019 Regional Grant Opportunity	\$9.06 million
	2020 Regional Innovation Fund	\$4.98 million
Regional Journalism Scholarships Program 2019		\$2.30 million
Regional and Small Publishers Cadetships Program 2019		\$0.96 million
Public Interest New Gathering (PING) Program 2020/21		\$68.35 million
Total		\$85.65 million

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Senator URQUHART asked:

Okay. If we took them together, how much does the funding committed for direct grants since 2017 fall short of the \$150 million recommended by the ACCC? I thought that was around \$80 million.

Answer:

The Government has committed \$89.09 million in funding since 2017. The difference is \$60.91 million.

It is noted that the ACCC's DPI was released in June 2019, with Government's response released in December 2019.

Program	Funding Round	Amount Committed
Regional and Small Publishers Innovation Fund Rounds	2018 Regional Innovation Fund	\$3.44 million
	2019 Regional Grant Opportunity	\$9.06 million
	2020 Regional Innovation Fund	\$4.98 million
Regional Journalism Scholarships Program 2019		\$2.30 million
Regional and Small Publishers Cadetships Program 2019		\$0.96 million
Public Interest New Gathering (PING) Program 2020/21		\$68.35 million
Total		\$89.09 million