

# Australian Greens' dissenting report

1.1 The Bill seeks to amend the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* to make possible the establishment of a Regional and Small Publishers Innovation Fund, to be administered by the ACMA on behalf of the Commonwealth, for the purposes of providing grants as financial assistance to publishers of newspapers, magazines or other periodical, or to a content service provider.

1.2 The explanatory memorandum makes clear that the intention is to assist regional and small publishers in contributing to Australian civic journalism.

1.3 The Australian Greens support this intention. This particular effort to support it through legislation is, however, flawed.

1.4 The Australian Greens believe that the eligibility criteria for grants should be crafted to best support regional and small publishers, and to promote civic journalism, and that the eligibility criteria currently proposed do not do so consistently.

1.5 The 'control test' is an unnecessary inclusion to the Fund's eligibility criteria and should be withdrawn without delay.

1.6 The Australian Greens recognise that the intention of the Fund is to support Australian media organisations and assist public interest journalism. The Australian Greens believe that to achieve this outcome, the Fund should support Australian journalists and support Australian jobs for the benefit of Australian readers on issues relevant to Australian consumers. This is the best way to support Australian media; 'control tests' are a weak and poorly designed proxy.

1.7 Nowhere is it stated explicitly why one grant applicant, seeking to either:

- purchase a particular piece of technology or equipment;
- support a program or an initiative that is intended to promote civic journalism;
- develop an application for the delivery of news, and other media related content services;
- train and upskill staff; and/or
- make efforts to increase revenue and readership;

should be assessed as eligible or ineligible based on whether it is majority controlled by Australian residents.

1.8 The purpose of the Fund is to support civic journalism as its providers transition into a new and disrupted media environment. Insisting on a review of where an outlet's majority control is located does nothing to support civic journalism.

1.9 Instead, it creates unnecessary and ideologically driven carve-outs and exceptions that do nothing but limit eligibility to the grant scheme to those the Government believes are ideologically 'friendly'. This defies the intent of the Bill, and makes clear why civic journalism is so necessary.

1.10 Support cannot be offered only to those with whom the Government sees like-minds.

1.11 The use of taxpayer money to aid one's perceived allies in the fourth estate while withholding support from one's perceived opponents is an embarrassing and shameless partisan intervention into what should be an all-of-industry support mechanism.

1.12 The 'control test' does not aid the public interest and should not be included. Indeed, its inclusion weakens the effectiveness of the Fund to assist civic journalism and actively undermines the effectiveness of this Fund in doing what Australians need it to do.

1.13 The Australian Greens strongly recommend that the Bill be amended as a matter of urgency to prevent a control test from being introduced.

**Senator Janet Rice**  
**Deputy Chair**

**Senator Sarah Hanson-Young**  
**Senator for South Australia**