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MINISTER FOR BROADBAND, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY
LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SENATE
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MEDIA RELEASE

Government response to Convergence Review and Finkelstein Inquiry

Minister for Broadband, Communications, and the Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy, today announced reforms that will secure for the Australian public into the future a media sector that is fair, diverse, and produces more Australian content.

The reforms are the Government's response to the Convergence Review and the Finkelstein Inquiry.

These reforms include:

- A press standards model which ensures strong self-regulation of the print and online news media.
- The introduction of a Public Interest Test to ensure diversity considerations are taken into account for nationally significant media mergers and acquisitions.
- Modernising the ABC and SBS charters to reflect their online and digital activities.
- Supporting community television services following digital switchover by providing them a permanent allocation of a portion of Channel A.
- Making permanent the 50% reduction in the licence fees paid by commercial television broadcasters, conditional on the broadcast of an additional 1490 hours of Australian content by 2015.

“These reforms will ensure for the Australian public a media sector that is fair, diverse, and able to tackle the challenges of the future.

“The Government will bring forward a press standards model which ensures strong self-regulation by print and online media organisations.

“Membership to such a body will ensure exemptions from privacy legislation for its member organisations.

“The Government will also bring forward in a separate bill a public interest test in relation to major media mergers and acquisitions.

“The Public Interest Test will ensure that diversity of voices is always considered when media organisations of national significance seek to merge.

“In consultation with the Opposition, the Government will appoint a Public Interest Media Advocate (PIMA).

“The PIMA will decide whether a media merger of national significance can proceed. The PIMA will also authorise the independent self-regulatory body or bodies for dealing with news media standards and complaints.”

“The Government will bring forward a separate Bill dealing with the announced licence fee rebate for television stations and associated issues respect of local content and matters associated with the ABC, SBS and community television.

“The Government will modernise the charters of the ABC and SBS to reflect their online and international activities.

“The Government will secure spectrum for Community television on the sixth channel. It will not be made available for a fourth free-to-air television network.

“The Government will also establish a parliamentary committee to inquire into three potential further reforms:

1. The abolition of the 75% reach rule, particularly in relation to regional and local news. If the committee is able to come up with a quick resolution on the 75% rule, the Government would include this amendment in the general package;
2. On-air reporting of ACMA findings regarding Broadcasting regulation breaches; and
3. Whether the ACMA should consider program supply agreements for news and current affairs, as part of determining whether a person is in control of a commercial television broadcasting service.

“The Privacy Tort will be referred to the Australian Law Reform Commission for detailed examination.

“The reforms announced today are about ensuring for the Australian public a media sector that is fair, diverse, and able to tackle the challenges of the future.

“I want to thank everyone involved in the Convergence Review and the Finkelstein Inquiry for their work.

“I also want to particularly thank the people and organisations who took the time to make public submissions to these inquiries.”

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