

The Honourable David Janetzki MP
111 Eagle Street
Brisbane QLD 4000

Wednesday 28 January 2026

Dear Treasurer,

I write on behalf of the Local & Independent News Association (LINA), Australia's industry association for local and independent digital newsrooms. LINA represents a diverse and growing network of newsrooms, including 28 in Queensland, that provide vital public interest journalism to the communities they serve. Sixty-five percent of our Queensland-based member publishers operate in regional Queensland, with 35% based in and around the suburbs of Brisbane, serving as essential communications infrastructure for their communities.

This letter outlines our support for the Queensland Government's efforts to support small businesses and the news sector, as well as our recommendations to strengthen support to digital publishers.

Small Business First Agenda

Small businesses are core to the news industry and to LINA's membership. The median LINA member operating in Queensland had an annual revenue of \$298,000 and a staff of 2 (FTE) in 2025. For these businesses to continue to develop sustainability and build their resilience, publishers and their staff need affordable access to professional advice, financial counselling, to continued education and training, and to improvements to their business and publishing infrastructure.

For these reasons, LINA welcomes the Queensland Government's commitment to assisting small businesses through the Small Business First Agenda, and particularly the Business Basics Grants, Business Boost Grants and Small Business Planning Courses, and we support their continued funding through the 2026-27 budget and beyond.

The Small Business Apprenticeship Pilot Program, which provides support for apprentice wages in small and family businesses, is currently only open to the construction industry. LINA encourages the government to expand this program to include journalism cadets and trainees as eligible apprentices.

Strengthening social cohesion: Know Your Neighbour

Local and independent newsrooms play a crucial role in supporting civic engagement and fostering community. In 2025 LINA partnered with the New South Wales Department of Premier & Cabinet to deliver a social cohesion program engaging young people (aged 14-24) in digital content creation, teaching them media literacy and journalistic standards in the process and amplifying the voices of people with culturally diverse backgrounds in communities. The program involved 15 newsrooms and 32 young participants with a total cost of \$100k. Outcomes included:

- increased standpoint diversity in local news media;
- training in new skillsets for young participants;
- engagement of new audiences with local news;
- increased multi-platform content production for local news organisations; and
- ongoing reporting work for one-third of the young participants.

This successful program could be repeated in Queensland.

Advertising for local newsrooms

LINA commends the Queensland Government’s commitment to a minimum of 75 per cent of press advertising placements to rural and regional newspapers. This policy reflects a welcome recognition of the importance of local journalism in informing and connecting communities, and strengthening community resilience, trust, and civic engagement.

However, to fully realise the intent of this commitment, LINA urges the Government to expand its scope to include digital news publications and include publications in metropolitan areas.

Local journalism no longer exists solely in print formats. Newsrooms today are multiplatform by audience necessity, with many community publishers reaching their communities through websites, newsletters, social media, and mobile apps. In fact, for many residents—particularly younger Queenslanders and those in remote areas—digital is the primary means of accessing timely, trusted local news.

While these are newly established newsrooms, they are actively seeking guidance to ensure the news services they provide meet professional editorial standards and provide trusted voices to their communities. LINA produced a [Newsroom Starter Kit](#) to support public interest journalism in small news businesses. LINA member publishers are also members of the Australia Press Council and are committed to upholding its Principles and Standards of Practice, along with [LINA’s editorial and organisational requirements](#) for independence and quality.

Importantly, this broader, future-focused approach is consistent with the principles outlined in the Commonwealth government’s News Media Assistance Program (News MAP) 2024 framework. As the framework advises:

“Journalism policy should generally be neutral about the distribution method... Australians are able to access news content through a broad range of distribution technologies—print newspapers, radio, television, digital publications and online services like podcasts and social media... government interventions should not generally be targeted to a specific distribution technology...” and

“Promote diversity and competition, and respond to changing conditions... Policy interventions should not seek to fix or revert things to a point in time, entrench incumbents, or fail to pragmatically engage with changes in technology.”

Excluding digital channels and suburban publications from the mandatory allocation risks inadvertently privileging legacy formats over innovation, contrary to these guidelines. It also narrows the reach and effectiveness of government messaging—particularly during natural disasters and emergencies, where digital platforms often provide real-time updates when print delivery may be delayed.

Including digital news platforms in the 75 per cent advertising requirement would:

- Reflect how regional audiences actually consume news today;
- Ensure that metropolitan audiences receive relevant messaging from government in their local publications;
- Strengthen the financial sustainability of local journalism in both print and digital forms;
- Support innovation, reach underserved demographics, and build media diversity;
- Facilitate immediate calls to action from readers, directing new traffic to government websites and services;
- Provide easy access to immediately change messaging if needed;
- Ensure government communications are both effective and equitable across all formats, especially during emergencies.

The Queensland Government has long demonstrated its support for public interest journalism. Expanding the advertising policy to include digital publishers would ensure that this support is responsive to the realities of a modern media landscape and aligned with best-practice policy principles.

In conclusion, we are asking the Queensland government to:

- Expand small business support programs to ensure inclusion of media companies;
- Fund a 'Know Your Neighbour' program to promote social cohesion; and
- Ensure that digital and metropolitan newsrooms are included within advertising requirements.

Thank you for your continued leadership in supporting media diversity. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further and contribute to the development of a policy that fully supports the breadth of local journalism in Queensland.

Sincerely,

Claire Stuchbery
Executive Director