

AUSTRALIA'S RIGHT TO KNOW

Wednesday June 6, 2007

FREE SPEECH CAMPAIGN GATHERS MOMENTUM

AUSTRALIA'S RIGHT TO KNOW ANNOUNCES NEW MEMBERS AND STAFF

The Australian media's newly-formed Right to Know campaign for free speech gathered pace today with four more major media organisations joining up.

The latest members are APN News & Media, West Australian Newspapers, the Australian Subscription Television and Radio Association (ASTRA) and the Media Arts and Entertainment Alliance (MEAA).

There are now 12 organisations in the coalition, representing almost every newspaper publisher and broadcaster in the region and making the free speech coalition the biggest joint media effort ever in Australia.

The coalition formed four weeks ago in response to what it described as the "deeply troubling" state of free speech in Australia, and the continued erosion of the right for people to be properly informed.

The new members are joining the coalition of News Limited, Fairfax Media, the ABC, FreeTV representing all major commercial television networks, Commercial Radio Australia representing all major radio networks, SBS, Australian Associated Press and Sky News.

About the new members:

- ASTRA is the peak industry body for subscription television and has 40 member organisations, including television operators such as Foxtel, Austar, Optus and Telstra, as well as channel providers such as BBC World, Bloomberg, FOX Sports, MTV and CNN.
- APN News and Media is one of the largest and fastest-growing multi-media companies in Australia, publishing 23 daily and almost 100 non-daily newspapers in Australia and New Zealand. It is also Australasia's largest radio broadcaster and is a market leader in the outdoor advertising sector.
- West Australian Newspapers is the leading media group in WA. Its publishing interests include its flagship newspaper The West Australian, as well as 22 regional newspapers and magazines across the State. The group also operates a regional radio network and has a 50% interest in the Hoyts Cinemas group.



- MEAA is the union and professional organisation for the media, entertainment, sport and arts industries. It has 36,000 members, including more than 10,000 journalists across Australia. The Alliance campaigns frequently on press freedom issues.

In a joint statement today, the Chairman of ASTRA Nick Greiner, CEO of APN Brendan Hopkins, CEO of WAN Ken Steinke, and the Federal Secretary of the MEAA, Christopher Warren, said joining the coalition was “an easy decision.”

“This is a turning point for the Australian media and we hope that by working together in this extraordinary way, we can begin to lay the foundations for the kind of change we need to bring our free speech into line with that of other democratic nations,” they said.

“This is an important project and we are proud to play our part, for the sake of all Australians who have a right to access the information and decisions that affect their lives.”

The Right to Know coalition also today announced two senior appointments to the independent team, headed by Irene Moss AO, which will help prepare a national audit of the state of free speech in Australia.

They are Peter Timmins as Deputy Chair to Ms Moss, and Jane Deamer as full-time Research Director.

Mr Timmins is an expert on freedom of information and privacy. He has an Honours Law degree from the University of Sydney, worked in government in Australia and overseas and in the finance industry. He has more than 20 years’ experience as an independent consultant and commentator on Freedom of Information.

Ms Deamer is a lawyer and the daughter of renowned newspaper editor and media law specialist Adrian Deamer. She has worked in commercial litigation both as a solicitor and barrister and has been a member of several tribunals. She has experience as an investigator with the NSW Ombudsman and a sound knowledge of the problems affecting the media’s access to information.

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