

The aim of the PING program is to support regional journalism but a number publishers were not eligible for funding because they were established during the COVID-19 crisis. Why were they left out and would the communications minister consider revising the eligibility criteria to support the new entrants, given that they are also serving the needs of the local community?

What if anything will the communications minister do to support newly established publishers in regional and remote Australia?

We have spoken to author Di Morrissey, who is also a publisher of community newspaper The Manning Community News, who says she missed out on the PING deadline by 24 hours. Will the communications minister consider supporting Morrissey and independent publishers like her, who qualify for support but, for one reason or another, failed to apply in time?

Response from a spokesperson for the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts:

The Government recognises that public interest journalism is essential in informing and strengthening local communities.

When COVID-19 triggered catastrophic drops in advertising revenue, the Government responded quickly to the unprecedented conditions facing regional media businesses that produce public interest journalism.

The \$50 million PING program was first announced on 15 April 2020, and applications opened on 7 May for three weeks.

The Department assessed applications in line with publicly available guidelines and adhered to due dates so that funding was available to regional media as quickly as possible.

Grant offers have been provided to all 107 PING recipients. More than 70 grant agreements have been executed.