



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **‘SAVE OUR VOICES’ - AUSTRALIA’S REGIONAL MEDIA COMPANIES UNITE TO FIGHT FOR URGENT REGULATORY CHANGE**

**Embargoed until Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> October 2020 at 11.00pm AEDT**

Sydney: Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> October 2020

The country’s leading regional media organisations have united to fight for urgent reforms to outdated and obsolete laws that put the future of local media at risk and threaten to leave 9.2 million regional Australians without local news services.

Australian Community Media (ACM), Prime Media Group, SCA and WIN Network today launched the ‘Save Our Voices’ campaign fronted by veteran television journalist Ray Martin AM, aiming to raise awareness of the importance of regional media and highlight the need for long overdue regulatory change.

The campaign rolls out today with a series of television, radio and newspaper ads and a dedicated website ([www.saveourvoices.com.au](http://www.saveourvoices.com.au)) featuring interviews conducted by Ray Martin with industry leaders, politicians from all levels of government and community figures. The message is clear: if regional media businesses are to survive, the government must overhaul media regulations that were devised 30 years ago, at a time before the internet existed.

ACM Executive Chairman and co-owner, Antony Catalano, said: “To keep the voices of regional Australia strong and to keep our trusted local news services viable, regional media needs to be able to make commercially sensible decisions that allow us to stay profitable, sustainable and self-sufficient. Regional media outlets that have been part of their communities for decades - and in the case of a number of ACM’s newspapers more than 150 years - need the freedom to structure our businesses efficiently so we can achieve the scale necessary to compete with the unregulated digital services of metropolitan media and global internet giants.”

Echoing Catalano’s sentiments, WIN Network Chief Executive Officer, Andrew Lancaster, said: “Media ownership laws blocking regional media companies from operating efficiently are outdated and from the pre-internet era. To continue to provide essential news, information and support services to regional Australia, our industry needs modern regulations that reflect the dramatic increase in competition facilitated by the NBN.”

Noting the vital interdependency between local businesses and local media, SCA Chief Executive Officer, Grant Blackley, said: “Forty per cent of SMEs are located in regional areas and at SCA, we work with 14,000 of those businesses every day – providing a connection between local communities and local businesses and reinforcing the value of local media to the sustainability and growth of those businesses. We should envision a better place where there is a strong and sustainable local voice and where government recognises the contribution of people and businesses outside the capital cities.”

Prime Media Group, SCA and WIN Network have jointly submitted to government for discussion a commercially sustainable, self-funding plan that will enable regional media businesses to more effectively compete against international and metropolitan media companies now operating in regional media markets.

Prime Media Group Chief Executive Officer, Ian Audsley, said: “We are grateful to the government for acting quickly during the COVID-19 pandemic to help fund public interest journalism via its PING program. Along with JobKeeper, that assistance should see us through the worst impacts of the pandemic. However, we need the government to act quickly again on a more economically sustainable plan to ensure regional Australians receive the very best local media services beyond 2021.”

For more information, please visit [www.saveourvoices.com.au](http://www.saveourvoices.com.au).

Save Our Voices is an initiative of Australian Community Media, Prime Media Group, SCA and WIN Network