

**PRIME
MEDIA GROUP**

MEDIA RELEASE

Issued: Thursday 7th May 2015

**JOHN HARTIGAN CALLS ON MPS TO STAND UP & BE COUNTED
AS REGIONAL AUSTRALIA'S VOICE COMES UNDER THREAT**

In Tamworth NSW to celebrate PRIME7's 50th anniversary, Prime Media Group Chairman John Hartigan has made a public appeal to all members of parliament to fight for regional Australia's voice.

"Regional media and the capacity for regional Australians to participate in the national debate is under threat", Hartigan told 100 guests, while addressing a corporate function held at the Tamworth Regional Conservatorium of Music this evening.

"The greatest challenge that regional broadcasters face is the rapidly evolving media landscape. We are now living in the era of the internet, high speed broadband, catch up TV services and online streaming, just to name a few. All this brings significant competition to our broadcasting services."

"We welcome competition, but meeting this competition is challenging when regional broadcasters remain shackled by antiquated and anomalous regulations in what is now essentially a borderless media environment", said Hartigan.

"The greatest risk facing our industry is the number of regional voices in the national debate will decline further and the consequences for regional Australia will be profound.

Pointing to cuts to regional media services made by the ABC and Fairfax in the past 12 months, Hartigan said, "Make no mistake – it's happening now."

Having grown up in country Australia, the former News Corp CEO said his experience allowed him to understand what it's like to scramble to get the same opportunities as his city counterparts.

"Fifty years on, we find ourselves still scrambling to compete, but without the opportunities afforded to media companies operating in the metropolitan cities or overseas. Unless the government takes steps to address the inequities, regional media will be relegated to the role of the country cousin."

Hartigan then went on to strenuously appeal to politicians who serve regional and rural communities to stand up and be counted: "On your watch, are you prepared to sit on the sidelines and witness the erosion of regional voices and regional jobs? I hope the answer is no."

Hartigan also recently challenged the Communications Minister Malcolm Turnbull on media reforms, expressing his concern about Turnbull's apathy in failing to tackle serious imbalances in the market.

"We at Prime are proud of our commitment to the local community and we believe that regional stories are an integral part of the nation's tapestry and that regional Australians deserve a voice. Let's hope that sentiment is shared by the heavyweights in Canberra."