

**February 22, 2024**

**Submission: News Media Assistance Program (News MAP)**

**From: Independent Multicultural Media Australia (IMMA)**

On behalf of Independent Multicultural Media Australia (IMMA), we submit this proposal to address critical issues facing our ecology, and to advocate for equitable support and recognition from government.

IMMA represents a diverse array of multicultural media outlets in print, electronic and digital platforms, that serve as vital information and community engagement conduits for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities across Australia.

Multicultural communities are growing rapidly, and given the record current and forecast immigration levels, multicultural media should be elevated to the forefront of government communications strategy and planning. Established CALD communities are ageing and have different communication needs. IMMA members are critical to diminishing communication inequities among CALD communities.

The independent multicultural media ecology is pivotal in informing audiences in heritage languages and English across generations. We also play an institutional role in advocating for our communities and in the institutional completion of CALD communities.

Despite the increased presence of CALD journalists in mainstream media, their perspectives and their gaze on local and global issues align with predominant Anglo-Australian narratives. In terms of media diversity, multicultural media is the most diverse media ecology.

With a history spanning over 80 years in Australia, multicultural media outlets predate formal multicultural policies and have significantly contributed to shaping government policies and fostering community cohesion, as well as Australia's modern cultural and economic development.

However, despite our contributions, we have observed a disparity in government support, particularly in advertising and grant initiatives. We all know how digital transformation has impacted on all media; however, our sector has received miniscule support in meeting this challenge compared to the support granted to mainstream and regional media by government.

Government advertising, also an income source, has dried up, and during crises such as COVID-19, and for important messaging, the government directed its multicultural media communications towards foreign digital platforms and already-funded multicultural media entities rather than independent multicultural outlets. Independent multicultural media validates messaging, engages intergenerationally, and starts the "all-powerful word-of-mouth". (Leba: 2008)

Furthermore, there is a concerning trend where public relations firms benefit from government communication budgets, while media outlets require more direct support. Instances highlighting this issue include campaigns like the Disability Gateway and AEC Referendum Multicultural briefings last year, where our media outlets were expected to provide coverage without advertising. This practice undermines the sustainability of multicultural media and overlooks their unique role in effectively disseminating information to diverse communities.

In contrast, the Victorian government has implemented a progressive policy that directly allocates 15% of government media spending to independent multicultural media outlets, excluding digital giants and public relations intermediaries. This model ensures that multicultural media receive advertising for their contributions and enables them to disseminate government messages effectively across various sectors.

However, initiatives such as the Regional and Small Publishers Jobs and Innovation (RASPJI) package and the Public Interest News Gathering (PING) program have ignored the independent multicultural media sector regarding digital transformation and media sustainability funding. No funding support was offered or granted to the independent multicultural media sector nationwide for either of these programs.

As producers of public interest journalism, we are committed to informing and empowering our audiences. Nevertheless, equitable government support and proactive engagement are essential to address the systemic challenges facing multicultural media.

**Therefore, we urge the government to consider the following recommendations:**

1. Increase direct government advertising allocation to independent multicultural media outlets, following the Victorian model, to ensure equitable representation and engagement of CALD communities.
2. Implement policies to prohibit the diversion of advertising funds to public relations intermediaries and tech giants, ensuring that media outlets receive fair compensation for their public interest services.
3. Create a digital transformation and sustainability fund for independent multicultural media.
4. Ensure independent multicultural media is always included in communication and media policies across all government departments, including any future initiatives, funding, or policy proposals.
5. Immediate action is needed to ensure the viability and inclusivity of our sector, particularly considering the recent closures and suspensions of multicultural publications.
6. Thank you for considering our submission. We look forward to discussing these recommendations further and working collaboratively to address the challenges facing multicultural media.

Yours sincerely,

Fotis Kapetopoulos

Secretary  
*Fotis Kapetopoulos*

Independent Multicultural Media Australia (IMMA)

## IMMA MEMBERS

### Multiple outlets

Many of the members are proprietors of several outlets across platforms and have substantial digital publications and social media.

### Members

1. George Sabljak - Croatian Herald
2. Muhammad Noman - Monthly Muktamancha
3. Ross Alatsas - Greek Media Group 3XY
4. Zivana Jovanovic - Skip Glas (Serbian Voice)
5. Fawaz Chawk - Al Wasat
6. Julius Larobina – Il Globo, La Fiamma, Rete Italia, Niche Radio Network
7. Keith Tan - Australian Chinese Daily
8. Vaso Despotovic - Vesti
9. Gareth Narusky- Polaris Media Australian Jewish News
10. Janey Tham - 2AC Chinese Radio
11. Maree Ma Vision Times Media Australia (Vision China Times)
12. Fariborz (Richard) Mansouri - Persian Herald
13. Igor Pavlovski - Macedonian Weekly
14. Dimitra Skalkos - Greek Herald
15. Yuksel Cifci - Turkish Media Ltd
16. Neeraj Nanda- South Asia Times
17. Irwan Utama - INDOMEDIA
18. Chris Gogos - Neos Kosmos
19. Nhan Quyen - The Vietnamese Newspaper
20. Wendy Huang - Chinese Herald (NSW)
21. Tonee Sethi - G'day India
22. Alice Nicolas Philippine Times
23. Cecil Huang - Melbourne Chinese Daily
24. Chris Despotakis - Radio Ena (SA)
25. David Chieu Duong - Sunrise Newspaper
26. Khalid Osman The African Migrant
27. Clyde Salumu Sharady - African Media Australia
28. Amandeep Sethi - The Indian Weekly
29. Sachiyo Perry - DN Media Australia
30. Pawan Luthra - Indian Link
31. Arab Middle East media (AME media) - El Telegraph, Al-anwar, Anoujoum
32. Pawan Luthra / Indian Link
33. Australia Today -Jai Bharadwaj