

Media Release

JNI announces short-term package to support journalism

The Judith Neilson Institute today announced three new initiatives to support media organisations and journalists during the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

JNI will boost funding for freelancers and casual contributors, provide a free news service for Australia's 450 community radio stations, and help tackle misinformation on COVID-19, including on social media.

The executive director of JNI, Mark Ryan, said these initiatives were a temporary measure aimed at providing help as quickly and efficiently as possible where it was most needed over the next few months.

"All sectors of the economy are affected and the impact on journalism is profound," he said.

"While more people are reading, watching and listening to news, media organisations are struggling with the financial implications of the crisis."

JNI consulted with industry leaders in developing its response. It was told that two early casualties of media cost-cutting have been freelancers and casual contributors. JNI has therefore created a fund to support these journalists and provide some cost-relief to media organisations.

Media organisations are invited to apply for financial support for freelancers and casual contributors to undertake specific projects. This might be one story, or a series of stories; or editorial support, or photographic assignments. There is no limitation on topics. All media organisations, including independent and regional media, are encouraged to apply.

Funding will be administered and distributed on a rolling basis over the coming 2-3 months. [Further details on how to apply can be found on the JNI website.](#)

Australia's network of more than 450 community radio stations has also been affected by the pandemic as sponsorship drops and volunteers are forced to work from home.

JNI will give funding to the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) to enable it to provide its National Radio News service free of charge for six months.

Currently more than 80 stations pay a subscription fee-for-service which reaches some 1.3 million listeners a week. Making the service free will provide cost-relief to these stations but also allow many more stations to access it, giving the news service a total potential reach of 5.8 million listeners a week.

Finally, the public is overwhelmed with news about COVID-19, from mainstream to social media. JNI will help news consumers make sense of this information by providing support to RMIT University for RMIT ABC Fact Check. This will enable it to commit additional resources to its efforts to tackle misinformation on the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Media Contact

Andrew Griffiths
Media and Communications Officer
0415 841 808
agriffits@jninstitute.org

About the Judith Neilson Institute for Journalism and Ideas

The Judith Neilson Institute supports quality journalism and storytelling. Its grants provide journalists with the resources they need to produce outstanding stories. Its education initiatives give journalists the skills they need to tell these stories in compelling ways. Its events promote well-informed, evidence-based discussion of the issues shaping the world.