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The Future of Australian Media: Creating a 'Level Playing Field' and Supporting Local Content

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1. Introduction

The Federal Parliament passing a range of media law reforms – covering media ownership, licence fees and taxes – coincides with a review of local content, seeking to ensure incentives and rules regarding local content keep up with the rapidly changing media landscape.

The legislative reforms seek to create a fairer regulatory environment, by removing rules that apply to traditional media but not online and streaming services. The reforms aim to allow radio, television and newspapers to structure their businesses more efficiently and achieve greater scale to adapt and compete more effectively with newer services.

To address concerns that these reforms will lead to a reduction in local content for regional areas, broadcasters in those areas will be required to increase their local content.

Separate to these changes, the Australian and Children's Screen Content Review is seeking to provide policy options in relation to how to best support Australian drama, documentary and children's content.

While the review will not cover news and current affairs, a separate Senate review into the future of public interest journalism is also underway, due to report in December 2017.

These measures come at a crucial time for Australian media. Advances in technology allow Australian consumers to access content from all over the world via their computers, phones and televisions. Global competitors have developed strong positions in the local market yet web-based services have, until now, been excluded from local media regulation. The reforms are the most significant in a generation and aim to allow the regulatory environment to keep up with the rapidly changing media landscape.

2. Screen content review

Successive governments have regulated and provided incentives to ensure that Australian television content is produced and broadcast, both here and overseas. The rationale for these measures is to ensure that Australian stories are told, which helps reflect and shape national identity, character and cultural diversity.

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