



**Public Interest  
Journalism  
Foundation**

Public Interest Journalism Foundation  
Care of the Centre for Advanced Journalism  
University of Melbourne  
Faculty of Arts  
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Victoria 3010

6 July, 2012

Senator Conroy  
The Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital  
Economy, Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, and  
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Digital Productivity  
Level 4, 4 Treasury Place  
Melbourne Vic 3002

Dear Senator Conroy

### **Sustaining public interest journalism**

We write as members of the Public Interest Journalism Foundation, which was established in 2009 with a broad brief to develop new approaches to journalism that “maximise and explore the applications of emerging media technologies”. The Foundation is an independent organisation, whose members include journalists, academics and community members.

The current upheaval in the newspaper industry in Australia has brought the Foundation’s mission into sharp focus, given the importance of an effective media for an accountable, informed and engaged democracy.

We write to request a meeting with you to discuss ways that your Government may be able to help contribute to a more sustainable, innovative and accountable media industry in the digital age.

Specifically, we would like the opportunity to discuss the matters raised in the attached news release calling for mechanisms to promote philanthropic support for public interest journalism, such as tax deductibility for not-for-profit media organisations or for journalistic investigations.

This measure has contributed to the growth of not-for-profit media organisations in the US, some of which are producing excellent work. We note that under section 12.94 of the Finkelstein report, the author pointed to the creation of The Global Mail and added that “to encourage similar initiatives, philanthropists could be allowed to claim a tax deduction for a portion of donations for the establishment of new non-profit news venture and/or assist funding of their operations”.

We also urge your Government to develop mechanisms for supporting digital innovation in public interest journalism, such as adopting the future of an informed citizenry as a national priority for Australian Research Council funding, and establishing seed grants for research on journalistic innovation, and support for collaborations between journalists and other sectors of civil society.

We look forward to your response.

Kind regards

*Bill Birnbauer*

For

(Bill Birnbauer)

Bronwen Clune

Elaine Henry

Gerard Noonan

Don Perlgut

Margaret Simons

Melissa Sweet

Julian Thomas

**Enc**

**Media statement: Federal Government urged to act on crisis facing journalism**

**CC**

**Mr Malcolm Turnbull, Shadow Minister for Communications and Broadband**

**Senator Scott Ludlum, Greens spokesman on Communications**