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ACCC report a turning point for Australian media

Free TV Australia today welcomed the recommendations in the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's (ACCC) Digital Platforms Inquiry Final Report to address the fundamental power imbalance between Australian media companies and Google and Facebook.

Responding to the ACCC's Final Report, Free TV CEO, Bridget Fair said: "The ACCC's ground-breaking report lays bare the unprecedented levels of market dominance of Google and Facebook and the impact that they have had on media companies and the millions of Australians that rely on them.

"We have been calling for a strong regulatory response that allows our members to fairly monetise their content on the digital platforms since our initial submission to this inquiry in April 2018. The ACCC Final Report goes a long way towards delivering this outcome.

"We particularly congratulate the ACCC on its recommendation for a Code of Conduct which would force Google and Facebook to negotiate fairly with Australian news media businesses. The ability of Australian media companies to monetise their content on the digital platforms is critical for their future.

"Free TV has also consistently stated that our media laws have failed to keep pace with the dramatic changes in the media landscape. Pleasingly the ACCC has recognised the need for a harmonised media regulatory framework. We hope that the most obvious cases of regulatory disparity can be addressed quickly.

"Commercial television broadcasters are the cornerstone of the Australian production sector and invest significantly in trusted news and local journalism, as well as Australian entertainment, drama and live sport.

"Minister Fletcher highlighted the importance of cultural policy objectives. Our focus is having a regulatory framework that supports the ability of Free TV broadcasters to continue playing our critical role in meeting this objective.

"Accountability and transparency are central to curbing the unrestricted market power of Google and Facebook. We welcome the increased focus on anti-competitive conduct that will come from having a dedicated digital markets team within the ACCC.

"On the taking down of illegal material, the ACCC has clearly identified the deficiencies in the current processes for seeking removal. We need a rapid and efficient process of having illegal material removed from the digital platforms. We think that the proposed mandatory standard on takedown of pirated copyright material to be issued by the ACMA is a positive step towards this outcome.

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“We look forward to working with the Government over the next 12 weeks to implement the ACCC’s recommendations,” Ms Fair said.

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