

ACMA news media bargaining code eligibility assessment report

News business name: News Cop

News business ID: ACMA-NBC-7368VYHV92

News sources: News Cop

Date submitted: 21/09/2021

Link to CRM entry: [Click here to open the CRM record in a new window](#)

Initial assessors: Catriona Oliver (APS 3) & Lachlan Habgood (A/g EL1)

QA assessor: Elizabeth Press (EL2)

Officer recommendation: Eligible

Revenue test

Assessment: Pass

The applicant provided a profit and loss statement for the period ended 30 June 2021. The report indicates that the total revenue for News Cop Pty Ltd exceeded the \$150,000.00 eligibility amount in the most recent financial year.

The applicant provided a statutory declaration from [REDACTED] of News Cop Pty Ltd, stating that News Cop Pty Ltd's reported revenue is true and accurate and prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. Note, in the previous application from News Cop, the revenue test was supported by a statutory declaration signed [REDACTED]. Given this information before the ACMA, it is considered that the signatory, [REDACTED], meets the requirements of this part of the test.

The applicant meets this criterion.

Professional standards test

Initial assessment: Pass

The applicant says they are subject to internal editorial standards and provided the URL <https://newscop.com.au/complaints-professional-standards/> for its editorial standards and complaints mechanism. This link is accessible from the news source link submitted by the applicant (a link at the top of the page titled 'Complaints and professional standards').

Clicking the link resolves to a page with four headings, *Professional Standards*, *Making a complaint*, *Handling of complaints*, *Submit a complaint*. The Professional Standards page provides policies relating to the accuracy and impartiality of content; along with policies related to honesty, privacy, fairness, independence, privacy, avoidance of harm and respect. These internal standards appear to be based on the Australian Press Council professional standards.

The complaints handling provisions also meet the eligibility requirements. The 3 pages that make up the complaints' mechanism, feature a form to submit a complaint and instructions on how to do so, information about what a complaint can be about and who can make it. Further, details are given about how a complaint will be dealt with as well as the expected resolution process and referral to an adjudication process.

The applicant states that it is not owned or controlled by a party with political or commercial interest.

Content test

Initial assessment: Pass

The applicant provided <https://newscop.com.au/> as the primary link to the news source content. A review of the content on this link against the Content test was conducted on 24/09/2021 and again on 7/10/2021.

24 September 2021 review

The content review against this eligibility criteria found only limited content on the news source meeting the core news definition. This included stories such as 'Australia and Singapore Agree to Travel Bubble' published 11/06/2021, 'No new cases as Qld reveals more breach attempts' published 11/06/2021 and 'The G7 Summit: What did the world leaders agree on?' published 13/6/2021. The most recent article was published 16/6/2021 (more than 3 months), indicating a lack of activity and news production on the website.

7 October 2021 review

The review found the same content that was published when the news source was assessed on 24/9/2021, with the addition of only 1 new article, a review of a Netflix program (Squid Game) published on 7/10/2021. This article does not meet the definition of core news content under the code.

It is noted that each article on the news source is repeated at least twice, with 2 of the articles posted 3 times on the main page. The webpage also contains links midway on the page titled Science, Health, Technology, Covid 19 Entertainment, Politics, Finance, US, Business, Australia, World etc. Clicking any of these links opens a page containing copies of the content found on the front page of the news source website. At the bottom of the page is a link titled 'Load More'. Clicking this link opens 3 additional articles, all of which are copies of the articles published on the news source front page.

Preliminary recommendation

To meet the Content test, applicants must demonstrate that the primary purpose of the nominated news source is to create core news content. The ACMA's Guidelines for applicants advises that the ACMA will consider, as part of the test:

the amount of core news content created by the news source

the frequency with which the news source creates core news content

the degree of prominence given to core news content created by the news source, compared with the degree of prominence given to other content created by the news source, and

> any other relevant matter.

It is considered that this news source fails the Content test because it does not meet the first 2 considerations above. The news source has a relatively low amount of core news content, with only 6 articles found during the 2 assessments periods. Further, all content is posted on the news source at least twice and in some cases three times. This leads to an impression of more content on the site than there actually is. Finally, the news source does not publish core news content frequently, with the most recent core news article being published almost 4 months prior to the final initial assessment date of 7/10/2021. The infrequency of the publication of content, including core news articles provides the impression of a non-functional news source because of the lack of regular publishing cycle and currency of the news content. Accordingly, the preliminary view is that the applicant fails the Content test.

Response to preliminary decision

On 15/10/2021, the applicant provided a response to the ACMA's preliminary decision. The applicant stated that following the ACMA's decision that its first application for registration under the code failed the Revenue test (decision made on 23/6/2021), it had 'spent some time working on the technical underpinnings of our platform to improve its visibility and responsiveness to search engines.'

The applicant stated this work was completed in late September 2021, around the time it had re applied for registration (application received 21/9/2021). The applicant stated that this was the reason the content was not up to date at the time of the second application but that 'News Cop's published core news content articles are now back at the same or in fact higher frequency.'

A review of the news source on 15/10/2021 found that core news content was, in fact, the predominate content on the website.

Assessment of content on news source 15/11/2021

An additional review of the news source link <https://newscop.com.au/> was conducted on 15/11/2021. The review indicates that the news source is predominantly comprised of core news content. For example, "[Deep Disappointment' from watered down final COP26 deal](#)," published 15/11/2021, reports on the COP26 agreement and the likelihood that it will fall short of meeting essential climate goals. Another article, "[Adelaide to ban police from accessing new facial recognition software](#)," published 13/11/2021, reports that Adelaide is replacing its CCTV network with sophisticated facial recognition software and is in the process of securing personal privacy protections. As a final example, "[Human sewage harms coastal ecosystem, says UC researchers](#)," published 14/11/2021 reports on the impact of human sewage on the earth's coast. The rest of the news source contains similar journalistic content, and each article is only displayed once on the home page.

There is a ribbon of links displayed on the right side of the webpage titled, 'Science,' 'Health,' 'Technology,' 'COVID-19,' 'Entertainment,' 'Featured,' 'Politics,' 'Finance,' 'US,' 'Business,' 'Australia,' 'Sports,' and 'World.' These links, when accessed,

displays some of the same articles found on the news source main page. The content on these links is determined according to link name.

The assessment of the news source at the above times, found that core news was the most prominent feature on the website and that the core news content has been published frequently and regularly in the period 15 October to 15 November 2021. Therefore, the news source meets the Content test.

Australian audiences test

Initial assessment: Pass

The news source operates in Australia and an Australian phone number is listed on the Contact us page, and the content seems to be serving Australian audiences. International news is also featured but many of these stories have an Australian interest to them. For example, news about the Travel bubble deal between Australia and Singapore a story about the Olympic swimming trials in Australia.

Connection requirements

Initial assessment: Pass

The Applicant has provided a Statutory Declaration meeting the connection test. The supplied ABN is for News Cop Pty Ltd. The applicant meets this criterion.

Recommendation for preliminary decision

Decision maker: Elizabeth Press (EL2)

Comments from decision maker

The preliminary decision is that News Cop Pty Ltd's application fails to meet all the eligibility criteria for registration under the News Media Bargaining Code (the code). This is the second application for registration from the applicant for this particular news source.

The preliminary assessment was that the application failed because the eligibility requirements for the Content test were not met.

The News Cop website <https://newscop.com.au/> must demonstrate its primary purpose is to create core news content. Core news is defined as content that reports, investigates, or explains:

- > issues or events that are relevant in engaging Australians in public debate and in informing democratic decision making; or
- > current issues or events of public significance at a local, regional, or national level.

In determining the primary purpose of the news source, the ACMA has considered the amount of core news content created by the news source, the frequency with which the news source creates core news content and the prominence of the core news created by the news source compared to other content produced by the news source.

The preliminary assessment found that the news source had a very low amount of core news content overall. Six articles on the news source could be considered core news content though, all core news articles were all published at least twice and, in some cases, three times. This repetition gives the impression of more content being available on the website than there actually was at the time of our assessment.

The assessment showed that core news content available in the news source <https://newscop.com.au/> was published too infrequently to meet the test. The most recent core news article, at this time, was published on 16 June 2021, making the news on the site nearly 4 months old. The only other content on the site published after this date is a television program review, published on 7 October 2021.

Final decision

Decision maker: Rochelle Zurnamer (SES1)

Date of final decision: 24 November 2021

Final decision: Pass

Comments from decision maker

On 15 October 2021, the applicant responded to the ACMA's preliminary decision that it did not meet the content eligibility requirements under the code. The applicant explained that core news content was lacking at the time of their application due to technical improvement works being made to the News Cop website.

While core news content was found on the news source, staff recommended waiting 4 or more weeks from the submission of the applicant's response before reassessing the news source against the Content test requirements. The additional time would assist staff in the final assessment against the content test, especially a further assessment of whether the core news content was consistently maintained over a reasonable period of time.

A review of the news source (News Cop) on 15 November 2021 finds that its primary purpose is to create core news content. As the applicant has passed each of the eligibility criteria, it can be registered.



Signature of delegated officer:

Name: Rochelle Zurnamer

Date: 24 November 2021