



Star News Group

26 July 2013

**Submission to the Australian Law Reform Commission on its Issues Paper:  
*Copyright and the Digital Economy***

Star News Group is a family owned independent newspaper company with regional and community mastheads in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

Our company is 104 years old and fourth generational. In the 21 years of community publishing I have never experienced more difficult times or such large challenges.

The proposed changes will add further significant pressures and challenges. For some, I believe could be to the point of extinction.

Community and regional newspapers have an ongoing and significant investment in regional and community journalism which is not replicated elsewhere; information developed that is used by third parties must be compensated with payments to the publishers.

If titles close, copyright will not be the issue. But the community will poorer and less informed.

Continued and proper maintenance of the Copyright Act is essential to ensure that original materials continue to be created, that business models dependant on the protection of copyright remain viable and proper recompense is made for the use of copyrighted materials. The current Copyright Act provides these sureties.

The proposed amendments contained in the ALRC's Issues Paper will undo these sureties, create unnecessary confusion and water down the rights of copyright holders and in turn unduly effect those organisations and individuals who rely upon protection of their copyright for their economic livelihood.

Specifically, the Star News Group does not support either of:

- The repeal of the current statutory licence regime; and
- The introduction of a new 'fair use' copyright exemption and the repeal of the current copyright exemptions.

The current statutory licence regime is an efficient and fair method by which copyright holders receive payment for use of their copyright by educational facilities and government agencies. Star News Group does not see any reason for its proposed removal and thus does not support its removal.

**Connecting people and communities** .../2

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The introduction of a new 'fair use' copyright exemption and the repeal of the current copyright exemptions does nothing to support or protect copyright holders. 'Fair use' is a subjective term which will lead to increased costs for the protection of copyright and in turn a softening of the rights of all copyright holders. Star News Group does not see any reason for the introduction of a 'fair use' exemption nor the removal of the current copyright exemptions and thus does not support this proposal.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Thomas", with a long, sweeping horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Paul Thomas  
Managing Director