



7/03/2013

### **FREELANCE RATES OF PAY**

The spat last week between editors at *The Monthly* and Fairfax Media's *Good Weekend* has revealed to the public what the Media Alliance and its members have long known: that the setting of freelance rates is opaque, inequitable, capricious and unjust. This can lead to grossly unfair and potentially discriminatory outcomes (see the *Crikey* report of February 28 at [www.tinyurl.com/c7l3bjv](http://www.tinyurl.com/c7l3bjv)).

Despite in 2010 the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission ruling that the Media Alliance could collectively bargain on behalf of freelance journalists who write for your publications, you have refused to engage positively with us or our members on reaching a fair system to set freelance rates.

In fact the contracts you have tried to enforce on freelance journalists over the past few years have sought to strip further our members of their intellectual property rights.

The suggestion that at the top end of the publishing chain editors are offering up to \$2.50 a word to poach writers has drawn snorts of derision from across the freelance community. "Who knew \$2.50 a word was a thing?" was one crack on Twitter.

The truth is that publishers big and small have sought to drive down the rates paid to freelancers. Added to this is the increasing tendency for some publishers to expect journalists to write for free. In what other industries are people expected to work for free? This state of affairs is unacceptable.

We believe openness about freelance rates of pay and how they are struck will go a long way to preserve quality and ensure fairness in the market – particularly as publishers are increasingly turning to freelancers to provide high-quality journalism.

It is time you and other publishers across the industry came clean on what you pay freelancers.

To show good faith to the freelancers who work for you, you should collate and publish the average rates you pay across your titles. Further, you should provide a gender breakdown of these rates to ensure that the suggestion of gender inequity can be laid to rest.

The Alliance is prepared to assist you in this task. To this end we seek a meeting to discuss the rates you pay and how they are decided.



## media, entertainment & arts alliance

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The Media Alliance represents more than 1500 freelance journalists in Australia to whom we provide contract advice and professional support. In 2010 the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission granted the Media Alliance the authority to bargain collectively on behalf of freelancers with the four major publishers. Our concern is to see freelancers fairly rewarded for the journalism they produce.

It is only through a transparent, equitable and accountable rates system that our freelance members can have faith that they are being treated with respect and can earn a decent living.

The Media Alliance promotes good practice in the journalism profession and we are keen to contribute our professional expertise and advice to assist in achieving such practice.

We continue to provide freelancers with access to professional training programs as well as advice on copyright arrangements and contracts. This month, we will be announcing a program for freelancers to receive training in the Media Alliance *Journalists' Code of Ethics* and the latest developments in media law.

Under the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission's authority, we seek an urgent meeting with you to discuss the issue of freelance rates of pay and others issues that concern our freelance members. Please contact me by March 25 to arrange a time and date to meet that is mutually convenient.

Yours sincerely,

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