

Australia's newswire axed amid pressure from digital giants

March 3 2020



Staff at Australian Associated Press' headquarters were told a drop-off in subscribers in the face of free online content meant the company was "no longer viable"

Australia's only national newswire will be shuttered after 85 years of

operation, with around 180 staff told Tuesday their jobs will end in June.

Staff gathered on the newsroom floor at Australian Associated Press' headquarters in Sydney were told a drop-off in subscribers in the face of free online content meant the company was "no longer viable."

"This decision's been made with very heavy hearts. It's been made on an economic and financial basis," chief executive Bruce Davidson said following the announcement.

The newswire will close at the end of June while its subediting business Pagemasters is set to close at the end of August.

The decision to close the wire needs approval from its owners Nine, News Corp Australia, The West Australian and Australian Community Media.

The announcement prompted concern about whether there would still be adequate scrutiny of democratic institutions.

"All [news outlets](#) have relied on AAP's network of local and international journalists to provide stories from areas where their own correspondents couldn't go, from the courts to parliament and everywhere in between," said Alexandra Wake a journalism expert at RMIT University.

People took to [social media](#) to express their concern while there were tributes in parliament.

"They have a wonderful history in this place and when you have such an important institution such as AAP coming to an end that is a matter of real concern," Prime Minister Scott Morrison said to journalists sitting in the press gallery at federal parliament.

Members of the opposition party held up signs emblazoned with: "Thanks AAP" while their party leader read out the names of the Canberra team.

"You will leave a massive void," opposition leader Anthony Albanese said.

Originally founded by media baron Keith Murdoch in 1935, AAP became a central source of [news](#) for major outlets in Australia and overseas.

But speculation about the wire's future has persisted in recent years, following several major staff cutbacks and the closure of the company's New Zealand arm in 2018.

A merger between Nine and Fairfax further centralised the country's media which is dominated by a handful of companies, including News Corp Australia.

The "unprecedented impact" of [digital platforms](#), such as Facebook and Google, taking content and distributing it for free had forced its closure, the company said in a statement.

Staff were told between 30 and 50 jobs would be made available at the company's two major shareholders Nine and News Corp Australia.

Journalists tweeting after the meeting described the news as shattering.

"Today is a sad day for an industry I love and a career/life that I've loved even more," Sydney journalist Dominica Sanda tweeted.

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