

AIP Board's Response to Memorandum of Grievances regarding the Digital News Transformation Fund (DNTF)

16 July 2026

The Board of the Association of Independent Publishers (AIP) met on 14 July 2026 to consider a Memorandum of Grievances submitted by two publisher organisations and concerned individuals, calling for the dissolution of the AIP Board, the resignation of the Executive Director, and the suspension of the DNTF itself, among a number of other issues.

The Board wishes to reaffirm AIP's achievements in establishing the DNTF, which has secured an unprecedented R114 million investment for South Africa's independent news publishing sector. The Fund was established by Google and AIP to strengthen the sustainability, digital transformation and audience reach of South Africa's small, medium and independent news publishers.

The AIP Board and the Executive Director remain proud of the role AIP has played in negotiating and establishing this landmark initiative. While we recognise that the Fund has experienced challenges at its establishment, we believe it represents one of the most significant investments ever made in the sustainability of independent journalism in South Africa.

The Board rejects calls from outside organisations and individuals for the DNTF to be suspended. Suspending the Fund would directly prejudice the many independent publishers who have already benefited from the first two funding rounds.

The Board furthermore rejects calls for the dissolution of the elected AIP Board and for the dismissal of the AIP Executive Director. These are matters that fall within the governance structures of AIP and cannot be dictated by external organisations.

The Board expresses its full confidence in the Executive Director and supports her decision to pursue appropriate legal remedies in response to defamatory allegations made against her.

The Board also reiterates that the DNTF is not an AIP fund, it was established as an industry fund primarily to support the digital transformation of South Africa's independent news publishing sector while contributing to its long-term sustainability. It remains essential that the Fund continues to operate through an independent governance structure; an independent Board, an independent, transparent adjudication process and an independent, accountable fund manager to protect the integrity and credibility of funding decisions.

At the same time, the Board fully acknowledges the severe economic pressures faced by independent publishers. AIP remains committed to supporting publishers through training, proposal development, advocacy and practical assistance to maximise their opportunities to access funding and strengthen the sustainability of their businesses. Our board members are committed to working closely with publishers, and to listening and assisting wherever possible.

The Board fully supports the DNTF Board's decision to establish an Industry Forum to provide for structured input to strengthen the Fund and improve communication across the sector.

Our sector is small but vibrant. The Board believes that building unity across the sector is essential.

Issued by Anetta Barnes-Mangxaba on behalf of the AIP Board.



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Note to Editors:

The Association of Independent Publishers (AIP) is a vibrant national organisation for advancing the interests of the local grassroots independent print and online media sector in South Africa.

Website: www.aip.org.za

X (Twitter) - <https://twitter.com/AIPSouthAfrica>

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/IndependentPublishers/>

LinkedIn - <https://www.linkedin.com/company/90829107/admin/feed/posts/>

YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/@AIPSouthAfrica>

Why is community media so critical?

- It is one of the most diverse sectors of the media in terms of language, content and format.
- It covers areas of the country that no other media cover, other than SABC radio.
- It has the closest and most intimate relationship with its audiences.
- It builds communities from the bottom up.
- It holds local power brokers (government, business and civil society organisations) to account.
- It is critical to SA democracy because it ensures that we know what is happening across our country – not just what is happening in the major cities.
- It celebrates and preserves our local culture and history.