

## **MDPMI INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

Today we publish the final report of the Media and Digital Platforms Market Inquiry, just over 2 years since the launch in October 2023. This is not an ordinary Inquiry. Whilst it has focused on market features that adversely affect competition like all inquiries, it has done so in a sector which has a critical role to play in supporting democracy in our country and protecting many of the constitutional rights of citizens, including the freedom of expression. Harm to competition undermines the ability of the news media to fulfil its role in informing citizens and holding government and business to account. This is both at a national level with the mainstream media and broadcasters, but also at a local level given the role played by community media. It applies equally to the public broadcaster which has a mandate to provide public interest journalism to all citizens in all official languages and yet is 80% funded through commercial advertising, and vernacular media that keeps citizens informed in their home language.

The scope of the Inquiry was ambitious, tackling not just search and social media platform conduct, but extending to the rise of AI chatbots and the backend tools of advertising technology used by the media to sell their digital inventory. The broad scope has enabled a more holistic approach where a suite of remedies and recommendations are devised to address all the adverse market features that impact negatively on the media in SA. This is more likely to result in a financially sustainable media moving forward. However, there are challenges to the media other than those arising from platforms, and even the remedies lay the foundation for revitalisation but do require the media to actively take advantage of opportunities opened up by the Inquiry if they are to thrive. There is additional work for government to do in supporting the media through implementing the recommendations from the Inquiry to dtic and DCDT.

I would like to commend the panel and technical team for an inclusive inquiry process that has facilitated public consultation and participation from platforms, media organisations, both large and small media, government, academics and public interest organisations. The outcome has been a strongly evidence-based inquiry report with sound findings and practical remedies. I would also like to commend both the Inquiry team and digital platforms in engaging in good faith discussions to find remedies that address the market features that harm the media but are practical and agreeable for the platforms too. This means we can move forward immediately in implementing remedies to revitalise and transform the SA media.

I now hand over to the panel, James Hodge and Paula Fray, to set out the inquiry findings and remedial actions before we hand over the report to Minister Tau.

