



**Sharon Grierson MP**  
Federal Member for Newcastle

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**MEDIA BILL GAG A BLOW A DOUBLE BLOW FOR DEMOCRACY**

Federal Member for Newcastle Sharon Grierson says the gagging of debate on the Howard Government's cross-media ownership legislation today was a double blow for democracy.

The Government denied many Labor Members of Parliament the opportunity to voice their opposition to these laws in Parliament today.

"Not only does the bill cut the number of voices in the media, the Government has now used the gag to cut the number of voices in the Federal Parliament."

"I was one of the lucky ones who actually got to detail the impact of this legislation on the community I represent."

"Under these laws, the number of media owners in Newcastle could fall from seven to four, and the same person could control two out of three media forms in Newcastle."

"We have only one local nightly TV news bulletin, one local daily newspaper, and two owners who hold the four commercial radio stations between them."

"Any further consolidation of this ownership would give the owner great power over the information received by our community."

"Consolidation of ownership also leads to consolidation of newsrooms, and so less opportunity for local employment in the journalism and media fields."

"This is typical of a Howard Government that has become arrogant in its control of both houses of Parliament and will not tolerate open debate or dissent."

"The moguls are this morning positioning themselves for a shopping spree that will reduce media diversity under the new laws. Meanwhile the representatives of the people in Parliament have once again been denied the right to speak."

"This is a double blow for democracy under the Howard Government."

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