

14 June 2021

**Response to the Competition Commission's Request for Comments and Opinions for the Online Intermediation Platform Market Inquiry (OIPMI)**

Dear Ms Jokazi,

The Commission has identified the Bureau for Economic Research (BER) as a key stakeholder in the OIPMI. The Commission defines Online Intermediation Platforms as *"platforms that facilitate transactions between business users and consumers (or so-called "B2C" platforms) for the sale of goods, services and software, regardless of whether the transactions are concluded on the platform itself, on the online site of the business user or offline"*. Based on this definition, the BER does not fall within the ambit of the Inquiry. The BER specialises in macroeconomic research and therefore cannot provide detailed comments on the issues raised in the Commission's Statement of Issues.

The BER monitors and forecasts macroeconomic economic and sector trends and identifies and analyses local and international factors that affect South African businesses. It generates its own data using surveys and econometric modelling techniques and, in some instances, collates this information with publicly available data from agencies such as Stats SA. It contextualises data trends through detailed commentary and analyses, and sells this to clients who subscribe to its services. Some of the information that the BER generates is also made freely available to anyone who registers on the website.

Specifically, the BER, as an individual supplier, does not satisfy the definition of an eCommerce marketplace because it does not offer products (in this case, data and data analyses) from other

suppliers. The BER does not act as an on-seller of other firms' data. It does not provide the services of an intermediation platform as "middleman" or agent that facilitates transactions between consumers and business users. Instead, it generates its own information and data products that it makes available to paying and non-paying clients.

The BER is also not a frequent user (customer) of online intermediation platforms and as such cannot comment on the questions raised in the Statement of Issues. We will however be happy to assist with any data needs of a macroeconomic nature. The impact of the increased frequency of online transactions on general price levels or on the price levels of specific product categories come to mind – though this would have to be carefully isolated from other economic factors that also affect price levels.

We wish the Commission all the best with the inquiry.

Kind regards,



Prof Johann Kirsten  
Director: Bureau for Economic Research