

## Appendix 5 Australian Press Council Statement of Principles

<http://www.presscouncil.org.au>

To help the public and the press, the Australian Press Council has laid down the broad principles to which it is committed.

First, the freedom of the press to publish is the freedom of the people to be informed. This is the justification for upholding press freedom as an essential feature of a democratic society. This freedom, won in centuries of struggle against political and commercial interests, includes the right of a newspaper to publish what it reasonably considers to be news, without fear or favour, and the right to comment fairly upon it.

Second, the freedom of the press is important more because of the obligation it entails towards the people than because of the rights it gives to the press. Freedom of the press carries with it an equivalent responsibility to the public. Liberty does not mean licence. Thus, in dealing with complaints, the Council will give first and dominant consideration to what it perceives to be in the public interest.

The Council does not lay down rules by which publications should govern themselves. However, in considering complaints, the Council will have regard for these general principles.

1. Newspapers and magazines ("publications") should not publish what they know or could reasonably be expected to know is false, or fail to take reasonable steps to check the accuracy of what they report.
2. A publication should make amends for publishing information that is found to be harmfully inaccurate by printing, promptly and with appropriate prominence, such retraction, correction, explanation or apology as will neutralise the damage so far as possible.
3. Readers of publications are entitled to have news and comment presented to them honestly and fairly, and with respect for the privacy and sensibilities of individuals. However, the right to privacy should not prevent publication of matters of public record or obvious or significant public interest. Rumour and unconfirmed reports, if published at all, should be identified as such.
4. News obtained by dishonest or unfair means, or the publication of which would involve a breach of confidence, should not be published unless there is an overriding public interest.
5. A publication is justified in strongly advocating its own views on controversial topics provided that it treats its readers fairly by
  - making fact and opinion clearly distinguishable;
  - not misrepresenting or suppressing relevant facts;
  - not distorting the facts in text, headlines, pictures, billboards or posters;

- disclosing any commercial or other interest which might be construed as influencing the publication's presentation of news or opinion.
6. A publication has a wide discretion in matters of taste, but this does not justify lapses of taste so repugnant as to be extremely offensive to its readership.
  7. Publications should not place any gratuitous emphasis on the race, religion, nationality, colour, country of origin, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, illness, or age of an individual or group. Nevertheless, where it is relevant and in the public interest, publications may report and express opinions in these areas.
  8. Where individuals or groups are singled out for criticism, the publication should ensure fairness and balance in the original article. Failing that, it should provide a reasonable and swift opportunity for a balancing response in the appropriate section of the publication.
  9. Where the Council issues an adjudication, the publication concerned should prominently print the adjudication.

The Council strives to ensure that its adjudications on complaints reflect both the conscience of the press and the legitimate expectations of the public.

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