



General Guide

Media Reporting Concerns - What You Can Do

This fact sheet provides information about how you raise concerns about media reporting. It should not be relied upon as legal advice.

We recommend you talk to a lawyer from our service.

Why does media reporting matter?

Media reporting can shape public attitudes, influence decision-making, and affect the daily experiences of individuals and communities.

Where reporting is inaccurate or imbalanced, it may:

- contribute to misunderstanding or harm
- reduce trust in media institutions
- affect how issues are recognised and addressed

For this reason, media organisations are expected to have editorial standards, governance frameworks, and complaints processes to promote accuracy, fairness, and accountability.

When can concerns about media reporting arise?

Concerns about media reporting may arise where content is not presented in a fair, accurate, or balanced way.

Concerns about fairness and balance may arise where:

- only one side of the story is told
- important facts are left out
- opinion is presented as fact
- language is emotional or persuasive rather than neutral
- sponsorships, conflicts of interest or agendas are not disclosed.

How can you assess media reporting?

Concerns about media reporting can often be identified by assessing the information contained in the media report. Factors such as what information is included, left out and how a story is presented can all shape how an issue is understood by the audience.

You may wish to look more closely at a report if:

- the story only includes one side of an issue, or does not give the other side a chance to respond
- expert opinions or statistics are used in a imbalanced way, or if sources are unclear or anonymous without explanation
- the headline is sensational or does not match the story
- the content relies more on opinion than evidence
- the same story is reported very differently by other media outlets.

Concerns may also arise from the way information is presented. For example, language that is emotional or persuasive (rather than neutral), or stories that make two sides seem equal when the evidence suggests otherwise.

What can you do if you have concerns about media reporting?

If you have concerns about the accuracy, fairness, or balance of a media report, there are steps you can take to better understand the issue and raise it through appropriate channels.

1. Check and compare the story with other sources

- Look for key facts supported by evidence (statistics, expert opinions).
- Read beyond the headlines and consider images, captions and the broader context in which the information is presented.

2. Raise the issue with the publisher, broadcaster or producer

- Contact the media outlet directly to seek clarification or request further information.
- Many media outlets have formal complaints or feedback process. Engaging in these processes is often an important first step.

3. Use formal complaint processes

- If your concerns are not resolved, you can lodge a complaint with the organisations below.
- These complaints processes help ensure that media organisations are accountable to the established standards of accuracy, fairness, and responsible reporting.

Print and online news (newspapers, magazines, news websites)

The Australian Press Council (APC) is the principal standards body and self regulator for the print, digital, and online news media in Australia.

You can make a complaint to the APC within 30 days of the material being published. Late applications may be accepted in certain circumstances. The publication you are making a complaint against must be a member of the APC. You can find a list of members of the APC [here](#).

In response to a complaint the APC can:

- make an adjudication, where appropriate, as to whether the publication has breached the Council's Standards of Practice.
- issue a reprimand or censure.
- seek an apology, retraction or correction.

The APC cannot issue compensation, fines, or other financial sanctions.

Television, radio and other media outlets

You can raise your complaint with the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA). ACMA is an independent Australian government authority that regulates television, radio and other communications and media services. It handles complaints where there may have been a breach of industry codes of practice.

If you have lodged a complaint with the broadcaster and are not satisfied with the outcome, you can lodge a complaint with the ACMA. There is no time limit to lodge a complaint.

If your complaint is upheld by ACMA possible outcomes could include:

- The publication is given an informal or formal warning
- The publication is issued an infringement notice
- The publication is given a remedial direction
- The publication makes a court-enforceable undertaking
- ACMA can pursue the matter in Federal Court for civil penalty orders or injunctions

For more information

- Information for complainants - Australian Press Council:
<https://presscouncil.org.au/complaints/information-for-complainants/>
- Complain about a program on TV or radio | ACMA:
<https://www.acma.gov.au/complain-about-program-tv-or-radio>
- Online disinformation and misinformation | ACMA:
<https://www.acma.gov.au/online-disinformation-and-misinformation>

Need help?

Contact RCLAS for free and confidential advice.



1800 976 198



RCASClegalhelp@nationallegalaid.org.au



For more information use the QR code or visit
nationallegalaid.org.au/national-services/rcasc-legal-help



An interpreter can be arranged upon request.

If you are hearing or speech impaired, you can contact us by calling the National Relay Service on **133 677** (TTY) or **1300 555 727**

You can find more contact options to suit your needs, on the National Relay Service website via www.accesshub.gov.au

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