

### **Where to send your complaint**

Attn: Christopher Warren  
Federal Secretary  
Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance  
PO Box 723  
Strawberry Hills  
NSW 2012

### **Other outlets for complaints**

COMMERCIAL RADIO AUSTRALIA  
Level 5, 88 Foveaux Street  
SURRY HILLS NSW 2010  
Ph: 02 9281 6577  
Fax: 02 9281 6599  
[www.commercialradio.com.au](http://www.commercialradio.com.au)  
[mail@commercialradio.com.au](mailto:mail@commercialradio.com.au)

FREE TV AUSTRALIA  
44 Avenue Road  
MOSMAN NSW 2088  
Ph: 02 9960 7100  
Fax: 02 9969 3520  
[contact@freetvaust.com.au](mailto:contact@freetvaust.com.au)  
[www.freetvaust.com.au](http://www.freetvaust.com.au)

AUSTRALIAN PRESS COUNCIL  
Suite 10.02, 117 York Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000  
Ph: 02 9261 1930 or 1800 025 712  
Fax: 02 9267 6826  
[complaints@presscouncil.org.au](mailto:complaints@presscouncil.org.au)  
[www.presscouncil.org.au](http://www.presscouncil.org.au)

AUSTRALIAN COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA  
AUTHORITY  
PO Box 78, Belconnen ACT 2616  
Tel: 02 6219 5555  
Fax: 02 6219 5200  
[broadcasting@acma.gov.au](mailto:broadcasting@acma.gov.au)  
[www.acma.gov.au](http://www.acma.gov.au)

*Authorised by Christopher Warren,  
Alliance Federal Secretary*

### **Code of Ethics**

MEAA members engaged in journalism commit themselves to

- Honesty
- Fairness
- Independence
- Respect for the rights of others

1. Report and interpret honestly, striving for accuracy, fairness and disclosure of all essential facts. Do not suppress relevant available facts, or give distorting emphasis. Do your utmost to give a fair opportunity for reply.
2. Do not place unnecessary emphasis on personal characteristics, including race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual orientation, family relationships, religious belief, or physical or intellectual disability.
3. Aim to attribute information to its source. Where a source seeks anonymity, do not agree without first considering the source's motives and any alternative attributable source. Where confidences are accepted, respect them in all circumstances.
4. Do not allow personal interest, or any belief, commitment, payment, gift or benefit, to undermine your accuracy, fairness or independence.
5. Disclose conflicts of interest that affect, or could be seen to affect, the accuracy, fairness or independence of your journalism. Do not improperly use a journalistic position for personal gain.
6. Do not allow advertising or other commercial considerations to undermine accuracy, fairness or independence.
7. Do your utmost to ensure disclosure of any direct or indirect payment made for interviews, pictures, information or stories.
8. Use fair, responsible and honest means to obtain material. Identify yourself and your employer before obtaining any interview for publication or broadcast. Never exploit a person's vulnerability or ignorance of media practice.
9. Present pictures and sound which are true and accurate. Any manipulation likely to mislead should be disclosed.
10. Do not plagiarise.
11. Respect private grief and personal privacy. Journalists have the right to resist compulsion to intrude.
12. Do your utmost to achieve fair correction of errors.

# **Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance**

## **Australian Journalists Association Section**



## **Code of Ethics: Complaints Procedures**

# Ethics: How to Complain

- The action that you believe is unethical;
- The point or points of the code that you believe have been breached.

The letter should be addressed to the Federal Secretary. Once the Federal Secretary receives your letter he/she will refer it to the National Ethics Panel.

## A new national panel

The National Ethics Panel replaced the branch based system from June 2001. The new national panel consists of 21 experienced journalists who have been elected by the members of the journalist section of the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance.

Members of the panel serve for a four-year term and represent a minimum of three branches. In addition to the 21 journalists panel members, there are nine members of the public that are appointed to the panel, bring the total number of panellists to 30.

Members of the panel will appoint a chair and at least one deputy chair to manage the panel. When your complaint is received, the chair will appoint three panel members to consider the complaint. The three complaints panel members are decided on the basis of:

- **Geography** – Usually the complaint will be heard in the state where both the complainant and the journalist complained against lived, although there are exceptions to this rule.
- **Balance** – This includes, but is not restricted to, gender balance. It may also include other matters that need to be balanced within journalism: different mediums, different employers etc.
- **Non-journalist representation** – One of the three panellists must be a non-journalist

Once the complaints panel members have been appointed, the panel will meet to consider your complaint. They have a number of options including:

- Dismiss the complaint without further action
- Seek further information from either the complainant and/or the person complained against or from any other person
- Have the parties appear personally before the panel
- Allow the parties to call witnesses. If witnesses are called, either party may examine or cross-examine the witnesses.

The committee does not operate under law but does follow the rules of natural justice. In the event the complaint goes to a hearing, the parties are not entitled to legal representation.

If the journalist is found guilty of breaching the Code, they are liable to any of the following penalties:

- Warning;
- Reprimand;
- A fine of up to \$1000;
- Suspension of membership for up to one year;
- Expulsion from membership.

**Please note that the code and penalties only apply to members of the Australian Journalists Association section of the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance.**

## Appeals

In the event you or the journalist is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation of a complaint you have a right to appeal in writing to the Federal Secretary within 28 days of being notified of the decision being appealed against. The appeal will then be referred to the Chair of the national ethics panel.

The panel chair will convene an Appeals panel consisting of five members of the National Ethics Panel. At least two of the members of this panel will be from the pool of nine non-journalists. No member from the original complaints panel will be part of the appeals panel.

## Introduction

Respect for truth and the public's right to information are fundamental principles of journalism. Journalists describe society to itself. They convey information, ideas and opinions, a privileged role. They search, disclose, record, question, entertain, suggest and remember. They inform citizens and animate democracy. They give a practical form to freedom of expression. Many journalists work in private enterprise, but all have these public responsibilities. They scrutinise power, but also exercise it, and should be accountable. Accountability engenders trust. Without trust, journalists do not fulfil their public responsibilities.

## Guidance clause

*Basic Values often need interpretation and sometimes come into conflict. Ethical journalism requires conscientious decision-making in context. Only substantial advancement of the public interest or risk of substantial harm to people allows any standard to be overridden.*

The code of ethics was first developed in 1940, reviewed and updated in 1984 and underwent a major review between 1994 and 1999 resulting in a new code of ethics being instituted in February 1999

## What do you do?

This leaflet sets out how you can complain if you believe a journalist has acted contrary to the code of ethics.

If you believe a journalist has breached the code of ethics in any way, you should lodge a written complaint stating:

- The name of the journalist;