

IMPRESS Code Review: Call for Evidence

Anonymous 1 Submission

Discrimination

I think the bar is too high for the Discrimination clause, to the point that it is near impossible to breach. The Guidance states that, 'Language that qualifies as hate speech is that which is intended to, or is likely to, provoke hatred or to put a person or group in fear. The disputed words, therefore, must be more than provocative, offensive, hurtful or objectionable: this provision is about hate speech, not speech that merely hurts feelings'. There is two parts to my submission, first the guidance doesn't take into systematic use of language through a series of articles. What may be considered 'hurtful' language in a single article, could become dangerous to that protected group if that language is used over and over again. Secondly, how the committee judges the language used is based on their experiences of what they consider to be discriminatory. The successfulness of a complaint depends on the makeup of a committee.

Another point on the discrimination clause is that only the affected party or representative group can complain.. Why can't a member of the public complain? A third party? if the article has breached the discrimination clause who is complaining should have no bearing on the complaint. Surely IMPRESS has the power to look at an article, see that it engages the discrimination clause and act on it through an investigation of their own. Blatant dismissal of a complaint, when it has merit, purely because "the right person" hasn't complained, is ridiculous. There have been multiple occasions where IMPRESS have stated the discrimination clause is what sets it apart from IPSO, but I am yet to see evidence of this.

Harassment

The current Harassment Code Clause and Guidance takes a very old fashion take on harassment, I do not consider it takes social media and online journalism into account.

Code Clause 5.1. states that Publishers must not engage in intimidation. The Guidance focuses on the in person actions of the Publisher, such as arriving at a person's home or sending unsolicited emails. The guidance does not take into account the use of social media. Publishers with large following may be able to call their followers to action on social media such as twitter and Facebook to target a certain individual. I understand politicians are held to a different standard but what about everyday individuals who voice opposition to the likes of the SKAWAKBOX? The Canary? Unity News Network? These Publishers have a huge following and it would not take much effort on the part of the publisher to single them out but could have a huge toll on that individual. I think it would be beneficial for the guidance to acknowledge the role social media could have when it comes to the Harassment Clause.

Regarding the second Harassment Clause, I think there should also be some reference to social media in the guidance for 5.2. Social media has become a source for many publications. It is important to have some standards regarding the use of social media accounts, fake social media accounts to gain access to private groups and the need for journalist to identify themselves in groups.

Lastly, I think publishers writing multiple articles about individuals should be taken into account, though this may not be appropriate for the harassment clause. Writing multiple stories about a politician is one thing, writing about a private individual is another. The scheme and code currently

address one article at a time for complaints. But what if the Publisher has published multiple articles about an individual? Articles that together amount to harassment?

Public Safety

From my study of the Code and Guidance, I note that there is not much inclusion of public safety, domestic violence and public health. However, I would note that it would be useful to have a fast track procedure for these complaints due to the real world impact they have. False claims about the vaccine containing DNA or COVID denying claims by Publishers should be shut down immediately, the harm caused by 42 day investigation could have a massive impact on the public. Current IMPRESS procedures don't account for the speed in which information, particularly false information travels.