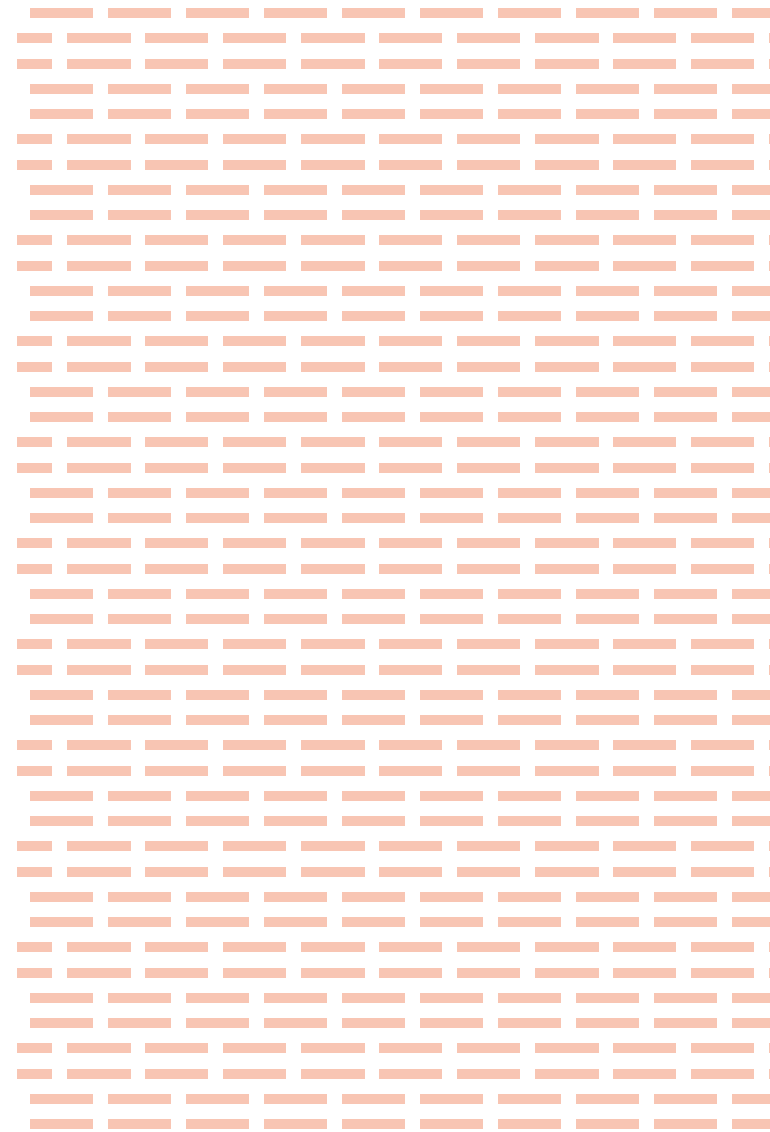




**IMPRESS**

# **THE IMPRESS STANDARDS CODE**



# PREAMBLE TO THE IMPRESS STANDARDS CODE

Journalism plays a crucial role in society. Every day, journalists report significant events, policies and controversies, expose wrongdoing, challenge unfairness and satirise, amuse and entertain. Such power comes with responsibility. IMPRESS aims to ensure that journalists behave responsibly, while protecting their role to investigate and report freely.

All publishers regulated by IMPRESS agree to abide by the following rules, which together constitute the IMPRESS Standards Code. This Code seeks to balance the rights of the public, journalists and publishers. The Code should be read alongside

the guidance, which provides information about what these rules mean in practice.

This Code is intended to be:

- (a) A practical working tool that enables journalists, editors and publishers to do their jobs;
- (b) Easily understood by the public; and,
- (c) Effectively enforceable through IMPRESS's powers and remedies as a regulator.

Publishers will be held directly responsible for compliance with

this Code, which applies to all content and newsgathering activities for which publishers are responsible under the terms of their Regulatory Scheme Agreement with IMPRESS, regardless of the medium or platform of publication. All references here to publishers apply equally to anyone acting under a publisher's authority. All references here to journalists apply equally to anyone acting in a journalistic capacity.

**This Code is distinct from the law and publishers are separately responsible for ensuring that they comply with the law.**

In certain circumstances, there may be a public interest justification for a particular method of newsgathering or publication of an item of content that might otherwise breach the Code. Where a public interest exception may apply, this is identified in the relevant clause. A public interest means that the public has a legitimate stake in a story because of the contribution it makes to a matter of importance to society. Such interests include, but are not limited to, the following:

- (a) The revelation or discussion of matters such as serious incompetence or unethical behaviour that affects the public;
- (b) Putting the record straight where an individual or organisation has misled the public on a matter of public importance;

- (c) Revealing that a person or organisation may be failing to comply with any legal obligation they have;
- (d) The proper administration of government;
- (e) Open, fair and effective justice;
- (f) Public health and safety;
- (g) National security;
- (h) The prevention and detection of crime; and
- (i) The discussion or analysis of artistic or cultural works.

The following provisions apply where a publisher is about to undertake an action that they think would

otherwise breach the Code, but for which they believe they have a public interest justification. The action might be a particular method of newsgathering or publication of an item of content. Before undertaking the action, the publisher should, where practicable, make a contemporaneous note, which establishes why they believe that:

- (a) The action is in the public interest;
- (b) They could not have achieved the same result using measures that are compliant with the Code;
- (c) The action is likely to achieve the desired outcome; and
- (d) Any likely harm caused by the action does not outweigh the public interest in the action.

# 1. ACCURACY

- 1.1.** Publishers must take all reasonable steps to ensure accuracy.
- 1.2.** Publishers must correct any significant inaccuracy with due prominence, which should normally be equal prominence, at the earliest opportunity.
- 1.3.** Publishers must always distinguish clearly between statements of fact, conjecture and opinion.
- 1.4.** Whilst free to be partisan, publishers must not misrepresent or distort the facts.

# 2. ATTRIBUTION & PLAGIARISM

- 2.1.** Publishers must take all reasonable steps to identify and credit the originator of any third party content.
- 2.2.** Publishers must correct any failure to credit the originator of any third party content with due prominence at the earliest opportunity.

# 3. CHILDREN

- 3.1.** Except where there is an exceptional public interest, publishers must only interview, photograph, or otherwise record or publish the words, actions or images of a child under the age of 16 years with the consent of the child or a responsible adult and where this is not detrimental to the safety and wellbeing of the child. While a child should have every opportunity to express his or her wishes, journalists have a responsibility to consider carefully the age and capacity of the child to consent. Unless there is a detriment to the safety and wellbeing of a child, this provision does not apply to images of general scenes.
- 3.2.** Except where there is an exceptional public interest, publishers must not identify a child under the age of 16 years without the consent of the child or a responsible adult unless this is relevant to the story and not detrimental to the safety and wellbeing of the child.
- 3.3.** Publishers must give reasonable consideration to the request of a person who, when under the age of 16 years, was identified in their publication and now wishes the online version of the relevant article(s) to be anonymised.

# 4. DISCRIMINATION

- 4.1.** Publishers must not make prejudicial or pejorative reference to a person on the basis of that person's age, disability, mental health, gender reassignment or identity, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation or another characteristic that makes that person vulnerable to discrimination.
- 4.2.** Publishers must not refer to a person's disability, mental health, gender reassignment or identity, pregnancy, race, religion or sexual orientation unless this characteristic is relevant to the story.
- 4.3.** Publishers must not incite hatred against any group on the basis of that group's age, disability, mental health, gender reassignment or identity, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation or another characteristic that makes that group vulnerable to discrimination.

# 5. HARASSMENT

- 5.1** Publishers must ensure that journalists do not engage in intimidation.
- 5.2** Except where justified by the public interest, publishers must ensure that journalists:
  - a. Do not engage in deception;
  - b. Always identify themselves as journalists and provide the name of their publication when making contact; and
  - c. Comply immediately with any reasonable request to desist from contacting, following or photographing a person.



# 6. JUSTICE

- 6.1** Publishers must not significantly impede or obstruct any criminal investigations or prejudice any criminal proceedings.
- 6.2** Publishers must not directly or indirectly identify persons under the age of 18 who are or have been involved in criminal or family proceedings, except as permitted by law.
- 6.3** Publishers must preserve the anonymity of victims of sexual offences, except as permitted by law or with the express consent of the person.
- 6.4** Publishers must not make payments, or offer to make payments, to witnesses or defendants in criminal proceedings, except as permitted by law.

# 7. PRIVACY

- 7.1** Except where justified by the public interest, publishers must respect people’s reasonable expectation of privacy. Such an expectation may be determined by factors that include, but are not limited to, the following:
- a. The nature of the information concerned, such as whether it relates to intimate, family, health or medical matters or personal finances;
  - b. The nature of the place concerned, such as a home, school or hospital;
  - c. How the information concerned was held or communicated, such as in private correspondence or a personal diary;
  - d. The relevant attributes of the person, such as their age, occupation or public profile; and
  - e. Whether the person had voluntarily courted publicity on a relevant aspect of their private life.
- 7.2** Except where justified by the public interest, publishers must:
- a. Not use covert means to gain or record information;
  - b. Respect privacy settings when reporting on social media content; and
  - c. Take all reasonable steps not to exacerbate grief or distress through intrusive newsgathering or reporting.

# 8. SOURCES

- 8.1** Publishers must protect the anonymity of sources where confidentiality has been agreed and not waived by the source, except where the source has been manifestly dishonest.
- 8.2** Publishers must take reasonable steps to ensure that journalists do not fabricate sources.
- 8.3** Except where justified by an exceptional public interest, publishers must not pay public officials for information.

# 9. SUICIDE

**9.1** When reporting on suicide or self-harm, publishers must not provide excessive details of the method used or speculate on the motives.

# 10. TRANSPARENCY

- 10.1** Publishers must clearly identify content that appears to be editorial but has been paid for, financially or through a reciprocal arrangement, by a third party.
- 10.2** Publishers must ensure that significant conflicts of interest are disclosed.
- 10.3** Publishers must ensure that information about financial products is objectively presented and that any interests or conflicts of interest are effectively disclosed.
- 10.4** Publishers must correct any failure to disclose significant conflicts of interest with due prominence at the earliest opportunity.



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