

Response from an ABC spokesperson

The ABC's editorial standards on accuracy stipulate that we "make reasonable efforts to ensure that material facts are accurate and presented in context" and that we "do not present factual content in a way that will materially mislead the audience".

In practice, this means there's no blanket prohibition on using composite illustrations. The guidelines for News are that they be clearly labelled so the audience is aware. This image was introduced into our content management system in 2022 without this labelling. Journalists subsequently located the image in the CMS without realising it was a composite.

The images Media Watch has highlighted that have been used in news stories were not properly labelled and we have removed them and published an Editor's Note on the stories.

The thumbnail used on the Radio National audio episode was selected as an abstract representation of the theme of cancer treatment, not an explicit representation, and is quite obviously so. There wouldn't be confusion for the listener and this image is not being removed. Abstract images from Getty's "Creative" tab are regularly in this way by ABC radio programs. The thumbnails on a radio episode serve a different purpose to photos embedded in news stories. All care is taken by the program team to select images that are both editorially sensitive and have clear authorship listed in Getty. The AI function in Getty is not used.

Illustrations and photographs are used in different ways and both have always had a place. We can't commission original photography for the dozens of images required each day. However, in news reporting we prioritise news photography over visual art. We've been alerting staff to be vigilant to changes in the images available via agencies and the way they're presented.