



ABC News, Analysis and Investigations' response to the program review of *Exposed: The Ghost Train Fire*:

“ABC News is grateful to Mr Chris Masters and Professor Rod Tiffen for their work in conducting this program review and welcomes the finding that the *Exposed: The Ghost Train Fire* performed an important public service.

The review acknowledges the depth and breadth of the reporting, describing it as of a standard that very few television series achieve. It notes that the program-makers uncovered new evidence of arson being the likely cause of the fire. It also noted that the series exposed the incompetence of the police investigation, reported on the inadequacies of earlier investigations, revealed the way policy-making by the NSW government benefited businessman Abe Saffron and highlighted the corrupt circle of influence around Saffron.

The review describes the program as 'an outstanding achievement', that it presented 'much fresh, revealing and important material', and that it 'mounts a scathing demolition of the police investigation'. The review finds the production values of the series to be very high and the cinematography world class.

As the review notes, the series has received much public acclaim and very few viewer complaints. None of those complaints has been upheld by the ABC's independent complaints investigation unit. We note that the review found no factual inaccuracies.

On the review's observations about how the program dealt with the historic allegation made by a 1986 Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry against former NSW Premier Neville Wran, at all times the program-makers considered they were reporting the shared view of credible sources, and the word 'allegation' was used 10 times to underline that point.

Mr Wran has previously been accused of aiding Abe Saffron to secure the lease of Luna Park. Those allegations first came to light in the so-called 'Age Tapes' and have been inconclusively investigated over time. The allegation was thoroughly reported by multiple journalists and outlets in 2017. Of that reporting, the review found: 'Nearly all the news coverage at the time [in 2017] was superficial and did not carry the story forward in any substantial way. It is to the credit of *Exposed* that it follows up the allegation by introducing important witnesses and revealing interviews.'

Those interviews included a known associate of Abe Saffron, Rosemary Opitz, who alleged a friendly relationship between Mr Wran and Saffron, and interviews with former NSW police who were investigating organised crime.

The *Exposed* series, entirely appropriately in the view of ABC News, examined the same allegation, and pictured the same individuals as other media did in 2017. ABC News doesn't accept the reviewers' opinion that the graphic was misleading. The series did not purport to have proven the allegation.

The review does not question the decision to include any of that material in the series but contends that viewers would have been left with the impression that the program was asserting Mr Wran's guilt. That was not the program's intention or assertion.

The review concludes that the 'series was notable for the depth and breadth of the reporting it used to investigate the very important events surrounding the tragedy of the Luna Park ghost train fire. That reporting achievement should be recognised and given due weight'. It also concludes that *Exposed* "mounted a compelling case for a new investigation'.

ABC News is proud of the achievement of the *Exposed* team and the work they have done to reveal new evidence regarding the Ghost Train fire. The series was clearly in the public interest and has resulted in a NSW Police Unsolved Homicide Squad investigation and an historic \$1 million dollar reward. The NSW Coroner is formally considering a fresh inquest. The renewed scrutiny by the *Exposed* team has been welcomed by the families and friends of the seven victims who died in the fire.

We hope that justice will be done for the families, witnesses and survivors, and that they will get some of the answers which they have been seeking for many decades."

Gaven Morris

ABC Director News, Analysis and Investigations

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