

MEDIA ASOSIESEN VANUATU

# Code of Ethics & Practice

**Code of Ethics & Practice**  
Media Association of Vanuatu  
Republic of Vanuatu



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# Preamble

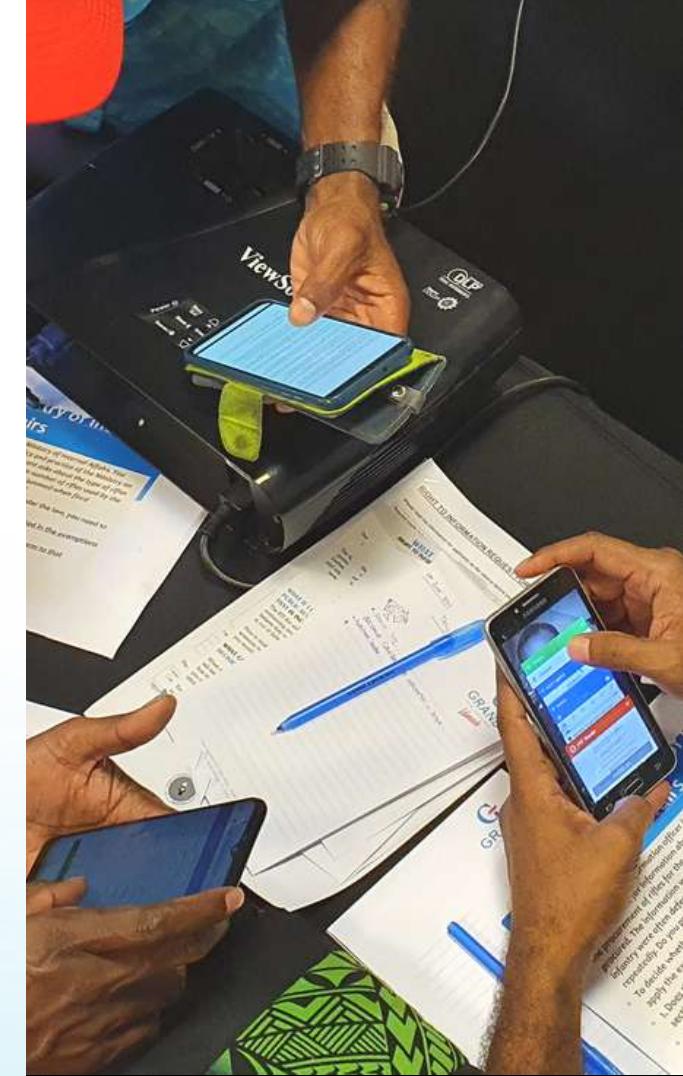
Journalism is not just a profession; it's a public service. It consists of sharing, broadcasting or publishing information in the public interest. This Code is for everyone who performs this activity, whether professionally or on a voluntary basis. It describes the general set of expectations and norms in the ethical conduct of journalism.

This Code reflects the shared values of the Vanuatu media community of practice, and takes into consideration our unique cultural, religious and historical traditions and beliefs.

This is a voluntary Code, endorsed by the Executive and membership of the Media Association of Vanuatu. There are no sanctions or penalties attached to it.

The Code may be used as a non-binding reference by the public in any complaint or commentary relating to how the news is reported. It may be used as a non-binding reference by media organisations in disciplinary proceedings relating to ethical conduct, and by journalists in any grievance process. It shall not be used to adjudicate contracts, rules, regulations, or any legal proceeding.

The Code exists to enlighten and instruct, and to help journalists better serve the public interest.



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# 01

## ACCOUNTABILITY, ACCURACY, BALANCE & FAIRNESS

- a. A Journalist reports and interprets news stories honestly, striving for accuracy, fairness and disclosure of all essential facts. They do not suppress significant available facts or give distorting emphasis to their work.
- b. News items should clearly identify the author of the material they create, at the top of a printed article, or at the beginning and/or the end of a broadcast piece. The identity of an author or contributor may be hidden if publishing that information creates an unreasonably high risk to their personal health or safety. News bulletins, summaries announcements, and short, trivial, or purely factual notices do not require a credit or by-line.
- c. If a significant inaccuracy, misleading or distorted statement is published it must be corrected promptly and, where appropriate, a correction or apology should be issued at the earliest reasonable opportunity.
- d. Any corrections, clarifications and retractions should be discussed between the parties involved and given equal priority and prominence to the content that they are correcting.
- e. If online articles and broadcast contents are substantially changed, a note must be included in the article or content body itself reflecting the nature of the change, and the reason for it.
- f. Media publications must distinguish clearly between the news, commentary, conjecture, fact, and paid advertising.
- g. Editorial opinions in any medium must be clearly identified as such and kept separate from news reports.
- h. A Journalist should act at all times to keep personal interest, beliefs, commitment or perceived benefit from affecting their accuracy, fairness and journalistic independence. Full disclosure should be made of apparent conflicts of interest that do not impede the ability of the journalist or media organisation from reporting fairly.
- i. Media should report fairly the result of any court or tribunal decisions relating to content brought by or against them. They have an obligation to publish/broadcast, without diluting the finding, any legal adjudication on a complaint made against them.

## 02

### RIGHT OF REPLY

- a. Media organisations have the obligation to offer a fair opportunity of reply to any individual affected significantly by an editorial error.
- b. Journalists should offer a fair opportunity for individuals and organisations to respond to criticism or allegations.

## 03

### PRIVACY

- a. Publication of information about the private lives or concerns of individuals without their consent is acceptable only if the intrusion relates to legitimate public interest outweighing the normal right to privacy.
- b. Prominence in public life does not disqualify individuals from the right to privacy about their personal affairs unless these matters affect their performance or fitness for the public role or office they seek or hold.
- c. Journalists should avoid identifying innocent relatives or associates of persons convicted or accused of crimes unless the connection is relevant to the story reported.

## 04

### HARASSMENT & PURSUIT

- a. Journalists must not seek interviews, information or pictures by means of intimidation or harassment, deception, eavesdropping or covert technological means (including long lens photography of people in places where they have a reasonable expectation of privacy).
- b. Information and picture gathering by such methods can be justified where the material is in the public interest and could not be obtained in any other way.

## 05

### SUBTERFUGE

- a. A journalist should use straightforward means to obtain information, images and recordings, identifying themselves and the purpose of their work when doing so.
- b. Use of subterfuge, false identity or covert recording, is be justified only when the material sought ought to be published in the public interest and could not be obtained in any other way.
- c. Journalists should never exploit a person's vulnerability or ignorance of ethical media standards and practices.

# 06

## DISCRIMINATION

- a. Journalists should avoid discriminatory or gratuitous references to people's gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or sexual preference, physical or mental disability or illness, or age.
- b. Journalists should not relate prejudicial or pejorative references made by any party concerning a person's gender, race, birthplace, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or sexual preference, physical or mental disability or illness, or age except where it is directly relevant to the material and serves the public interest.
- c. While journalists are free to report and comment on all matters of public interest, it is the duty of media organisations, media professionals and media practitioners to avoid publishing material in a form likely to promote or encourage public hatred or prejudice against any group or individual.

# 07

## GENDER

- a. Journalists should try wherever possible to use gender-neutral language when writing news stories.
- b. A journalist must avoid the discrimination against gender in their conduct, and in their reporting.

# 08

## CHILDREN

- a. Journalists should not approach, interview or photograph a child under the age of 18 without the consent of a parent or an adult responsible for the child.
- b. Journalists should interview or photograph a child under the age of 18 in the presence of a parent or an adult responsible for the child.
- c. Discretion should be exercised when interviewing children under the age of 18 about subjects which might have legal or moral consequences, or where such interviews could place them in a detrimental position, threatening their safety or well-being.
- d. The names of persons under the age of 18 who are charged with crimes or involved in offences should not be released.

# 09

## VICTIMS IN SEXUAL CASES

- a. Journalists must not identify victims of sexual assault or publish material likely to lead to their identification without their informed consent.
- b. Journalists must not identify children under the age of 18 either as victims or witnesses in cases alleging sexual offences.

# 10

## PUBLIC DECENCY

- a. When reporting, or portraying sexual activity and conduct, media organisations should be aware of the impact of publishing material that affronts or offends public decency. Particular regard should be paid to the context of publication and time of transmission.

# 11

## CRIME

- a. Crime and antisocial behaviour, especially involving violence, should not be glamorised or portrayed in a manner which on reasonable judgment would be likely to encourage or incite people to commit or condone such acts.
- b. A journalist should pay particular regard to the context, time of transmission and probable effect and the likely audience or readership of such material. Special attention should be paid to the likelihood of such material being accessed by unsupervised children.

# 12

## PAYMENT, REWARD AND RECOMPENSE

- a. No payment or offer of payment should be made, directly or indirectly, to people engaged in or convicted of crime for information or articles related to their crimes, or for pictures whose value lies in their association with crime. Nor should payments or offers be made to associates of persons engaged in or convicted of crime, including their family, friends, neighbours and colleagues.
- b. Recompense may be offered for reasonable expenses incurred by the interviewee. This includes transportation costs, and in extraordinary circumstances, accommodation.
- c. No payment or offer of payment should be made, directly or indirectly, to any person known to be, or reasonably expected to be, a witness in criminal proceedings, for information or articles in connection with the proceedings until after their conclusion.
- d. Payment or an offer of payment may be justified if information which ought to be published in the overriding, public interest cannot be obtained by any other means.

# 13

## RELIGION

- a. While all public institutions are properly subject to scrutiny, inquiry and comment, media organisations should approach and refer to religious bodies in a balanced, fair and sensitive manner, bearing in mind the respect and reverence in which they, their representatives and their beliefs are likely to be held by adherents.

# 14

## VANUATU KASTOM

- a. While free to report and to comment in the public interest on Vanuatu chiefly institutions, traditions, affairs and other cultural matters, media should approach and refer to these subjects in a balanced, fair and sensitive manner, bearing in mind the respect and reverence they are afforded in our society.

# 15

## STRONG LANGUAGE

- a. Journalists should avoid gratuitous use of obscene, indecent or blasphemous language in their material. Publication or broadcasting of these in direct form can be justified only in rare cases when it is essential to the public's understanding of the material, or when it contributes substantially to the public good. Care must be taken in choosing the context and scheduling of the material concerned to avoid unnecessarily causing offence to its likely readers or audience.

# 16

## GRIEF & BEREAVEMENT

- a. A journalist should respect personal grief, taking care to make any necessary approaches and inquiries with sensitivity and discretion.
- b. Bereaved or grieving persons should be approached for comment through trusted intermediaries, wherever it is reasonable to do so.

# 17

## ADVERTISING

- a. Advertisements and advertiser-sponsored material must be clearly distinguishable from general editorial and programme matter, where necessary by being clearly labelled in print or on air as 'advertisement', 'advertising feature' etc.

# 18

## PERSONAL INTEREST & INFLUENCES

- a. A Journalist should never allow personal or family interests to influence them in their professional duties. There will be occasions where journalists may be pressured by close associates about a story. The journalist must make their editor, or supervisor, aware of such pressure.
- b. A Journalist must not accept, or be influenced by, any consideration, gift or advantage offered to them, or by advertising or other commercial considerations. The journalist must inform their editor/supervisor of any such offer promptly and without omission.
- c. There will be occasions where journalists will be asked to accept assignments where they may have a conflict of interest or a personal interest. The journalist must inform their editor/supervisor of such a conflict promptly and without omission.

# 19

## FINANCIAL JOURNALISM

- a. A journalist should not use for their own, or their family's profit, directly or indirectly, financial or commercial information obtained in their professional capacity in advance of its general publication.
- b. A journalist should not report on shares or securities in which they or their families have an interest without disclosing the interest to their editor or supervisor and, where appropriate, to their readers or audience.
- c. A journalist should not hold, buy or sell shares or securities about which they have written recently or which they intend to write about in the near future

# 20

## CONFIDENTIAL & OTHER SOURCES

- a. Journalists and media have an obligation to protect confidential sources of information, and to respect confidences knowingly and willingly accepted in the course of their occupation and engagements.
- b. Prior to receiving or sharing confidential information, journalists should clearly explain to the source the measures that will be taken to ensure their source's privacy, and detailing the limits of that protection, including legal requirements to disclose their identity or the information shared.
- c. Plagiarism is not acceptable. Where material originally prepared by another medium is used and quoted, credit should be given to the originator of the item or story.

Media organisations should endeavor to show fairness at all times, and **impartiality** and **balance** in any item or programme.

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**21**

TASTE &amp; DECENCY

- a. Media organisations should recognise currently accepted general standards of decency and taste in language and behaviour, bearing in mind the context in which the language and behaviour occur (including humour, satire and drama), and, for broadcasters, the timing of transmission and likely audience of the programme.

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**22**

IMPARTIALITY &amp; BALANCE

- a. Media organisations should endeavour to show fairness at all times, and impartiality and balance in any item or programme.

# 23

## DECEPTIVE PRACTICES

a. Media should refrain from use of any deceptive practice or technique (including transmission or publication of reconstructions' or library pictures, film and recordings which are not clearly identifiable as such) which may diminish public confidence in the integrity of media.

# 24

## INTERVIEWS

a. Interviews for print, electronic media, radio and television must be arranged, conducted, and edited fairly and honestly. Potential interviewees are entitled to know in advance the format, subject and purpose of their interview, whether it will be transmitted live or recorded, when it will be printed, whether it may be edited, and whether only part of it may be used, or it may not be used at all.

b. Panellists/Interviewees are also entitled to know in advance the identity and roles of other people likely to be interviewed at the same time or on the same subject for the same programme or article.

c. The presentation and editing of an interview must not distort or misrepresent the views of the interviewee or give a false impression of dialogue or the pretence that a recorded interview is being transmitted live.

# 25

## VIOLENCE

a. Violence shown visually with realistic sound must be justifiable in its context and intensity as being necessary to the programme or article.

b. Violence combined with sexuality should not be printed or transmitted in a manner designed to create arousal or prurient interest. The identity, dignity and safety of victims, their friends, and family members should be protected at all times.

## 26

### DISTRESSING MATERIAL

- a. Editors, producers and broadcasters of news, current affairs and documentary programmes and articles should take particular care in deciding whether the inclusion of material depicting or describing intense violence or similarly distressing content is warranted. Such details should only be included when they add to understanding and serve the public interest.
- b. The dignity, privacy and safety of individuals depicted must be considered when publishing or broadcasting particularly disturbing images, sounds or descriptions including, but not limited to:
  - 1. Torture or ill-treatment of people or animals.
  - 2. Detailed depictions of dead or mutilated bodies.
  - 3. Images of people in extreme pain or on the point of death.
  - 4. Violence or ill treatment of children.
  - 5. Suicide and serious self-harm.

## 27

### DANGEROUS & ANTI-SOCIAL DETAIL

- a. Detailed instructions concerning the creation of incendiary devices or other illegal weapons, should not be transmitted in a way which might encourage or instruct such actions.
- b. The consumption of illicit drugs, solvents or other intoxicants should not be depicted in a way which might encourage or instruct such actions.

## 28

### HIJACKING & KIDNAPPING

- a. No information should be published or broadcast which is likely to endanger lives in, or prejudice attempts to deal with, a hijack or kidnapping.

# 29

## MISINFORMATION

- a. Serious threats against individuals, groups or public safety should be reported immediately to the police. Such threats should not be published or broadcast unless there is a compelling case to be made that doing so serves the public good, or on receipt of lawful instruction to do so.
- b. Information should be clearly attributed to its source. Sources speaking on behalf of a group or organisation must be clearly mandated to speak to the media in that capacity.
- c. Verify all sources, statements, and press releases from individuals or groups to ensure their integrity, honesty, authority and right to speak.
- d. If content is identified as being willfully inaccurate or misleading it is the obligation of the publisher or broadcaster to remove or amend the material and to correct the record in a manner that will inform the public of the source and nature of the inaccurate or misleading information.

# 30

## PRODUCT PLACEMENT AND REFERENCE

- a. Material published or broadcast in exchange for any commercial consideration must be clearly identified. This includes sponsorship, support in kind, partnership, or any manner of reciprocal benefit.
- b. Material whose content has been created in whole or in part by a third party meeting the criteria set out in 31)  
a) must be clearly identified as originating from that party, and their role in the creation of the material must be clearly communicated to the public.

# 31

## COMPETITION & FAIR DEALING

- a. Media will ensure that in competitions, contests, draws or raffles there is no collusion between broadcasters or publishers and contestants, which results in the favouring of any contestant or contestants over others.
- b. Journalists must ensure that they exercise respect and tolerance towards the public and each other in their dealings.

## 32

### ELECTION COVERAGE

- a. Journalists shall not make any promise to any candidate or politician about favourable or preferential content of a news report.
- b. Journalists shall report fairly and impartially on all campaign-related activities, and shall make an effort to ensure equal access to the media to all candidates, subject only to consideration of the public interest.
- c. Journalists who report on elections or politics are prohibited from acting as an officer, agent or delegate in any political party, partisan advocacy group, or politically affiliated organisation. Journalists may hold non-executive membership in such organisations or groups for the private exercise of individual conscience.
- d. Journalists who report on an election must not make financial contributions or provide material support to any party, campaign, or partisan advocacy group in that election.
- e. Journalists must not accept goods, favours, payment or inducements of any kind from any candidate, political party, campaign or partisan advocacy group in an election. Any proffer or inducement designed to sway the journalist's reporting should be disclosed to their editor or supervisor.
- f. Journalists shall observe and abide by the code of practice as determined by the agency that is responsible for the safety and the implementation of the electoral process.

## 33

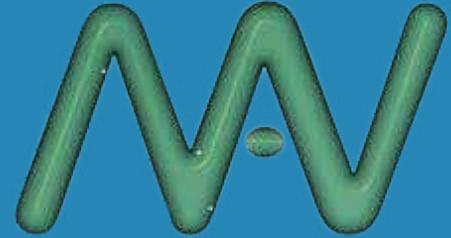
### LANGUAGE

- a. Journalists shall maintain the integrity of the language of publication and broadcast. Efforts should be made to ensure clarity, correctness, and proper and respectful usage. Unnecessary use of colloquialisms, slang, jargon and confusing terminology should be avoided.

# 34

## SOCIAL MEDIA

- a. When social media is used as a platform for dissemination of news or information shared in the public interest, this Code applies.
- b. Members of the public who share news or information in the public interest are acting in a journalistic capacity, and should take it upon themselves to read, understand and uphold this Code.
- c. Professional journalists should always be conscious of their role and responsibilities when they interact on social media, and should assist members of the public to improve their understanding of how to responsibly share public interest news and information. This includes advocacy and education concerning this Code of Ethics.
- d. Journalists should conduct themselves online as they do in the physical world. When gathering news and information on social media, they should clearly identify themselves, the purpose of their work, and how they intend to use people's contributions.
- e. It is often difficult to distinguish between personal expression and public interest journalism on social media. Media professionals and responsible members of the public should make every reasonable effort to state clearly when they are acting in the public interest, and when they are acting as private individuals.
- f. Expressions of opinion and matters of fact should be clearly identified as such.
- g. Statements and information shared openly in public forums should be treated as public utterances. Nonetheless, journalists should inform members of the public when their comments are to be used in a story, and provide them the opportunity to amend, expand or clarify their statements.
- h. Communication to limited groups of people, between friends and in confidence should be treated as private information, and the appropriate steps should be taken to avoid disclosure of prejudicial or injurious information when there is no compelling public interest case to be made.
- i. Private communications between criminal groups, individuals who are inciting or encouraging criminal activity or public unrest, conspiracy to commit unlawful acts and abuses of public trust may create a situation in which the public interest outweighs the right to privacy. Decisions concerning such breaches of privacy should be made by editors, publishers and their directors, with input and guidance from legal experts.
- j. Journalists and media organisations should take reasonable steps to preserve their record of interaction and communication on social media. They should not remove, delete, hide or otherwise obscure materials they have published on social media, except in cases where the public interest is served by their suppression, or they have been legally directed to do so.
- k. Sharing by media organisations of third-party posts, comments, or other social media content should be treated as an act of publication or broadcast. The same editorial oversight, standards and rigour should be applied to these materials as to original material.



# Code of Ethics & Praktis