

**Questions sent to Senator David Van from Media Watch:**

Media Watch is looking at matters you raised at Estimates in regard to ABC news reporting and opinion.

We've examined broader media coverage of your two examples (vaccine rollout and Colin Powell) and found the ABC's reporting and tone consistent with commercial media coverage.

For example, Sky News reported on 1<sup>st</sup> July:

***PM twists the facts to cover up his bungled rollout***

<https://www.skynews.com.au/australia-news/pm-dealing-with-real-competency-problem-over-botched-vaccine-rollout/video/2409cbf07ca79b3a82f1dab2fa9a9916>

On 24 June, Ten News reported

**SANDRA SULLY: *As the vaccine rollout bungle bites here in NSW, the government accused of failing to focus on keeping Australians safe.***

Regarding, Colin Powell, The Daily Telegraph reported that Powell "saw his legacy tarnished when he made the case for war in Iraq in 2003"

<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/breaking-news/colin-powell-war-hero-historymaker-haunted-by-iraq/news-story/aa2a37eee639a8dc3d5f7b2fc0b4411c>

Nine News reported Powell's death, saying "his legacy marred by false claims to justify the war in Iraq"

And Powell admitted as much, telling US broadcaster Barbara Walters:

**COLIN POWELL: *It's a blot. I'm the one who presented it on behalf of the United Nations, United States, to the world and it will always be a part of my record.***

**BARBARA WALTERS: *How painful is that?***

**COLIN POWELL: *It was painful. It's painful now.***

In light of these examples, do you still believe the ABC's treatment of these two stories is unjustified, or in breach of the ABC charter?

Or do you agree the ABC's reporting was fair, reasonable and based on facts, rather than opinion?

**Response from Senator David Van:**

On any reading of the ABC's Editorial Guidelines, the stories I quoted in Estimates, breach those Guidelines as they do not relay fact but include the reporters' own opinions. Words such as 'bungled' as used by Ms Lane are her opinion and do not relate to anything else referred to in the piece. There is ample room for opinion on the ABC but the news isn't one of them.

How commercial broadcasters choose to draft their editorial guidelines does not give ABC reporters - who are paid by the taxpayer and are bound by the Charter – licence to report at the same standard as commercial stations. The ABC has a duty to tax payers that commercial operators do not.

For Media Watch to suggest the ABC can operate at anything below the highest standards to balance commercial broadcasters is a disgrace.