

EDITORIAL POLICIES

Quality Assurance
Project 2:

Accuracy

Final Report
April 2008

Advise. **Verify.** Review



ABC
Australian
Broadcasting
Corporation

Editorial Policies

The Editorial Policies of the ABC are its leading standards and a day-to-day reference for makers of ABC content. The [Editorial Policies](#) -

- give practical shape to statutory obligations in the ABC Act;
- set out the ABC's self-regulatory standards and how to enforce them; and
- describe and explain to staff and the community the editorial and ethical principles fundamental to the ABC.

The role of Director Editorial Policies was established in 2007 and comprises three main functions: to advise, verify and review.

The verification function principally involves the design and implementation of quality assurance projects to allow the ABC to assess whether it is meeting the standards required of it and to contribute to continuous improvement of the national public broadcaster and its content.

Acknowledgements

Director Editorial Policies acknowledges the work of Denis Muller, who brought to the project's design and implementation almost 40 years of experience of journalism as well as relevant academic and technical expertise. Jessica List, Editorial Policies Executive Assistant, provided valuable support throughout. The professionalism of the 12 reviewers is acknowledged. Thanks also to John Cameron, Director News, and all of his staff for the co-operation they extended to a process that inevitably has effects on program teams already managing the deadline pressures of daily journalism.

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Foreword

Of all the journalistic virtues, accuracy is surely supreme.

Joseph Pulitzer's motto was 'Accuracy, Accuracy, Accuracy'. As one experienced hand noted, Pulitzer the press baron may have sinned against larger truths, but he had the practical wisdom to see that if you get the little things wrong the audience will not trust you to get the big things right.¹

For the ABC, accuracy in its news and information is a statutory requirement², as well as a matter of professional pride. The striving is constant. As in any endeavour run against deadlines by humans who must compress large amounts of information into brief and clear reports, lapses occur. The reasonable expectation is not total accuracy all the time, but rather that efforts are made to find out how lapses happen and how they might be avoided.

The findings of this second quality assurance project by Editorial Policies suggest that the standard of accuracy in three of the ABC's principal news and current affairs programs – *AM*, *The World Today* and *PM* – is very high.

The pages that follow give the details of the method (which is itself being tested), the results, and the News Division's response. Some observations about where improvements may be made are also included.

PAUL CHADWICK
Director Editorial Policies

Note by Director News

This project was done by reviewers independent of the ABC.

It found that the accuracy of these programs was very high: from approximately 150 stories examined, four stories were found to contain single material inaccuracies.

The News Division was asked to comment on the draft report and provided additional information and context for the reviewers to consider.

Although this extra information did not change the findings of the reviewers, it is included in the final report.

JOHN CAMERON
Director News

¹ Jack Fuller, *News Values – Ideas for an Information Age* (University of Chicago Press, 1996) p10.

² *ABC Act* section 8 (1) c

Quality Assurance Project 2

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I. Introduction

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation commissioned this firm in 2007 to assist it to devise and implement a new system of editorial quality assurance. The system consists of a number of separate projects, of which this is the second. Its focus is on accuracy. The methodology was devised by the Principal of this firm, Dr Denis Muller, in collaboration with the ABC's Director Editorial Policies, Mr Paul Chadwick. The implementation of it was carried out independently of the ABC by Dr Muller, reporting to Mr Chadwick.

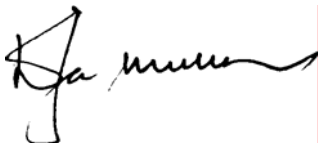
This report:

- presents the rationale, objectives and guiding principles for the project;
- describes the methodology;
- presents the findings;
- presents the News Division's response, and
- provides data on inter-reviewer reliability and time taken to conduct the reviews.

This is in the nature of a pilot project. No comparable editorial quality assurance system has been found to exist in media organisations in countries with a similar cultural and political setting to Australia. The methodology will be reviewed after the pilot is complete.

In accordance with procedural fairness, the draft report dated March 2008 was circulated to News Division for comment. Those comments have been taken into account in the preparation of this final report. The full response from News Division is included as Appendix II. We thank News Division for its timely and considered response.

We would also like to thank the ABC for inviting us to participate in this very interesting and important work. We regard it as a privilege to be asked to assist the national broadcaster in strengthening its capacities in such a vital area. We are accountable to the ABC through Mr Chadwick for the proper conduct of this project. We would be happy to discuss this report through him and by arrangement with him at any mutually convenient time.



DR DENIS MULLER
Principal

April 2008

II. Executive summary

A. Purpose

The purpose of this pilot review was to provide a methodologically rigorous examination of the accuracy of material broadcast by the News and Current Affairs Division of the ABC, as part of the Corporation's Editorial Quality Assurance processes. A parallel purpose was to test the methodology with a view to refining it and using it again in the future.

B. Scope

The scope of the review was confined to:

- Factual and contextual accuracy, and to the use of stereotypical labels of groups and individuals.
- Items broadcast on the ABC Radio news and current affairs programs *AM*, *The World Today* and *PM*.
- Items based predominantly on documentary source material against which the broadcast could be checked.
- Items about Australian domestic news.

Explicitly this pilot review did not cover balance, fairness or impartiality, which will be the subject of future quality assurance projects.

C. Method³

A random sample of 150 items, approximately one-third of the qualifying data base, was drawn from programs broadcast in two randomly chosen two-week periods dating back no further than three months from the date of selection. A sampling fraction of one-third yields a high level of confidence that the sample is representative. The sample was broken down proportionally among the three programs so as to reflect the actual distribution of qualifying stories in the week 1 to 5 October 2007.

A panel was assembled of 12 experienced journalists, none currently employed by the ABC .

In stage one of the review each item was independently reviewed by two members of the panel , each unaware of the other's identity. There was a high (0.79) correlation of congruence in the findings of all the reviewers, and between most pairs of reviewers higher than 0.8.

Items were assessed for plain-fact and contextual accuracy on the following scale:

Wholly accurate

Substantially accurate

Immaterially inaccurate

Materially inaccurate

Each item was also assessed for labelling, by reference to paragraphs 5.17.2 and 11.8.2 of the Editorial Policies.

³ Full description of method is at http://www.abc.net.au/corp/pubs/documents/QAproject_accuracy.pdf.

In stage two of the review, these findings were given to News Division for comment, and the Division's response was incorporated into this report.

D. Findings

The level of accuracy across the three programs, *AM*, *The World Today* and *PM*, was very high: 95.3% of the items sampled were found to be either wholly or substantially accurate for plain facts, and 97.3% were found to be wholly or substantially accurate as to context.

Four items (2.7%) were found to be materially inaccurate on either a plain-fact or contextual basis, and another seven (4.7%) were found to be immaterially inaccurate on one or other of those bases.

From an analysis of all the items classified as substantially accurate, immaterially inaccurate and materially inaccurate, a typology of inaccuracies was developed. The types were:

1. **Imprecision:** Minor errors of fact; careless or ambiguous expression leading to the creation of a misleading impression; the use of unnecessary approximations.
2. **Pushing it:** Using the upper or lower limit of a range of numbers in place of the range itself; rounding up or down well beyond what is reasonable; nudging the facts so that an exaggerated sense of drama or importance is achieved.
3. **False alarm:** Creating conflict or negativity where none really exists.
4. **A hook looking for a story:** The use of a term or phrase which has news currency, usually in the introduction to the story, when the substance of the story has little or nothing to do with that topic.
5. **Oversimplification:** Paraphrasing or short-cutting that leaves out a material fact and thus alters the substance of the story as received by the audience.

Illustrations of these are given in this report.

Five instances (3.4%) of inappropriate labelling were found.

News Division did not accept all of the findings concerning accuracy and in particular did not accept two of the four findings of material inaccuracy. News accepted none of the findings of inappropriate labelling. The News Division's response is summarised in the report and reproduced in full in Appendix II and Appendix III.

Conclusions drawn from the project comprise the following section of this report.

III. Conclusions

A. Standards

There is a very high standard of accuracy in the material broadcast by *AM*, *The World Today* and *PM*.

The inaccuracies found appeared to arise from a pattern of journalistic practices familiar to anyone who has worked in a newsroom for any length of time and who knows the professional culture. They appeared generally to arise not from recklessness or incapacity, but from: the competitiveness that drives journalists to make the most – sometimes too much – out of their material; time pressures; and insufficient care, which can be a consequence of both the other two factors. That does not excuse them but it does point the way to possible improvements.

B. Content

An issue for consideration is the extent to which documentary sources are explicitly cited in broadcast items. It was striking how seldom the items on these three programs did so. The citing of basic documentation might be considered a matter worth discussing as potentially adding to the usefulness of the information, especially now that listeners, if they wish, can follow up the item themselves by obtaining the documentation from the internet. It is, of course, entirely a matter for editorial judgment and is not put forward here as anything more than a subject for consideration.

C. Method

News Division raised questions about the methodology, in particular the reliance only on documentary source material, noting that in some cases where inaccuracy had been found, the reporter had obtained further information which had made the item accurate, even if it was inconsistent with the documentary source material.

This is an expected aspect of the method's stage one. Stage two of the method provides the mechanism, in the form of the Division's response, for relevant details to emerge about the actual preparation of the items, beyond documentary source material alone. Also built into stage two is the opportunity to apply a reasonableness test to take account of the circumstances in which items were prepared.

It is of course possible to adopt a more thorough procedure: for example, interviewing reporters, looking at all their materials, re-interviewing talent, checking the accuracy of the reporters' notes - in effect, re-reporting the item step-by-step to the extent that this can be achieved with the requisite fairness and rigor. Such steps would need to be considered carefully. They would be more costly, operationally disruptive, and open up the possibility of interviewees giving an honest but different recollection of what transpired in the original interview or, aided by hindsight, re-writing history or putting a different gloss on what they may have originally told a reporter. In practice, the cycle of review-counterclaim-review would be difficult to manage with fairness to all parties. Findings about accuracy may prove less, not more, reliable.

We believe the grounds for judging the methodology piloted here are these:

- Does it provide a reliable, valid and efficient measurement of accuracy?
- Is it fair?
- Does it create risks?

We believe it is reliable, valid (in the sense that it measures what it purports to measure) and efficient, and that it will be possible for it to be repeated over time at lower cost.

As to fairness, the methodology has limitations because in stage one it does not assess all the information used in putting an item to air, but stage two provides a mechanism for those whose work is provisionally criticized in stage one to respond by providing further information, and to describe any mitigating circumstances so that the Reasonableness Test can come into play.

The risks associated with conducting the review have been shown to be low. The main risks were that the documentary basis would be insufficient generally, that the reviewers would produce discrepant findings, robbing us of the basis for making reliable findings, and that the process would be disruptive to the ABC internally. These risks have not materialized. Should they do so in the future, refinements could be made in response.

We are confident that the results of projects such as this one will allow the ABC to state with greater reliance on evidence than it could in the past that, while always able to improve, its news and information is accurate according to recognized standards of objective journalism (ABC Act, section 8 (1) c).

The process of committing to quality assurance projects, conducting them, and then publishing them is likely to contribute to continuous improvement.

IV. Rationale, Objectives and Guiding Principles

A. Rationale

The ABC aspires to the highest standards in all its work, and the standard of its news and current affairs work is of particular importance because of the large role played by the national broadcaster in the practical functioning of Australian democracy.

Of central importance to the health of any democracy is trust in those who wield public power. These include journalists and media outlets. That trust cannot exist without professional and institutional accountability. Although the ABC already has well-developed internal mechanisms of journalistic accountability, it is increasing its commitment.

The role of the ABC Director Editorial Policies includes the development of fair and rigorous methodologies to verify that content is meeting the standards required by the ABC Act and the ABC's Editorial Policies, and to contribute to continuous improvement.

B. Objectives

The objectives of this project are to:

1. Create a rigorous and fair method of gathering and assessing data on the standard of accuracy in ABC news and current affairs content on radio, TV and online.
2. Create a model for the further development of quality assurance processes in the ABC.

C. Six guiding principles

The approach taken in designing and carrying out this work has been guided by six principles.

Principle 1 – Respect for editorial independence

Section 27 of the *ABC Act* requires the ABC to develop and maintain an independent news service. The word “independent” is crucial both as a general principle and as a principle of particular application to this project.

Section 2 of the ABC's Editorial Policies gives independence the status of a key value in the ABC, applicable generally across the organisation.

Independence in the context of this project refers particularly to editorial independence. This is a contested term, having been interpreted by some outside the media as meaning journalistic licentiousness, and by others as an essential element of ensuring reasonable diversity of media content in a country in which the ownership and control of the commercial media is highly concentrated. Of greater relevance to the ABC is the concept of independence for the national public broadcaster from the government of the day.

From the ABC's Editorial Policies it is unambiguously clear that when related to the ABC's news service, the term means journalists must be able to make decisions on editorial content free from improper or undesirable influences:

Para 5.1.7 of the Policies states that news programs should depend fully on public funding. This means they are independent of commercial interests and pressures.

Para 5.1.6 refers, if somewhat obliquely, to the requirement that decisions on content be based on the professional expertise and judgment of staff and not on personal opinion.

Para 5.2.2 (d) states that editorial judgments will be based on news values, not on political, commercial or sectional interests or personal views.

From these we have distilled what we conceive to be the essence of editorial independence as it relates to the ABC's news and current affairs programs:

News and current affairs content will be decided by the ABC's professional journalists applying established news values and public-interest considerations, unconstrained by political, commercial, sectional or personal interests, and conforming to the Editorial Policies of the ABC.

This definition is broadly consistent with other definitions of editorial independence, for example The Age Charter of Editorial Independence.

The first guiding principle of this quality assurance project is that those conducting it recognise and respect the editorial independence of ABC journalists.

Everything done in this process is directed at strengthening that independence, not weakening it. For that reason it is considered of paramount importance that those carrying it out be accountable to the ABC's Director Editorial Policies and, through him, to the Managing Director, who is also Editor-in-Chief.

Principle 2 – Professional accountability

Journalists, including ABC journalists, should be accountable for the way they exercise their powers and meet the responsibilities that come with them. At the same time, mechanisms of accountability must not inhibit the proper exercising of editorial independence.

Principle 3 – Natural justice

The quality-assurance process must adhere to the requirements of natural justice. No adverse findings will be conclusively made until the program team concerned have had a full and proper opportunity to respond to any draft finding. That response will then be taken into account in arriving at the conclusive finding.

Principle 4 – An educative focus

This is an educative and developmental accountability process, not a censorious or punitive one. Individual journalists' identities will not be used in association with the results.

Program-by-program results will be reported to the Director Editorial Policies in aggregate form. The purpose is to provide the basis for education and professional development across a program team, a Division and, where relevant, across the whole ABC. The purpose is not to single out individuals for criticism or praise.

Principle 5 – Reasonableness

Data will be assessed in light of what was reasonable to achieve in the circumstances, particularly by reference to the time or other practical pressures under which the material was gathered, produced and broadcast or published online.

Principle 6 – Transparency

The design and operation of the process has been transparent and was made available to the News Division in advance of implementation.

V. Methodology

A. Scope

The scope of this quality assurance project was confined to:

- Factual and contextual accuracy, and to the use of stereotypical labels of groups and individuals.
- Items broadcast on the ABC Radio news and current affairs programs *AM*, *The World Today* and *PM*.

It was considered important to pilot this project on one of the long-established programs of news and current affairs at the ABC. Radio and television news and current affairs:

have long histories of professionalism and experience;

have the largest proportion of ABC journalists;

produce a large proportion of ABC output in news and current affairs;

attract the largest audiences for ABC news and current affairs, and

exercise the powers and responsibilities which come with those resources and that exposure.

In choosing between radio and television, it was considered that, for the purposes of a pilot project, it was sensible to keep the semiotic or signal-sending complexities to a minimum. Television combines sound and vision, multiplying the semiotic complexities.

For that reason, radio was chosen as the less complex medium for this pilot.

Aside from news bulletins, ABC Radio's news and current affairs effort is largely directed at *AM*, *The World Today* and *PM*. If the performance of ABC Radio news and current affairs were to be assessed, then assessing these programs provided the broadest and most substantial base on which to do it.

B. Assessment criteria

The assessment was confined strictly to accuracy, which included factual and contextual accuracy, and accuracy in labelling of groups and individuals. Explicitly this pilot project did not cover balance, fairness or impartiality, which will be the subject of future quality assurance projects.

This pilot project addressed the less complex notions of accuracy and labelling in order to test the methodology without over-reaching.

Factual accuracy is something that can largely be checked by a comparison between what was broadcast and the material upon which the broadcast was based. Contextual accuracy is more complex, but still amenable to assessment against the available sources.

Labelling is amenable to assessment against the requirements of the Editorial Policies, which state:

Para 5.17.2: The ABC does not label groups or individuals except where labels provide valuable information or context. Labels, if inappropriately applied, can be seen as subjective, over-simplistic or as portraying stereotypes.

Para 5.17.3: Where labels have been ascribed to an individual or group by a third party, this will be made clear within the broadcast.

Para 11.8.1: In presenting content, the ABC has a responsibility to treat all sections of society with respect and to avoid the unnecessary use of prejudicial content.

Para 11.8.2: To avoid discrimination, content should not use language or images which:
disparage or discriminate against any person or group on grounds such as race, ethnicity, nationality, sex, age, disability or sexual preference; marital, parental, social or occupational status; religious, cultural or political belief or activity.

Section 11 also refers to risks of stereotyping arising from the use of terms such as “mental illness”, warns against gratuitous references to people’s physical characteristics, cultural practices or religious beliefs, and generally requires staff to avoid stereotypes.

The Code of Practice, which is derived from the Editorial Policies and under which complaints may be made to the Australian Communications and Media Authority⁴, contains similar provisions relating to accuracy (Code, section 3.2) and stereotyping (Code, section 2.7).

C. Database

The assessment was carried out on items broadcast by the three programs *AM*, *The World Today* and *PM*, but confined to items on domestic Australian news prepared wholly within Australia and those elements of the item based on documentary source material.

The probable available data base was calculated using an analysis of items broadcast on the three programs in a randomly chosen week – 1 to 5 October 2007. It showed *AM* carried a rounded average of 9 stories per program, compared with 11 by *TWT* and 11 by *PM*. Stories from the three programs were sampled in those proportions.

The stories were sampled at random from two randomly chosen two-week periods dating back no further than three months from the date of selection, but excluding the 2007 federal election campaign period. Election campaigns create abnormal patterns of coverage and anyway that coverage is subject to its own auditing procedures. Items were drawn from weekday editions only.

Over four weeks, based on the figures from the week beginning 1 October 2007, the total number of Australian domestic stories across the three programs is likely to be approximately 460. It was decided that a random sample of one-third of these stories would be drawn. A sampling fraction of one-third is considered to be almost the equivalent of a census, and so yields a high level of confidence that the sample is truly representative. Thus a total sample of 150 stories was drawn. In the event, one story from *The World Today* did not qualify for inclusion because it turned out to be a foreign story, so the actual sample was 149. This makes no material difference to the findings.

The sample was broken down proportionally among the three programs so as to reflect the actual distribution of qualifying stories as shown in the week 1 to 5 October 2007. This meant that the items in the sample were broken down as follows:

AM	44 items
TWT	53 items (ultimately 52)
PM	53 items
Total	150 items (ultimately 149)

⁴ Part 11, Division 2, *Broadcasting Services Act 1992 (Cth)*.

D. Definitions

The first dependent variable is accuracy. For the purposes of this study, accuracy was considered to have two elements:

1. Plain facts: names, titles, dates, amounts, and so on.
2. Contextual accuracy: the fidelity of the broadcast material to the context in which the facts were presented in the documentary source material, and the use of facts in a way that did justice to the range of factual material available from the documentary sources.

Factual content was defined as:

Material which conveys bare information directly verifiable by reference to a source other than the item under investigation, and not containing explanation, interpretation, analysis, or opinion.

This definition is consistent with, although not exactly the same as, that used by the Australian Communication and Media Authority.

The second dependent variable is labelling. Where labels were applied to groups of individuals, they were assessed for relevance in terms of paras 5.17.2 and 11.8.2 of the Editorial Policies.

E. Process of assessment

It is acknowledged that there was some element of subjectivity in the assessments, and a system of inter-reviewer reliability was used to minimise it.

Each item was individually reviewed by two experienced journalists from outside the ABC. Their reviews were conducted independently of each other, and then compared by the project manager, Dr Muller. Where the assessments were discrepant, he reviewed the item himself.

The reviews consisted of initially listening to the sound track and reading the transcripts from the broadcast items and comparing their content with documentary source material referred to in the items or upon which it became clear the item was based.

From that, the reviewers assessed each item overall for plain-fact and contextual accuracy on the following scale:

Wholly accurate

Substantially accurate

Immaterially inaccurate

Materially inaccurate

These were defined as follows:

Wholly accurate: *No apparent errors at all.*

Substantially accurate: *No more than one apparent error which makes no substantial difference to the overall accuracy of the information conveyed.*

Immaterially inaccurate: An error or errors that are not reasonably likely to result in harm to those directly affected by the report, a material misunderstanding among listeners, or damage to the ABC's reputation.

Materially inaccurate: An error or errors that make a substantial difference to the overall accuracy of the information conveyed in that it is reasonably likely to result in harm to those directly affected by the report, material misunderstanding among listeners, or damage to the ABC's reputation.

It is recognised that there are varying degrees of harm. The threshold for the harm referred to in these definitions was that the harm would be not inconsequential. For instance, an inaccuracy may not harm a company's share price, but it may be reasonably likely to cost the company considerable time and expense to rectify the effects.

The assessment sheet used is given in Appendix I.

Reasonableness test

Any negative initial assessments will be moderated against a reasonableness test which will take into account the following factors:

How much time did the program team member/s have to prepare the report?

At what time of day was the report prepared?

How much prior knowledge about the subject was available to the program team member/s at the time of preparing the report?

What was the status of that knowledge?

How much expertise did the program team member/s have in the subject-matter?

What steps were taken by the program team member/s to verify the facts?

What constraints, if any, existed within the program for the ventilation of the item?

If there were constraints, to what extent did they lie within the control of the program team member/s concerned?

The application of the reasonableness test does not mean that inaccuracies will be ignored, unreported or excused, but that the circumstances in which any inaccuracies occurred are described. This is an important aspect of ensuring that quality assurance projects produce results that can be fed back into continuous improvement.

This test will be applied only in cases where inaccuracies are discerned and the program team provides a response to the draft findings. Any results from the application of the reasonableness test will be included in the final report. It was not for the assessors to apply the test since they had no knowledge of the circumstances in which the items had been prepared for broadcast.

F. Data analysis procedures

A simple count was done of items falling within each category of accuracy, and these are reported both in raw numbers and as a proportion of the total number of items from each program.

Results are reported for each program individually and summed across the three programs as well.

The existence of any stereotypical labelling was simply noted as an incidence. These incidences were counted and described in the analysis according to which particular characteristic it drew attention to and from which program.

G. Procedural fairness

A draft of this report was written in February and March 2008, and sent to senior management in News Division on 6 March for comment. They were asked to respond by 21 March, which they did.

In their response they did not specifically invoke any elements of the Reasonableness Test but they made a number of general points concerning the amount of time staff on these programs have to prepare their material, the early hours of the day in which some of the work has to be done, and the necessity for current affairs staff to explore issues in greater depth than news. In five specific instances they noted that the item as finally broadcast contained more information than had been in the original documentary material on which the item was based, and argued that while this meant that the item as broadcast might have been inconsistent with the documentary material, in fact it had been an accurate report. In a sixth case the item had been based on documentary material different from that used by the reviewer.

Implications for this methodology

The methodology has two stages:

1. An initial review of a sample of items based mainly on documentary sources, in which the broadcast item is compared for factual and contextual accuracy against the documentary sources.
2. The incorporation of the staff's response into a final report. This provides staff with the opportunity to contest the findings, provide further information and invoke elements of the Reasonableness Test if they wish.

There is clearly an inherent risk in this methodology that the documents used by the reviewers will not be the same as those used by the reporter. A further limitation is that the item's content based on documents will usually be only part of the story.

However, the risk has been shown in this pilot to be small. Only one of the 32 stories found to have been less than wholly accurate was said to have been based on a different document. Five more stories were said to have contained information beyond the documents which rendered the stories accurate even if they were inconsistent with the documentary source material.

Eliminating this risk would be not only expensive but ultimately impracticable. It would require an invasive procedure in which reporters were asked to supply details of the documents actually used, and it would require re-interviewing the talent, with all the opportunities for post-hoc reconstruction that that would open up.

Recognising that the methodology has these limitations, we nonetheless believe that the pilot has shown that it gives a reliable, valid, practical and cost-effective measurement of the quality of accuracy in the work of the three programs reviewed. We are fortified in this view by the high correlations – averaging 0.79 – between the findings of the double blind reviewers.

Step two in the process has shown that the risks described earlier are able to be managed by the staff having an opportunity to respond, and allows for the full picture to be presented in the final report.

We believe it is possible to replicate this study using less elaborate procedures than were used here. The high correlations between the reviewers indicates that experienced professionals share a high degree of consensus

about what constitutes accuracy, and that it may not be necessary to always use a double-blind system. Single reviewers working under independent supervision would probably produce data of equal value to that presented here.

Good practice requires future studies to be benchmarked, and it is suggested that the original data in this report be considered the benchmark for future comparisons.

VI. Findings on accuracy

A. Accuracy

On the basis of the documentary evidence alone – against which the items were externally reviewed – the level of accuracy across the three programs, *AM*, *The World Today* and *PM*, is very high: 95.3% of the items sampled were found to be either wholly or substantially accurate for plain facts, and 97.3% were found to be wholly or substantially accurate as to context (Table 1a).

Conversely, 4.7% were found to be either immaterially or materially inaccurate for plain facts, and 2.7% were found to be immaterially or materially inaccurate as to context (Table 1a).

The incidence of material inaccuracy across the three programs was very low: 1.5% for plain facts and 1.4% for context (Table 2a).

Table 1 summarises the results on a simple accuracy/inaccuracy basis for the three programs, and provides a mean score for the three programs combined on that simple dichotomy.

TABLE 1a: ACCURACY/INACCURACY SUMMARY SCORES BY PROGRAM

PROGRAM	PLAIN-FACT ACCURACY		CONTEXTUAL ACCURACY	
	Wholly/substantially accurate	Immaterially/materially inaccurate	Wholly/substantially accurate	Immaterially/materially inaccurate
	%	%	%	%
AM	95.5	4.5	97.7	2.3
The World Today	96.2	3.8	96.2	3.8
PM	94.3	5.7	98.0	1.9
Mean	95.3	4.7	97.3	2.7

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding

It can be seen that the overall accuracy-inaccuracy ratios for the three programs were very similar both for plain facts and context. *The World Today's* plain-fact accuracy score was marginally higher than that of the other two programs; *PM's* contextual accuracy score was marginally higher than those of the other two. *AM* fell between the other two on both counts.

Table 2a breaks down these summary scores for each program so that distinctions can be discerned between the different degrees of accuracy and inaccuracy for each program.

TABLE 2a: ACCURACY/INACCURACY -- DETAILED SCORES BY PROGRAM

DEGREE OF ACCURACY	PROGRAM						MEANS	
	AM		TWT		PM			
Base	44		52		53			
	%		%		%			
	Plain-fact	Contextual	Plain-fact	Contextual	Plain-fact	Contextual	Plain-fact	Contextual
Wholly accurate	77.3	86.4	84.6	88.5	73.6	88.7	82.8	87.9
Substantially accurate	18.2	11.4	11.5	7.7	20.8	9.4	16.8	9.5
Immaterially inaccurate	--	--	3.8	3.8	5.7	--	3.2	1.3
Materially inaccurate	4.5	2.3	--	--	--	1.9	1.5	1.4

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding

TWT's wholly-accurate plain-fact score is higher than that of the other two programs, both of which show some slippage into the "substantially accurate" category.

TWT's contextual-accuracy score is almost the same as PM's, and both are slightly higher than AM's.

As we have said, the incidence of material inaccuracy is very low, but the incidence of this on AM is greater on both counts than on the other two programs.

We deal in detail with the broad nature of inaccuracies later.

Table 3a shows the raw numbers from which the percentages in Tables 1 and 2 were derived.

TABLE 3a: COUNT OF CASES BY PROGRAM AND CATEGORY OF ACCURACY

PROGRAM	NO. OF ITEMS	CATEGORY OF ACCURACY							
		Wholly accurate		Substantially accurate		Immaterially inaccurate		Materially inaccurate	
		Plain-fact	Contextual	Plain-fact	Contextual	Plain-fact	Contextual	Plain-fact	Contextual
AM	44	34	38	8	5	-	--	2	1
TWT	52	44	46	6	4	2	2	--	--
PM	53	39	47	11	5	3	--	--	1

These figures assist in understanding the data by revealing the numbers of items falling into the various categories of accuracy. It can be seen that of the 149 items reviewed, four contained material inaccuracies, and seven contained immaterial inaccuracies.

In addition, there were items classified as substantially accurate which by definition contained a minor error of one kind or another.

News Division's response

News Division provided a written response to the draft report within the time frame arranged.

The response began by making three general points:

1. Staff of the three radio current affairs programs reviewed – AM, The World Today, and PM – have about 90 minutes in which to prepare their material for broadcast.
2. Current affairs journalists are expected to explore issues in greater depth, provoke and promote public debate, and investigate matters, on top of providing information.
3. To do this properly, current affairs reports will often employ a wider range of styles (than news).

The latter two points are from the ABC News Style Guide of August 2006.

Dealing then with the instances of what were found to be inaccuracies, the response began by noting that the items broadcast contained material that went beyond the documentary sources, and that where this had a material bearing on the content, it was noted in the response to that item.

The draft report presented 32 cases illustrating the types of inaccuracies found.

The response dealt with 12 cases. Of these 12:

Five items were justified on the basis that the report went beyond the documentary source and interviewed people, thus obtaining further information which made the report accurate even if it differed in some way from the documentary material.

One item was justified on the basis that it came from a different documentary source to that used by the reviewer.

One item was justified on the basis that a standard procedure was used in describing equal rankings.

One item was justified on the basis that the words used were informal but conveyed an accurate meaning.

One item was justified on the basis that it included the word “may”, thus qualifying the use of an upper-range estimate.

One item was justified on the basis that the inaccuracy alleged was a distinction without a difference.

One item was justified on the basis that a logical inference could be drawn that was in fact accurate.

In one case it was noted that the reporter did attempt an on-air correction in a live situation. The transcript shows this to be true.

If the justifications of News Division were accepted, the levels of plain-fact and contextual accuracy would be higher, as Tables 1b, 2b and 3b show. To enable a ready comparison to be made, the figures from the original findings are struck through and the figures based on News Division's justifications are given in italics. This presentation connotes neither endorsement of News Division's response nor rejection of the original findings.

The figures based on News Division's response show an increase in the proportion of wholly accurate stories for all three programs and corresponding decreases in the categories of substantially accurate, immaterially inaccurate and materially inaccurate items.

News Division's full response is presented in Appendix II.

TABLE 1b: ACCURACY/INACCURACY SUMMARY SCORES BY PROGRAM

PROGRAM	PLAIN-FACT ACCURACY		CONTEXTUAL ACCURACY	
	Wholly/substantially accurate	Immaterially/materially inaccurate	Wholly/substantially accurate	Immaterially/materially inaccurate
	%	%	%	%
AM	95.5 97.7	4.5 2.3	97.7	2.3
The World Today	96.2 98.1	3.8 1.9	96.2	3.8
PM	94.3 100.0	5.7 0.0	98.0 100.00	1.9 0.0
Mean	95.3 98.6	4.7 1.4	97.3 98.0	2.7 2.0

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding

TABLE 2b: ACCURACY/INACCURACY -- DETAILED SCORES BY PROGRAM

DEGREE OF ACCURACY	PROGRAM						MEANS	
	AM		TWT		PM		Plain-fact	Contextual
Base	44		52		53			
	%		%		%			
	Plain-fact	Contextual	Plain-fact	Contextual	Plain-fact	Contextual	Plain-fact	Contextual
Wholly accurate	77.3 79.5	86.4	84.6 88.5	88.5	73.6 84.9	88.7 90.6	82.8 84.3	87.9 88.5
Substantially accurate	18.2	11.4	11.5 9.6	7.7	20.8 15.1	9.4	16.8 14.3	9.5
Immaterially inaccurate	--	--	3.8 1.9	3.8	5.7 0.0	--	3.2 0.6	1.3
Materially inaccurate	4.5 2.3	2.3	--	--	--	1.9 0.0	1.5 0.8	1.4 0.8

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding

TABLE 3b: COUNT OF CASES BY PROGRAM AND CATEGORY OF ACCURACY

PROGRAM	NO. OF ITEMS	CATEGORY OF ACCURACY							
		Wholly accurate		Substantially accurate		Immaterially inaccurate		Materially inaccurate	
		Plain-fact	Contextual	Plain-fact	Contextual	Plain-fact	Contextual	Plain-fact	Contextual
AM	44	34 35	38	8	5	-	--	2 1	1
TWT	52	44 46	46	6 5	4	2 1	2	--	--
PM	53	39 45	47 48	11 8	5	3 --	--	--	4 --

Typology of inaccuracies

To assist in understanding the nature of all the inaccuracies found, a typology was developed. There are five types:

1. **Imprecision:** Minor errors of fact; careless or ambiguous expression leading to the creation of a misleading impression; the use of unnecessary approximations.
2. **Pushing it:** Using the upper or lower limit of a range of numbers in place of the range itself; rounding up or down well beyond what is reasonable; nudging the facts so that an exaggerated sense of drama or importance is achieved.
3. **False alarm:** Creating conflict or negativity where none really exists.
4. **A hook looking for a story:** The use of a term or phrase which has news currency, usually in the introduction to the story, when the substance of the story has little or nothing to do with that topic.
5. **Oversimplification:** Paraphrasing or short-cutting that leaves out a material fact and thus alters the substance of the story as received by the audience.

Tables 4 to 8 contain illustrations of these types of inaccuracy. It should be borne in mind that they contain only the extracts of the item that contained the inaccuracy, and not the whole item.

Imprecision was by far the commonest type of inaccuracy found in this study. There were 12 instances of careless expression leading to the creation of a false impression; 5 instances of minor factual errors, and 2 instances of unnecessary approximations. This is a total of 19 cases of imprecision. Table 4 sets them out.

TABLE 4: INSTANCES OF IMPRECISION

ITEM NO.	DATE	TITLE	NATURE OF INACCURACY
A16	2.10.07	Study finds WorkChoices disadvantages low-skilled workers	No reference in source documents to highly skilled workers “doing well”, as reported, but that they “fared best on individual common-law contracts”. This is a comparative, as opposed to an absolute, statement. They could be doing better than others without necessarily doing well.
A21	4.10.07	Authorities reluctant to assess overseas doctors: report	The item said: “(the) report has found that there is no assessment of foreign doctors’ credentials.” In fact the report said that overseas-trained doctors who are permanent residents cannot practise without completing two tests and a one-year internship administered by the Australian Medical Council (AMC) while overseas-trained doctors entering Australia on a temporary resident basis have been allowed to practise without an equivalent test. Some overseas-trained doctors who hold permanent residence were also working in Australian hospitals in provisional appointments without having passed or in some cases even begun the AMC accreditation process.
A26	8.10.07	Wind farms plan for outback NSW	The item said: “The company behind the plan wants to put hundreds of wind turbines north of Broken Hill by 2009.” Later in the item this was somewhat contradicted by a statement that the company “wants to begin construction by 2009”. The company’s statement confirms that the latter statement is correct.
A30	11.10.07	Federal funding for states dwindling, says report	In a question to Finance Minister Nick Minchin the ABC reporter said: “The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare figures have shown that your (Federal Government) spending on health has decreased by four percentage points over the last little while, so in fact, the Commonwealth share of spending on health, on hospitals, which has been talked about a lot lately, is going down, while the state share is going up.” The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) report says, “Between 1995-96 and 2005-06, the Australian Government share of <i>public hospital funding</i> (our italics) decreased from 45 per cent to 41 per cent.” The four percentage point decrease was in share of <i>public hospital</i> funding, not in spending on <i>health</i> . In fact the AIHW report found, “After allowing for inflation, real growth in Australian Government funding of health grew by an average of 4.9 per cent a year from 1995-96 to 2005-06.”
A33	3.12.07	Campaign urges abstinence from alcohol during pregnancy	The item quoted the CEO of ARBIAS as saying 1 in 100 newborn babies is believed to have FASD in the US, but in the ARBIAS media release this is given as a statistic for Australia.

ITEM NO.	DATE	TITLE	NATURE OF INACCURACY
A37	4.12.07	Body image the main concern for youths: survey	The item states that "when asked what their top three concerns were", young people ranked body image, family conflict and stress as the top three. The release from Mission Australia stated that participants were asked to rank 14 issues, and that these three were ranked as the top three.
A44	6.12.07	Innovation needed to boost tourism industry	The item stated that the tourism market was valued at \$84 billion; the figure given by the ABS was \$81 billion.
A71	5.10.07	Abbott admits states' public hospital funding surpassing Commonwealth	<p>The item states: The health insurance rebate costs the Federal Government more than \$3-billion dollars last year, at the same time the operating profits of health insurance funds doubled to nearly a billion dollars.</p> <p>The report [Health and Welfare series No 30 (2005-06)] on which this item is based, Table 28 shows that health insurance fund profits rose from \$447 million in 2003/04 to \$626 million in 2004-05 and \$984 million in 2005-06. So the doubling of the profits took place over two years. The report states that the doubling took place "at the same time" as the previous statement in which the time frame was "last year". The indication is that the doubling took place over one year, when it took place over two years.</p>
A108	5.12.07	OECD report reflects 'dumbing down' of school curriculums	The item stated Australian students were 6 th in reading (OECD said 7 th) and 9 th in maths (OECD 10 th).
A130	1.10.07	Welfare group calls for employment aid	Item described Tony Nicholson as Chief Executive of the Brotherhood of St Laurence. In fact he is the Executive Director.
A133	2.10.07	Climate change report calls for immediate action	The intro to the item referred to "prolonged droughts" but the report referred to "more frequent droughts". The item also states that under the worst-case scenario, temperatures would rise by 1 degree C by 2030. In fact this is a straight out prediction. The worst-case scenario applies only to the 2070 estimates, and lies in the range of 2.2 to 5 degrees C.
A134	2.10.07	Parents using psychology to protect children from sexual material	Item says parents are being urged to "use psychology", whereas the document from the Australian Psychological Society contained merely a series of tips for parents.
A141	4.10.07	Pulp mill construction could begin by year's end	John Gay is executive chairman of Gunns Ltd, not Chief Executive as stated in the item.
A148	8.10.07	Renewables industry needs target, says energy company	Item refers to "the world's" biggest wind farm, but the media release refers to "Australia's" biggest wind farm.
A166	12.10.07	Govt advisory group recommends tougher alcohol guidelines	The item refers to "safe" levels of alcohol consumption yet the document stresses that the guideline does "not represent a 'safe' or 'no-risk' drinking level". The item refers to "avoiding risk" but the document talks about "low risk" rather than no risk. The item says pregnant women should drink

ITEM NO.	DATE	TITLE	NATURE OF INACCURACY
			"no more than" seven standard drinks per week, but the document recommends "less than" seven standard drinks per week.
A171	4.12.07	ACTU claims employers forcing late AWAs on to workers	The item states that about one in four employees in WA are on AWAs, but Workplace Authority figures state that this is the national ratio. In WA it is either 44.75% or 32.1% depending on whether the calculation is based on full-time employees or all employees.
A175	5.12.07	ASIO backs agent over possible criminal behaviour	The item states that the case was thrown out of court. In fact, the judge deemed much of the evidence inadmissible and the DPP dropped the charges.
A178	5.12.07	Vic hospital calls for federal funding	The item stated that the Coalition had promised \$500,000 then another \$2.5 million. The extra amount was in fact \$2 million.
A182	6.12.07	Farmers facing climate change decline: report	The item states in relation to a report from ABARE the possibility that Australia might have to import grain and meat products, but there is no such statement in the ABARE report referred to. Also the item states that "the beef, grain and sugar industries will be hardest hit". The report shows, in order, that beef, dairy, sugar, sheep meat and wheat will be hardest hit.

TABLE 5: INSTANCES OF PUSHING IT

ITEM NO.	DATE	TITLE	NATURE OF INACCURACY
A20	3.10.07	Renewable energy reports highlights economic benefits	The item stated that an economic analysis commissioned by the Renewable Energy Generators of Australia found that investment in clean energy would save the Australian economy \$800m by 2050. The report actually states a range of net benefits of minus \$800m to plus \$800m depending on targets and other variables.
A31	11.10.07	ASIC blitz focuses on smaller companies	The item reported "almost 300" breaches of the Act. The actual number was 269.
A70	4.10.07	Plan to stop illegal timber imports	The item says "10% of Australia's timber imports are coming from illegal sources". The Minister's press release states that an estimated 9% come from suspected illegal sources.
A72	5.10.07	Farmers keen to take part in carbon solution: Farmers' Federation	The item states that agriculture is responsible for producing almost 20% of national greenhouse gas emissions. The actual figure is 16%.
A90	11.10.07	Jobless figure indicates interest rate rise	The item refers to Westpac-Melbourne Institute data as showing inflation expectations at 4.6%. The figure is 4.5%. The item also refers to "extreme" inflation; the original document refers to "volatile" inflation.
A100	4.12.07	All pilots will experience spatial disorientation: report	The item states that more than a quarter of fatal plane crashes may have occurred as a result of spatial disorientation. The report puts the figure at

ITEM NO.	DATE	TITLE	NATURE OF INACCURACY
			15 to 26%. It also qualifies the statement that all pilots will experience this phenomenon by saying "if they fly long enough". The item defines spatial disorientation as a "warped sense of direction". The report defines it as the inability of the pilot to interpret aircraft attitude, altitude and airspeed in relation to Earth.
A104	5.12.07	RBA documents reveal growing credit concerns	The item says the RBA notes that inflation is above its target band. The RBA report says that the rate is at the top end of the band but not above it. The item also says major economies around the world are weakening; the RBA says they appear to be weakening.
A136	3.10.07	Scientists call for action on climate change	The item reports predictions of a 5-degree C warming by 2070; the reports from CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology state the likely rise as 1 to 2.5 degrees C and if emissions are high 2.2 to 5C . The "best estimate" is 3.4C. An appendix to the report states that any rise over 4.7C would be "highly unlikely".
A137	3.10.07	Religious leaders urge Govt to act on climate change	This item repeats the exaggerated outlook for 2070 already described above for Item A136.
A141	4.10.07	Pulp mill construction could begin by year's end	The item refers to the \$2bn mill; the company release says it is \$1.7bn.
A183	6.12.07	NSW Ombudsman admits DoCS in disarray	The item states that DoCS receives 280,000 calls a year. The Ombudsman's report states that the DoCS helpline received 241,003 calls in 2005-06.

TABLE 6: INSTANCES OF FALSE ALARM

ITEM NO.	DATE	TITLE	NATURE OF INACCURACY
A41	5.12.07	Scientists encouraged by new weather, climate centre	The item reports scientists (unidentified) as saying Australia has been lagging behind other countries in researching climate change. The media releases from CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology make no such statement. A Dr Chris Mitchell says the research has been under-resourced but even so is at the forefront.
A145	5.10.07	Chief Justice speaks out	The item states that "judges are often criticized by community members and politicians as being out of touch and remote from the lives of everyday Australians. So here is Murray Gleeson's defence". Thus the remarks of the Chief Justice are set up as a defence to a proposition he did not acknowledge. In his speech, Gleeson said: "Is there such a thing as public opinion of judges and, if so, what is it? There is probably no clear or simple answer . . . People . . . probably have a range of opinions . . ."

TABLE 7: INSTANCE OF A HOOK LOOKING FOR A STORY

ITEM NO.	DATE	TITLE	NATURE OF INACCURACY
A42	5.12.07	NFF pushes for genetic engineering of crops	Despite a reference to genetic engineering in the intro to the item, the story was remarkably light on that topic. It dealt mainly with the impact of climate change on farming practices. Dr Mark Howden from the CSIRO, whose paper appeared to form the basis for the item, didn't mention it and wasn't asked about it. He was talking about his findings (published in a recent article) and implications for farming practices - eg suitable crops for particular locations, when to plant and so on. Ben Fargher from the NFF briefly mentioned genetic engineering, but focused more on land use.

TABLE 8: INSTANCE OF OVERSIMPLIFICATION

ITEM NO.	DATE	TITLE	NATURE OF INACCURACY
A136	3.10.07	Scientists call for action on climate change	The item's introduction paraphrases Dr Jim Peacock as saying only nuclear and clean coal technologies could reduce carbon emissions and meet Australia's power needs. Dr Peacock's speech stated that these technologies will probably meet Australia's <i>baseload</i> power needs, but he more generally advocated an approach which included a range of other technologies as well.

B. An additional issue for consideration

It was striking how seldom the items on these three programs stated their documentary sources. This means that in the overwhelming majority of cases the audience was not told the origins of the story. There was of course lots of sourcing of what people said – indeed the sourcing at that level was thorough. The sourcing of basic documentation, however, might be considered a matter worth discussing as potentially adding to the usefulness of the information provided to the audience, and giving it more context. This may be considered to be especially the case now that listeners, if they wish, can follow up the item themselves by obtaining the documentation from the internet. For this reason, telling them what exists and who produced it might be thought to be more relevant now than in the past. It is, of course, entirely a matter for editorial judgment and is not put forward here as anything more than a subject for consideration.

C. Inter-reviewer reliability

To minimize the inescapable element of subjectivity involved in making judgments of the kind called for in this review, a double-blind system of reviewing was employed. This meant that two reviewers reviewed each item independently and without knowing who the other reviewer was. Allowance was made for a third reviewer to assess items on which the initial two reviews yielded widely discrepant findings – for example, where one reviewer found the item wholly accurate and the other materially inaccurate either on plain facts or context. Three such cases occurred.

There were many minor discrepancies but these were all able to be resolved by the project manager by reference to the evidence provided by the reviewers, using the definitions provided for each of the four points on the accuracy scale.

Many of the differences between reviewers lay between “wholly accurate” and “substantially accurate” and between “substantially accurate” and “immaterially inaccurate”.

To measure the degree of congruence between reviewers, values were assigned to the various degrees of variance possible under the scale, as follows:

Where the reviewers’ assessments were identical, they were given the value of 1. Where there was any difference, either on plain-fact or contextual accuracy, of one place on the scale they were given the value of 0.75; where there was a difference of two places they were given the value of 0.25; where there was a difference of three places they were given the value of zero.

The correlations of congruence between four of the six pairs of reviewers were high – 0.8 or greater. The correlations between the other two pairs were lower but still reasonable at 0.69 and 0.77. The overall correlation was 0.79. The full set of correlations is given in Table 9:

TABLE 9: INTER-REVIEWER RELIABILITY -- CORRELATIONS OF CONGRUENCE

REVIEWERS	CORRELATION
1 and 7	0.80
2 and 8	0.86
3 and 9	0.82
4 and 10	0.69
5 and 11	0.77
6 and 12	0.81

These data suggest that there is a high to very high degree of consensus among experienced journalists about what constitutes plain-fact and contextual accuracy, and little risk of idiosyncratic assessments when experienced journalists are asked to conduct reviews like this. It may mean that future quality-assurance reviews on accuracy can be done by single reviewers, so long as they have the requisite experience and demonstrated steadiness of judgment.

Note: When a potential conflict of interest was brought to notice during the reviewing process, a third reviewer was brought in to work on the relevant items. The correlation between the third reviewer’s assessments and those of the original reviewer was 0.79, and between the third reviewer and the paired reviewer also 0.79. This equated exactly to the overall correlations between the reviewers, as reported above. It follows that there was no significant difference between the findings of the third reviewer and either of the other two who reviewed the same articles. Therefore there is no effect on the total findings.

A caveat: The assessments were based on a comparison between the broadcast items and the documentary material on which it was either explicitly based or on which it appeared to our reviewers to be based. Because these documents were not always explicitly identified in the broadcast, a “best endeavours” approach was taken to this aspect of the work.

D. Reviewing time

Each reviewer was given 25 items to review. The amount of time taken to conduct the reviews varied substantially, from 18.40 hours to 50.5 hours. By far the greater amount of time was taken up assessing plain-fact and contextual accuracy; the labelling part took virtually every reviewer only about 10 minutes, 15 minutes

at the most. The average time taken to carry out the plain-fact and contextual accuracy part of the assessments was 31 hours 28 minutes, and the median lay between 27 hours 38 minutes and 31 hours 43 minutes.

Some assessments took more than two hours and a small number took as many as three hours. Much of this was taken up finding the documentation on which the story was based. As matters stand, this will continue to be a challenging part of this work in the future. An unusual factor making the task more difficult at this time was that in the aftermath of the federal election of 24 November 2007, some websites had archived or removed material placed by the previous government. This had occurred between election day and the period (in January-February 2008) when the reviews were carried out.

Many reviewers were extremely conscientious about tracking down the documents, and it is this that accounts in large measure for the disparity in reviewer time. For obvious reasons, reviewers were precluded by the terms of their engagement from making any contact with ABC staff who had been involved in the preparation or broadcasting of the items. The reviewers' re-reporting had to be entirely independent to safeguard the credibility and integrity of the project.

VII. Findings on labelling

As a second part of the review, the sampled items were examined for the use of inappropriate labelling.

This being a project assessing accuracy, not a project assessing impartiality, labels were not considered from the perspective of whether their use indicated bias.

Labels were assessed primarily for whether they “provided valuable information or context” (para 5.17.2) by reference to the characteristics listed in para 11.8.2. For practical purposes this was defined as a test of relevance. Where a label was relevant in the sense that it provided valuable information or context, it was considered appropriate; otherwise it was considered inappropriate.

Inappropriate labelling was found to be uncommon on these programs, occurring in only five items (3.4% of the sample) . They are set out in Table 10.

The five labels were related to occupational status, physical characteristics, parental status (actually grandparental status), gender, and sexual preference.

News Division did not agree that any of the five were instances of inappropriate labelling, arguing that the labels used added context or colour, were examples of basic descriptive journalism, conformed with the Style Guide or were translations of jargon into standard English.

In rejecting the instances of labelling as inappropriate, News Division invoked passages from the ABC Style Guide concerning the differences between news and current affairs presentations.

The quoted passages said in part:

Current affairs stories and programs will explore issues in greater depth, provoke and promote public debate by putting issues on the agenda for discussion, and investigate matters of public importance.

Because of its broader brief to explore, provoke and stimulate, current affairs reports will often employ a wider range of styles in their language and construction.

News Division, in its response, interpreted this as providing scope for more description and more colour. It also invoked the ABC’s Editorial Policies:

The ABC does not label groups or individuals *except where labels provide valuable information or context* (News Division’s italics). On this basis, News argued that the examples used provided either valuable information or context.

Taken together, the use of the five labels found to be inappropriate were defended as adding description, colour, information and context to the items concerned.

The use of the term “colour” seems to be an interpretative extension to the provisions of the Editorial Policies, where the relevant term is “information and context”.

There is no evidence to indicate that the labels were inaccurate; whether they were appropriate is the question. It should be noted that one of the gender-specific labels was said to be required by the Style Guide, which did not allow the gender-neutral term “Chair”.

The Division’s full response on labelling is given as Appendix III.

TABLE 10: INSTANCES OF LABELLING

ITEM NO	DATE	TITLE	LABEL	REASON FOR FINDING IT IRRELEVANT
A102	4.12.07	Australian scientists link schizophrenia to astronomy	“A former magician”	The report was about the work of a professor of psychology. There was evident confusion about the distinction between astronomy and astrology in the presentation of this item, and it was not clear why Professor Wiseman’s former occupation was relevant, since his research concerned the correlation between people’s season of birth and how lucky they felt themselves to be.
A120	11.12.07	More details released of alleged Einfeld offences	“His hair is quite long”	The relevance of this reference to a defendant’s physical characteristics was not apparent.
A128	14.12.07	Drinking to your health	“74-year-old grandmother”	This was a story about geriatrics, so age was relevant but the status as grandmother was not.
A150	8.10.07	Boost to schizophrenia research	“Chairwoman”	The post occupied by Professor Shannon Weickert was described in the media release as Chair of Schizophrenia Research.
A203	14.12.07	Sweeping changes to Victoria’s IVF program	“Lesbian”; “single mother”	The media release from the Victoria Attorney-General referred to “single women”, “same-sex couples” and “female partner of the child’s mother”. These avoided the stereotyping often associated with the terms used in the item.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Assessment sheet used by reviewers

ABC Editorial Policies - Quality Assurance Project 2: Accuracy

Item assessment sheet

Please complete one assessment sheet for each item reviewed.

1. Item record number (write in) Your reviewer number

2. Program on which the item was broadcast:

AM	<input type="checkbox"/>	
The World Today		<input type="checkbox"/>
PM	<input type="checkbox"/>	

3. Date of broadcast

4. Title of item (copy from transcript list)

5. **Accuracy** assessments (overall assessment based on plain facts and contextual accuracy):

	Plain facts	Contextual
Wholly accurate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Substantially accurate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Immaterially inaccurate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Materially inaccurate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Please describe any inaccuracy or inaccuracies:

7. **Labelling** assessment

If irrelevant labelling was used, please identify all instances by writing in the actual words used, and assess them for relevance by ticking one or other of the columns:

Label	Words used
Race	
Ethnicity	
Nationality	
Sex	
Age	
Disability	
Sexual preference	
Marital status	
Parental status	
Social status	
Occupational status	
Religious belief	
Cultural affiliation	
Political belief or affiliation	
Physical characteristics	
Other	

Please say why you believe this labelling to be irrelevant:

8. Any further observations about the story in respect of accuracy or labelling:

How long it took to review this story (write in):

Any issue concerning the assessment process, as distinct from the assessment itself (write in):

Appendix 2: News Division's response on accuracy

Editorial Quality Assurance Project 2: Accuracy Response from News Division

The News Division welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the draft report for this project. This paper refers to some of the specific findings in the draft and makes some general comments about the project and the report. It has been put together with the assistance of the three program teams in Radio Current Affairs and relevant editorial management in News.

It is worth making a few comments about the nature of the Radio Current Affairs programs and how they are put together. As News is sure many of the reviewers are aware, these programs are put together with small teams working to tight deadlines dealing with stories that are often still developing as the programs are going to air. To use an example, the EP of AM assigns stories after an editorial meeting around 6.30am. This means that all available information about a story has to be sought out and absorbed; talent identified, located, woken up and then interviewed; talent edited; script written; voice recorded and then story cut together—all in ninety minutes. This process and time-frame are similar for the other two programs.

Another salient point is that the role of radio current affairs is quite different from the role of radio news: current affairs reporters are expected to tell stories in a different way from news reporting. The ABC News Style Guide says:

What is news? What is current affairs?

*All material produced by the News ... Division must adhere to the ABC's four key values – **honesty, fairness, independence and respect** – enshrined in Editorial Policies. They must also conform to our principles of editorial responsibility, which require **accuracy, impartiality and balance**.*

However, there are often significant differences between current affairs and news.

Both can provide information, context and analysis. But while news is primarily involved in informing our audience at the earliest opportunity of a current event or issue (and will generally only provide sufficient context and analysis to perform that primary function), current affairs has a broader brief. Current affairs stories and programs will explore issues in greater depth, provoke and promote public debate by putting issues on the agenda for discussion, and investigate matters of public importance.

Because of its broader brief to explore, provoke and stimulate, current affairs reports will often employ a wider range of styles in their language and construction. Interviews and debates may be more conversational, stories more discursive, and programs more adventurous by using music, humour, and other story-telling devices.⁵

So you would expect there would be more description, more colour in current affairs programs. News makes this point because it is particularly relevant to the section on labelling in the draft report. News would argue that some of the labels deemed inappropriate in the draft fall into the category of adding colour to stories, and are therefore not unnecessary in the context. While News accepts that labelling can lead to stereotyping, Editorial Policies say, “The ABC does not label groups or individuals *except where labels provide valuable information or context.*” News would argue that the examples used provide either valuable information or context. These instances are dealt with individually in the following tables.

Finally, in a number of cases reporters have, as you would expect, gone beyond the documentary evidence of a media release or a written report and spoken to talent about stories. In some cases, the information they received from the talent took the story further. Where this has a bearing on the outcome of this review, it has been noted individually in the tables.

⁵ Extracted from Style Guide (August 2006), News & Current Affairs Style Guide.

TABLE 4: INSTANCES OF IMPRECISION

ITEM NO.	DATE	TITLE	NATURE OF INACCURACY
A30	11.10.07	Federal funding for states dwindling, says report	<p>In a question to Finance Minister Nick Minchin the ABC reporter said: “The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare figures have shown that your (Federal Government) spending on health has decreased by four percentage points over the last little while, so in fact, the Commonwealth share of spending on health, on hospitals, which has been talked about a lot lately, is going down, while the state share is going up.”</p> <p>The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) report says, “Between 1995-96 and 2005-06, the Australian Government share of <i>public hospital funding</i> (our italics) decreased from 45 per cent to 41 per cent.”</p> <p>The four percentage point decrease was in share of <i>public hospital</i> funding, not in spending on <i>health</i>. In fact the AIHW report found, “After allowing for inflation, real growth in Australian Government funding of health grew by an average of 4.9 per cent a year from 1995-96 to 2005-06.”</p> <p>News response:</p> <p>The interview was live and a study of the full question shows the reporter tried to correct himself in the live situation. He begins by saying spending on health has decreased by four percent, then corrects that later to say “spending on health, on hospitals ...”. The Finance Minister then has the chance to respond and mentions the real increase in overall health spending. News believes the audience would have gained the correct impression:</p> <p><i>REPORTER: But the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare figures have shown that your spending on health has decreased by four percentage points over the last little while, so in fact, the Commonwealth share of spending on health, on hospitals, which has been talked about a lot lately, is going down, while the state share is going up.</i></p> <p><i>NICK MINCHIN: But you keep linking it to the growth in the economy, GDP. What you've got to look at is the real increase in health spending, and the fastest growing area of Commonwealth expenditure is in health.</i></p> <p><i>The growth in the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, which we pay for entirely, the growth in Medicare,</i></p>

ITEM NO.	DATE	TITLE	NATURE OF INACCURACY
			<p><i>which we pay for entirely, and real growth in the money we give to the states. Our complaint is that the states don't spend this money wisely. We provide them with all this revenue, and frankly, they are mismanaging the federal taxpayer's money, when we give it to them. The incompetence of State Labor Governments is a major issue in this federal campaign.</i></p>
A108	5.12.07	OECD report reflects 'dumbing down' of school curriculums	<p>The item stated Australian students were 6th in reading (OECD said 7th) and 9th in maths (OECD 10th).</p> <p>News response:</p> <p>The reporter stated that Australian students were ranked sixth in reading. This was concluded to be an inaccuracy by the reviewers, who said the OECD ranked them seventh. The original report actually states that Australia ranked equal sixth. News would argue that it is fair and reasonable for the reporter to say they ranked sixth and not seventh. A similar conclusion was reached on the maths ranking. The reporter said Australia ranked ninth. The reviewers said the OECD ranked Australia tenth. Again, the original report states Australia ranked equal ninth. It is normal to say, for instance, that two countries came equal sixth in the ranking and the next country after them was ranked eighth.</p>
A133	2.10.07	Climate change report calls for immediate action	<p>The intro to the item referred to "prolonged droughts" but the report referred to "more frequent droughts". The item also states that under the worst-case scenario, temperatures would rise by 1 degree C by 2030. In fact this is a straight out prediction. The worst-case scenario applies only to the 2070 estimates, and lies in the range of 2.2 to 5 degrees C.</p> <p>News response:</p> <p>Penny Whetton, co-author of the report, said at the media conference for the launch of the report (which the reporter attended) that "prolonged droughts are expected to become even more frequent". She was quoted as saying, "Possibly climate change will also cause more frequent El Nino oscillation events, resulting in a more pronounced cycle of prolonged drought and heavy rains." Separately, CSIRO's computer projections have indicated that droughts will become more intense and longer.</p> <p>The one-degree rise by 2030 is part of the worst-case/business- as-usual scenario. It is a J-curve that</p>

ITEM NO.	DATE	TITLE	NATURE OF INACCURACY
			sharply rises to 5% by 2070. Yes, the best case scenario also has a one-degree 2030 rise, but the reporter was painting the picture of the J-curve.
A148	8.10.07	Renewables industry needs target, says energy company	<p>Item refers to “the world’s” biggest wind farm, but the media release refers to “Australia’s” biggest wind farm.</p> <p>News response:</p> <p>The press release may indeed say Australia’s biggest—but the journalist then spoke to the company involved and was told it would also be the world’s biggest. Martin Poole, director of the company Epuron, will confirm this.</p>
A166	12.10.07	Govt advisory group recommends tougher alcohol guidelines	<p>The item refers to “safe” levels of alcohol consumption yet the document stresses that the guideline does “not represent a ‘safe’ or ‘no-risk’ drinking level”. The item refers to “avoiding risk” but the document talks about “low risk” rather than no risk. The item says pregnant women should drink “no more than” seven standard drinks per week, but the document recommends “less than” seven standard drinks per week.</p> <p>News response:</p> <p>Again, the story goes beyond the press release and talks to its author and to people involved in the area:</p> <p><i>“JON CURRIE: So we're not saying you have to drink at these levels, but we're saying that if you do drink above these levels, and that is looking at this is a constant pattern of behaviour, you actually do increase your risk very significantly.</i></p> <p><i>GEOFF MUNRO: If we could stick to these guidelines, we will develop a safer drinking culture in Australia and we'll have less violence, less drink driving and fewer hospital beds occupied by people as a result of drinking.</i></p> <p><i>REPORTER: But he expects there could be some controversy.</i></p> <p><i>GEOFF MUNRO: Well, I think some people who like to drink much more than two drinks a day will think it's unrealistic, but I think in that case ... I think it's important that people who drink more than two drinks a day understand that they are running a risk.</i></p> <p><i>REPORTER: One of the issues that's been most debated, though, has been the advice that should be</i></p>

ITEM NO.	DATE	TITLE	NATURE OF INACCURACY
			<p><i>given to pregnant women.</i></p> <p><i>The current guidelines state that abstinence may be considered, but if a woman chooses to drink it should be no more than seven standard drinks a week and no more than two a day.</i></p> <p><i>The NHMRC (National Health and Medical Research Council) now wants to change that to no drinking at all.</i></p> <p><i>JON CURRIE: No matter what level of drinking you go down to, we could not find a point at which you could say this is safe for a pregnant woman. In other words, even for occasional drinking, there is suggestion that there may be problems with brain development, there may be problems with foetal abnormalities.”</i></p> <p>News believes the context makes the meaning of the report clear.</p>
A171	4.12.07	ACTU claims employers forcing late AWAs on to workers	<p>The item states that about one in four employees in WA are on AWAs, but Workplace Authority figures state that this is the national ratio. In WA it is either 44.75% or 32.1% depending on whether the calculation is based on full-time employees or all employees.</p> <p>News response:</p> <p>The reporter was using another source—a statement by the WA government’s then Employment Protection Minister Michelle Roberts on September 19, 2007. The reporter then asked both the WA Chamber of Commerce and Unions WA if the figure of “about one in four” was accurate and was told it was.</p>
A175	5.12.07	ASIO backs agent over possible criminal behaviour	<p>The item states that the case was thrown out of court. In fact, the judge deemed much of the evidence inadmissible and the DPP dropped the charges.</p> <p>News response:</p> <p>In the Izhar UI-Haque case, the Judge launched a withering attack on the means by which the evidence had been gathered (accusing agents of kidnapping) and—in the words of <i>The Australian</i> newspaper—“forced the DPP to drop the charges”.</p> <p>News believes the expression “it was thrown out of court” is an accurate, summary of what had</p>

ITEM NO.	DATE	TITLE	NATURE OF INACCURACY
			happened, using a readily understood, if slightly informal, expression.
A182	6.12.07	Farmers facing climate change decline: report	<p>The item states in relation to a report from ABARE the possibility that Australia might have to import grain and meat products, but there is no such statement in the ABARE report referred to.</p> <p>Also the item states that “the beef, grain and sugar industries will be hardest hit”. The report shows, in order, that beef, dairy, sugar, sheep meat and wheat will be hardest hit.</p> <p>News response:</p> <p>The reporter got the information on the possible need to import from talking to the author of the report.</p> <p>The author, Don Gunasekera, says the report lists the industries in the order stated, but that order doesn't relate to how hard those industries will be hit. For example, beef is not any worse off than sheep meat. The reporter listed a few of the industries potentially hit as an illustration.</p>

TABLE 5: INSTANCES OF PUSHING IT

ITEM NO.	DATE	TITLE	NATURE OF INACCURACY
A100	4.12.07	All pilots will experience spatial disorientation: report	<p>The item states that more than a quarter of fatal plane crashes may have occurred as a result of spatial disorientation. The report puts the figure at 15 to 26%. It also qualifies the statement that all pilots will experience this phenomenon by saying “if they fly long enough”. The item defines spatial disorientation as a “warped sense of direction”. The report defines it as the inability of the pilot to interpret aircraft attitude, altitude and airspeed in relation to Earth.</p> <p>News response:</p> <p>The reporter states that more than a quarter of fatal plane crashes may have occurred as a result of spatial orientation. It was qualified by the word “may” so was not intended as an absolute statement. News questions whether the sentence was inaccurate because the person being interviewed, not the reporter, said that “It will affect every pilot if they fly, you know, long enough, they will suffer from these illusions.” The report still concluded that 15-26% of fatal crashes may have occurred as a result of</p>

			<p>spatial disorientation. Implicit in that finding is that the author had only surveyed pilots who “had flown long enough” and had therefore done his analysis and come up with the figure based on total pilot numbers. Also News believes a “warped sense of direction” is a sufficient way of summarising spatial disorientation. The report defines it as the inability of the pilot to interpret aircraft attitude, altitude and airspeed in relation to the Earth. It is a reporter’s job to translate jargon into understandable language.</p>
A141	4.10.07	Pulp mill construction could begin by year’s end	<p>The item refers to the \$2bn mill; the company release says it is \$1.7bn.</p> <p>News response:</p> <p>The cost of the pulp mill has been contentious. However, the \$2billion cost was given to the reporter by John Gay of Gunns when the reporter asked him what the correct figure was.</p>

TABLE 6: INSTANCES OF FALSE ALARM

ITEM NO.	DATE	TITLE	NATURE OF INACCURACY
A145	5.10.07	Chief Justice speaks out	<p>The item states that “judges are often criticized by community members and politicians as being out of touch and remote from the lives of everyday Australians. So here is Murray Gleeson’s defence”. Thus the remarks of the Chief Justice are set up as a defence to a proposition he did not acknowledge. In his speech, Gleeson said: “Is there such a thing as public opinion of judges and, if so, what is it? There is probably no clear or simple answer . . . People . . . probably have a range of opinions . . .”</p> <p>News response:</p> <p>News thinks this is a fair account of the speech, which was a response to political and public/media criticism of the judiciary. It is not clear what the difference is between a response to criticism and a defence of the institution being criticised.</p>

TABLE 8: INSTANCE OF OVERSIMPLIFICATION

ITEM NO.	DATE	TITLE	NATURE OF INACCURACY
A136	3.10.07	Scientists call for action on climate change	<p>The item's introduction paraphrases Dr Jim Peacock as saying only nuclear and clean coal technologies could reduce carbon emissions and meet Australia's power needs. Dr Peacock's speech stated that these technologies will probably meet Australia's <i>baseload</i> power needs, but he more generally advocated an approach which included a range of other technologies as well.</p> <p>News response:</p> <p>If nuclear power and clean coal are needed to both reduce carbon emissions and meet power needs, that requirement stands whether it is baseload or total.</p>

Appendix 3: News Division's response on labelling

TABLE 10: INSTANCES OF LABELLING

ITEM NO	DATE	TITLE	LABEL	REASON FOR FINDING IT IRRELEVANT
A102	4.12.07	Australian scientists link schizophrenia to astronomy	“A former magician”	<p>The report was about the work of a professor of psychology. There was evident confusion about the distinction between astronomy and astrology in the presentation of this item, and it was not clear why Professor Wiseman’s former occupation was relevant, since his research concerned the correlation between people’s season of birth and how lucky they felt themselves to be.</p> <p>News response:</p> <p>In this instance, the label “former magician” is not prejudicial, discriminatory, subjective or portraying a stereotype. It is an interesting and relevant fact, and it adds to the colour and interest of what is essentially a fairly lightweight story. One of the key hooks of this story is that, as someone who was formerly a magician and is now a “Professor of the Public Understanding of Psychology”. Richard Wiseman has spent much of his career investigating and debunking unusual phenomena. He has now developed and set out a theory that some of the links between the season of birth and personality can be explained in rational, scientific terms. Professor Wiseman’s background as a magician is interesting and newsworthy. It shows a long-term interest in unusual and potentially deceptive phenomena, beyond his current role in academia. It is just the sort of interesting colour and detail that you would expect in a good current affairs story and in no way fits the description of inappropriate labelling. Referring to Richard Wiseman as a “former magician” was a creative tool to highlight the unusualness of this story. It paints a deeper picture of the man being interviewed.</p>
A120	11.12.07	More details released of alleged Einfeld offences	“His hair is quite long”	<p>The relevance of this reference to a defendant’s physical characteristics was not apparent.</p> <p>News response:</p> <p>In this and the next one, the reviewers have taken exception to the use of descriptive language. Such language is used as a tool to keep stories interesting and helps paint “word pictures” to give radio audiences a deeper understanding of the people reporters are talking about. It is common and News believes acceptable to describe the physical appearance of someone in court. This remark needs to be seen in context. It was not a prepared script; it was a live interview with a reporter on the scene. The full question and answer was:</p>

ITEM NO	DATE	TITLE	LABEL	REASON FOR FINDING IT IRRELEVANT
				<p><i>PRESENTER: So was the former judge present at the court today?</i></p> <p><i>REPORTER: Marcus Einfeld was present. Now it is a committal hearing, so it's just to establish if there's enough evidence to go to trial. So he actually hasn't taken the stand but he has definitely been in court listening and listening, looks like attentively he's got a number of people with him.</i></p> <p><i>He looked very relaxed, his hair is quite long, he hasn't been a former judge, hasn't been a federal judge since 2001. At once stage though, he didn't have a seat and he was standing at the front leaning against the wall.</i></p> <p>This was the first answer in what was quite a long live interview. Given that there was a reporter on the scene in the courtroom, it is standard journalistic practice to set the scene to enable listeners to visualise the courtroom, before going on to discuss some of the key aspects of the case. The description provided by the reporter— who was sitting, who was standing, what was their demeanour, how did they look—is basic descriptive journalism. In the radio current affairs, reporters will rely on descriptive colour in the same way that television reporters rely on pictures. The description of Justice Einfeld (listening attentively, looking relaxed, long hair, leaning on the wall) is not prejudicial, discriminatory or stereotyping, and its relevance was to help paint an accurate picture for the audience of what the scene in court was like.</p>
A128	14.12.07	Drinking to your health	"74-year-old grandmother"	<p>This was a story about geriatrics, so age was relevant but the status as grandmother was not.</p> <p>News response:</p> <p>The report questions the "relevance" of using the term "grandmother". It would be equally apt to ask what the relevance was of mentioning the woman's name, or the fact that she drank wine rather than simply "alcohol", or that she was "Mrs" Jackson rather than "Ms". These are simply factual, non-stereotyping, non-prejudicial, non-discriminatory pieces of information which help to flesh out this particular talent as a person. If the story were somehow implying that the fact she is a grandmother is somehow relevant—that other women of that age don't drink, or that she is typical of all grandmothers—then there might be grounds to question whether it might be inappropriate.</p> <p>Also, in this story, the report talked about the potential benefits for women over 70 drinking two glasses of alcohol and talks about whether it's the alcohol itself that</p>

ITEM NO	DATE	TITLE	LABEL	REASON FOR FINDING IT IRRELEVANT
				<p>is of benefit or just the company you keep while drinking that is responsible. It adds colour and context to the story to say she is a grandmother and hence probably has family and friends for company. It gives a fuller picture of the woman.</p>
A150	8.10.07	Boost to schizophrenia research	"Chairwoman"	<p>The post occupied by Professor Shannon Weickert was described in the media release as Chair of Schizophrenia Research.</p> <p>News response:</p> <p>The News Style Guide recommends the use of "chairman" or "chairwoman" (as opposed to "chairperson"). It is silent on the use of "chair". All forms are also acceptable to the Macquarie Dictionary (the preferred dictionary listed in the Style Guide), which says only that: "Moves to replace <i>chairman</i> have produced gender-free alternatives such as <i>chair</i> ... [and] have some currency." In this instance, it may be that the program producer or reporter chose to use the more specific "chairwoman" from a style point of view, but in any event News does not see how this can be viewed as inappropriate labelling. It is clear from the story that the person involved is a woman, so her sex is not being introduced to the story as a piece of prejudicial information—it is simply an attempt to comply with the Style Guide and state clearly the facts of the situation.</p>
A203	14.12.07	Sweeping changes to Victoria's IVF program	"Lesbian"; "single mother"	<p>The media release from the Victoria Attorney-General referred to "single women", "same-sex couples" and "female partner of the child's mother". These avoided the stereotyping often associated with the terms used in the item.</p> <p>News response:</p> <p>This is another case of translating Government jargon into plain English. A single woman with children is a single mother. Same-sex partners who are women are lesbians. The Macquarie Dictionary defines a lesbian as a "female homosexual" and contains no derogatory or prejudicial meanings. News does not see that either term involves "stereotyping". Clearly, there are times when labels stereotype. But this story was about single women and lesbians being granted access to surrogacy—it was entirely appropriate and relevant to the story.</p>