Document 01

1 Independence, integrity and responsibility

Principles

The trust and respect of the community depend on the ABC's editorial independence and integrity. Independence and responsibility are inseparable. The Managing Director is the Editor in Chief who has ultimate editorial power and responsibility.

Editorial decision making at the ABC is based on upward referral. Those who create, acquire, commission or oversee ABC content are responsible for ensuring that it complies with the Editorial Policies, but they are also required to upwardly refer any editorial matter where they are in doubt. Editorial content that is controversial or likely to have an extraordinary impact should also be upwardly referred, even if there is no doubt, to allow closer consideration of any editorial policy issues.

Upward referral is made to line managers and to appropriately senior people within Divisions who are designated with responsibility. In addition, editorial advisers are available and should be consulted for advice and guidance.

Where an editorial issue is being upwardly referred to the Managing Director, it must first be referred to the Editorial Director for input and advice.

Standards

1.1 Maintain the independence and integrity of the ABC.

1.2 Exercise ABC editorial control over the content the ABC broadcasts or publishes.

1.3 Ensure that editorial decisions are not improperly influenced by political, sectional, commercial or personal interests.

1.4 External activities of individuals undertaking work for the ABC must not undermine the independence and integrity of the ABC's editorial content.

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1.5 Exercise editorial independence as authorised and accept responsibility for it. When in doubt about an editorial matter, refer it up to the next most senior person for advice or decision.

1.6 When any editorial matter, including an editorial matter not being referred up for advice or decision, is likely to cause controversy or have an extraordinary impact, give proper notice of it to the most appropriate senior manager.

1.7 Any editorial matter which is considered by a Divisional Director to be sufficiently significant to be referred to the Managing Director for information or decision must first be referred to the Editorial Director. If a Director is in doubt as to whether an editorial matter is sufficiently significant, advice should be sought from the Editorial Director.

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Document 02

2 Accuracy

Principles

The ABC has a statutory duty to ensure that the gathering and presentation of news and information is accurate according to the recognised standards of objective journalism. Credibility depends heavily on factual accuracy.

Types of fact based content include news and analysis of current events, documentaries, factual dramas and lifestyle programs. The ABC requires that reasonable efforts must be made to ensure accuracy in all fact based content. The ABC gauges those efforts by reference to:

- the type, subject and nature of the content;
- the likely audience expectations of the content;
- the likely impact of reliance by the audience on the accuracy of the content; and
- the circumstances in which the content was made and presented.

The ABC accuracy standard applies to assertions of fact, not to expressions of opinion. An opinion, being a value judgement or conclusion, cannot be found to be accurate or inaccurate in the way facts can. The accuracy standard requires that opinions be conveyed accurately, in the sense that quotes should be accurate and any editing should not distort the meaning of the opinion expressed.

The efforts reasonably required to ensure accuracy will depend on the circumstances. Sources with relevant expertise may be relied on more heavily than those without. Eyewitness testimony usually carries more weight than second hand accounts. The passage of time or the inaccessibility of locations or sources can affect the standard of verification reasonably required.

The ABC should make reasonable efforts, appropriate in the context, to signal to audiences gradations in accuracy, for example by querying interviewees, qualifying bald assertions, supplementing the partly right and correcting the plainly wrong.

Document 02

Standards

2.1 Make reasonable efforts to ensure that material facts are accurate and presented in context.

2.2 Do not present factual content in a way that will materially mislead the audience. In some cases, this may require appropriate labels or other explanatory information.

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Document 03

4 Impartiality and diversity of perspectives

Principles

The ABC has a statutory duty to ensure that the gathering and presentation of news and information is impartial according to the recognised standards of objective journalism.

Aiming to equip audiences to make up their own minds is consistent with the public service character of the ABC. A democratic society depends on diverse sources of reliable information and contending opinions. A broadcaster operating under statute with public funds is legitimately expected to contribute in ways that may differ from commercial media, which are free to be partial to private interests.

The ABC takes no editorial stance other than its commitment to fundamental democratic principles including the rule of law, freedom of speech and religion, parliamentary democracy and non discrimination.

Judgements about whether impartiality was achieved in any given circumstances can vary among individuals according to their personal and subjective view of any given matter of contention. Acknowledging this fact of life does not change the ABC's obligation to apply its impartiality standard as objectively as possible. In doing so, the ABC is guided by these hallmarks of impartiality:

- a balance that follows the weight of evidence;
- fair treatment;
- open-mindedness; and
- opportunities over time for principal relevant perspectives on matters of contention to be expressed.

The ABC aims to present, over time, content that addresses a broad range of subjects from a diversity of perspectives reflecting a diversity of experiences, presented in a diversity of ways

Document 03

from a diversity of sources, including content created by ABC staff, generated by audiences and commissioned or acquired from external content makers.

Impartiality does not require that every perspective receives equal time, nor that every facet of every argument is presented.

Assessing the impartiality due in given circumstances requires consideration in context of all relevant factors including:

- the type, subject and nature of the content;
- the circumstances in which the content is made and presented;
- the likely audience expectations of the content;
- the degree to which the matter to which the content relates is contentious;
- the range of principal relevant perspectives on the matter of contention; and
- the timeframe within which it would be appropriate for the ABC to provide opportunities for the principal relevant perspectives to be expressed, having regard to the public importance of the matter of contention and the extent to which it is the subject of current debate.

Standards

4.1 Gather and present news and information with due impartiality.

4.2 Present a diversity of perspectives within a reasonable timeframe, aiming to reach a similar audience, so that no significant strand of thought or belief within the community is knowingly excluded or disproportionately represented.

4.3 Take care in the presentation of analysis and commentary. Do not present them as the editorial opinion of the ABC.

4.4 Do not misrepresent any perspective.

4.5 Do not unduly favour one perspective over another.

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5 Fair and honest dealing

Principles

Fair and honest dealing is essential to maintaining trust with audiences and with those who participate in or are otherwise directly affected by ABC content. In rare circumstances, deception or a breach of an undertaking may be justified. Because of the potential damage to trust, deception or breach of an undertaking must be explained openly afterwards unless there are compelling reasons not to do so.

Standards

Dealing with participants

5.1 Participants in ABC content should normally be informed of the general nature of their participation.

5.2 A refusal to participate will not be overridden without good cause.

Opportunity to respond

5.3 Where allegations are made about a person or organisation, make reasonable efforts in the circumstances to provide a fair opportunity to respond.

Attribution and sources

5.4 Aim to attribute information to its source.

5.5 Where a source seeks anonymity, do not agree without first considering the source's motive and any alternative attributable sources.

5.6 Do not misrepresent another's work as your own.

Undertakings

Document 04

5.7 Assurances given in relation to conditions of participation, use of content, confidentiality or anonymity must be honoured except in rare cases where justified in the public interest.

Secret recording and other types of deception

5.8 Secret recordings, misrepresentation or other types of deception must not be used by the ABC or its co production partners to obtain or seek information, audio, pictures or an agreement to participate except where:

a justified in the public interest and the material cannot reasonably be obtained by any other means; or

b consent is obtained from the subject or identities are effectively obscured; or

c the deception is integral to an artistic work.

In all cases, the potential for harm must be taken into consideration.

Mandatory referral

5.9 An appropriately senior ABC person designated for the purpose must approve in advance, having considered the applicable editorial standards (such as 5.5, 5.7 or 5.8), any proposal:

a to use secret recording during the production of content commissioned, produced or co produced by the ABC; or

b to broadcast or publish material obtained by deception; or

c to broadcast or publish without attribution information that forms the basis of a report and the ABC is to be committed to protect the identity of the source of the information; or

d not to honour an assurance given in relation to conditions of participation, use of content, confidentiality or anonymity.

Advice must be sought from ABC Legal on any proposal involving secret recording (5.9a) or deception (5.9b).

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7 Harm and Offence

Principles

The ABC broadcasts and publishes comprehensive and innovative content that aims to inform, entertain and educate diverse audiences. This involves a willingness to take risks, invent and experiment with new ideas. It can result in challenging content which may offend some of the audience some of the time. But it also contributes to diversity of content in the media and to fulfilling the ABC's function to encourage and promote the musical, dramatic and other performing arts. The ABC acknowledges that a public broadcaster should never gratuitously harm or offend and accordingly any content which is likely to harm or offend must have a clear editorial purpose.

The ABC potentially reaches the whole community, so it must take into account community standards. However, the community recognises that what is and is not acceptable in ABC content largely depends on the particular context, including the nature of the content, its target audience, and any signposting that equips audiences to make informed choices about what they see, hear or read. Applying the harm and offence standard, therefore, requires careful judgement. What may be inappropriate and unacceptable in one context may be appropriate and acceptable in another. Coarse language, disturbing images or unconventional situations may form a legitimate part of reportage, debate, documentaries or a humorous, satirical, dramatic or other artistic work.

Standards

7.1 Content that is likely to cause harm or offence must be justified by the editorial context.

7.2 Where content is likely to cause harm or offence, having regard to the context, make reasonable efforts to provide information about the nature of the content through the use of classification labels or other warnings or advice.

7.3 Ensure all domestic television programs with the exception of news, current affairs and sporting events are classified and scheduled for broadcast in accordance with the ABC's

Document 05

Associated Standard on Television Program Classification.

7.4 If inadvertent or unexpected actions, audio or images in live content are likely to cause harm or offence, take appropriate steps to mitigate.

7.5 The reporting or depiction of violence, tragedy or trauma must be handled with extreme sensitivity. Avoid causing undue distress to victims, witnesses or bereaved relatives. Be sensitive to significant cultural practices when depicting or reporting on recently deceased persons.

7.6 Where there is editorial justification for content which may lead to dangerous imitation or exacerbate serious threats to individual or public health, safety or welfare, take appropriate steps to mitigate those risks, particularly by taking care with how content is expressed or presented.

7.7 Avoid the unjustified use of stereotypes or discriminatory content that could reasonably be interpreted as condoning or encouraging prejudice.

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