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### **Response to MediaWatch – Melbourne Press Club, March 13, 2026**

The Melbourne Press Club welcomes the Victorian courts' commitment to accuracy in accounting for the number of suppression orders they issue.

A good start would be for the courts themselves to count and publish the actual number of suppression orders, and pseudonym orders, made by their own judges and magistrates.

This does not currently happen in any state except South Australia.

As a result, researchers including those who contributed to the Melbourne Press Club report, are reliant on counts made by media organisations based on notifications they receive.

As our researchers made clear, these are raw figures, and we acknowledge they do not capture every order made in Victoria, much less other states.

However, it is clear from the powerful interviews with journalists in our report and other members that the number of orders being issued in Victoria, and the reasons for which they are issued, is of serious concern.

Taken together with other trends, there are many things we would like to discuss with the officers of the Victorian courts, including:

- improving access to court documents for journalists,
- ensuring interim suppression orders only last days instead of months,
- urgently listing hearings on the merits of each application,
- reducing the number of suppression orders based on the mental health safety ground by raising the threshold, requiring comprehensive evidence and considering all the circumstances impacting on the applicant,
- addressing what our members say is a hostile attitude towards them by some judicial officers.

Melbourne Press Club's desire is to have a collaborative and open dialogue with the courts and their officers about these important matters.

To that extent, we're happy to see them engaging so willingly in the discussion in response to our report.

Michael Bachelard, President, Melbourne Press Club