



Guidance Note – Screen Division

Digital Content Review Process

Background

The ABC is Australia’s most trusted source of news and information. At a time of media disruption and decline in trust, it is more important than ever that we uphold the value our audiences place in us as the nation’s most trusted storyteller.

Maintaining trust in the ABC depends on ensuring that our content is accurate and editorially independent, in accordance with the recognised standards of objective journalism. This guidance note establishes a framework for how the ABC engages with external stakeholders, including production companies, during the review process for digital content which is created alongside a commissioned program.

Governing principles

ABC digital content is driven by editorial value and is designed to extend the conversation around our programs.

We treat the digital audience as unique, and commission content that is fit for platform and our target audience. This content sometimes closely reflects the program itself, while other times, a program is a catalyst for our digital team to independently explore a related topic.

Digital content is different to, and separate from, marketing and publicity materials. This content is created by ABC journalists and producers who adhere to the ABC’s Editorial Policies:

<https://www.abc.net.au/edpols/policies>

Framework:

In order to foster productive and respectful working relationships with our content partners whilst upholding the ABC’s Editorial Policies, the Screen Division has developed a framework for working with production companies when creating digital content.

The digital team will advise production companies of planned digital content in advance. In these conversations, we will often seek the use of program material (images and video) for inclusion in our digital content. Production companies will advise the ABC on any licencing or other restrictions. Our digital journalists may also be in touch during the fact checking process to ensure all content meets the ABC’s accuracy standards.

The ABC's digital team will categorise content created alongside a commissioned program as follows:

Category A:

An annotated transcript repurposed into a digital story, with **no** independent research or interviews by the ABC's digital journalist. This approach will often be taken for programs with complex legal or editorial challenges.

The ABC will provide screenshots of the locked article to the program makers prior to publication. Changes will only be made to ensure accuracy.

The name of the program will appear in the by-line of the digital story,

Example: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-06-27/the-black-hand-terror-cane-fields-far-north-queensland/102329810>

Category B:

A digital story using significant elements of a script (including background and quotes), but features **some** independent research, interviews or relevant context by the ABC's digital journalist.

The ABC will provide screenshots of the locked article to the program makers prior to publication. Changes will only be made to ensure accuracy.

Example: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-05-16/ningaloo-safeguarding-a-sanctuary/102291152>

Category C:

A digital write born out of a moment, character or topic in a program. The story is **primarily written from** independent research and interviews by the ABC's digital journalist, but might include some quotes or background from the program.

The ABC will provide screenshots of the locked article to the program makers prior to publication. Changes will only be made to ensure accuracy.

Example: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-06-04/edith-emery-architect-doctor-prisoner-legacy/102361834>

Category D:

The creator of a program, or talent featured in a program, writes or is closely involved in the writing of a digital story that will carry their by-line.

As your personal by-line will appear, and as part of the collaborative process, you will have the opportunity to review the digital story at various stages of the writing process prior to publication.

Example: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-07-24/war-on-waste-tips-tricks-reduce-plastic-fashion-food-waste/102598836>

Category E:

Talent from the show is interviewed for a digital story that is written by an ABC journalist. This approach is often used for Backstory pieces.

As this is an independent piece of journalism, there will be no review by those interviewed for the article prior to publication.

Example: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/backstory/2023-05-11/tim-winton-making-abc-documentary-ningaloo-behind-the-scenes/102322206>

NOTE: In some cases we may agree to adjust this framework for cultural safety reasons. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, and follow the ABC's internal upward referral processes.

Attribution:

In instances where a digital story has been created from scripts or is primarily based on a commissioned program, the name of the program will featured in the by-line of the article, and may also appear the body of the article.

The end of the article will also feature a promo for the program, for example [***Watch War On Waste on iview***](#) or on *Tuesday at 8.30pm on ABC TV*.

Any images and video supplied by the production company will also be credited in the article as **Supplied: *Production company name***.