

From Mandy Cormack
Editors Code Review

1. The Code preamble should make explicit that the regulator of the Code has the power to require apologies and corrections where appropriate and to direct the size and placement of those apologies and corrections. In the twenty first century what will distinguish adherents to the Code, is that they are willing to admit and acknowledge mistakes and move on, building trust and loyalty with their readers.
2. The Code should specify in the preamble, and under 'Accuracy', that corrections and apologies should be printed with equal (not as is stated at present 'due') prominence to the code-breach. As the industry discovers that there are positive gains to be made from being able to acknowledge and accept corrections, it should be possible, in time, to remove this implementation detail from the Code.
3. The guidance on public interest should not suggest that 'freedom of expression' is a right in itself, as if it has no limitations/counterbalancing rights that the press/journalists should also consider. Guidance should acknowledge that a balance is required between three interests which are in tension: freedom of expression, privacy rights of individuals, and the right of the public to accurate information. It should be clear that no one right can trump all others without detriment to liberal society as a whole.
4. Under Accuracy, the Code should reflect that the complaints of Third Parties should be considered without the consent of the party/ies directly affected, unless that party/ies explicitly object/s.
5. Under Privacy, the Code should be amended to require that social media content that was not intended for wide publication should not be used without permission.
6. Under Intrusion into grief or shock, make explicit that publications must take all reasonable steps not to exacerbate grief or distress, for example, by recognising that attacking the reputation of the deceased (against which there is no law of defamation) can do so.
7. Under Suicide, accept the guidance of the Samaritans and clarify that publications must not publish speculation on motives, unless justified in the public interest.
8. Under Discrimination, groups should be allowed to bring complaints against breaches of the Code, including for objectification and negative stereotyping. A defence of public interest should be available.
9. To meet basic Transparency standards expected in public life, add:
 - a. Under Financial Journalism, publishers must make absolutely clear when content has been paid for, or editorial policy has been influenced by, a third party such as an advertiser or sponsor.
 - b. A new clause Attribution and Plagiarism, should require publications to acknowledge the author of content and provide a link to the original/originator.
10. Authorship and control of content of the Code should be handed over to a truly independent industry regulator. Until this happens, press self-regulation will in fact be press regulatory capture undermining, in the eyes of the public, the authority of the regulator, the standing of journalists, and the profession of journalism.