Editorial Policy

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Overview

At Croakey, we publish works of journalism, usually by members of the Croakey editorial team, who are experienced journalists and editors.

We also commission and publish articles from a wide range of contributors, including health professionals and organisations, NGOs, researchers and public interest advocates.

Our editorial decisions are based on the merits of public interest and our alignment with the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance Journalist code of ethics are as follows:

1. Report and interpret honestly, striving for accuracy, fairness and disclosure of all essential facts. Do not suppress relevant available facts, or give distorting emphasis. Do your utmost to give a fair opportunity for reply.
2. Do not place unnecessary emphasis on personal characteristics, including race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual orientation, family relationships, religious belief, or physical or intellectual disability.
3. Aim to attribute information to its source. Where a source seeks anonymity, do not agree without first considering the source’s motives and any alternative attributable source. Where confidences are accepted, respect them in all circumstances.
4. Do not allow personal interest, or any belief, commitment, payment, gift or benefit, to undermine your accuracy, fairness or independence.
5. Disclose conflicts of interest that affect, or could be seen to affect, the accuracy, fairness or independence of your journalism. Do not improperly use a journalistic position for personal gain.
6. Do not allow advertising or other commercial considerations to undermine accuracy, fairness or independence.
7. Do your utmost to ensure disclosure of any direct or indirect payment made for interviews, pictures, information or stories.
8. Use fair, responsible and honest means to obtain material. Identify yourself and your employer before obtaining any interview for publication or broadcast. Never exploit a person’s vulnerability or ignorance of media practice.
9. Present pictures and sound which are true and accurate. Any manipulation likely to mislead should be disclosed.
10. Do not plagiarise.
11. Respect private grief and personal privacy. Journalists have the right to resist compulsion to intrude.
12. Do your utmost to achieve fair correction of errors.
Public Interest Journalism

The public interest includes, but is not confined to

i) Identifying or exposing crime or serious impropriety
ii) Protecting public health and safety
iii) Preventing the public from being misled by an action or statement of an individual or organisation.
iv) Providing voice to marginalised or underserved sectors of the community.

In situations involving children under 16, the rights of the child is paramount over and above a public interest story.

Respect and cultural safety in language

In relation to mentions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, follow the language and style recommended in these publications:

- Making Two Worlds Work.
- NSW Health Department, Communicating Positively: A Guide to Aboriginal Terminology.
- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, An introduction to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health cultural protocols and perspectives.
- Torres Strait Regional Authority, TSRA Cultural Protocols Guide for TSRAStaff.

Privacy

Much journalism may be intrinsically intrusive but we should avoid invading anyone’s privacy unless there is a clear public interest in doing so. We align with the Australian Press Council’s Statement of Privacy Principles that can be summarised as:

Privacy Principle 1: Collection of personal information
In seeking personal information, journalists should not unduly intrude on the privacy of individuals and should show respect for the dignity and sensitivity of people encountered in the course of gathering news.

Privacy Principle 2: Use and disclosure of personal information
Personal information gathered by journalists and photographers should only be used for the purpose for which it was intended. Some personal information, such as addresses or other identifying details, may enable others to intrude on the privacy and safety of individuals who are the subject of news coverage, and their families. To the extent lawful and practicable, a media organisation should only disclose sufficient personal information to identify the persons being reported in the news, so that these risks can be reasonably avoided.
Privacy Principle 3: Quality of personal information
We take reasonable steps to ensure that the personal information we collect is accurate, complete and up-to-date.

Privacy Principle 4: Security of personal information
We take reasonable steps to ensure that the personal information we hold is protected from misuse, loss, or unauthorised access.

Privacy Principle 5: Anonymity of sources
All persons who provide information to media organisations are entitled to seek anonymity. The identity of confidential sources should not be revealed, and where it is lawful and practicable, a media organisation should ensure that any personal information derived from such sources that it holds does not identify the source.

Privacy Principle 6: Correction, fairness and balance
We take steps to ensure that factual material is presented with reasonable fairness and balance, and that writers’ expressions of opinion are not based on inaccurate factual material or omission of key facts.

Where material refers adversely to a person, we provide an opportunity for subsequent publication of a reply to ensure that factual material is presented with reasonable fairness and balance.

Privacy Principle 7: Sensitive personal information
We avoid causing or contributing materially to substantial offence, distress or prejudice, or a substantial risk to health or safety, unless doing so is sufficiently in the public interest.

Conflicts of interest

The Croakey team need to ensure that they have declared any relevant conflicts of interest, and it is updated on the website in the Croakey team section.

If you are not sure whether to declare something, please ask the Managing Editor. You may wish to consider the World Medical Association of Editors prompt that:

“if my competing interest becomes known to others later, would I feel defensive or would others in the publication process, readers or the public think I was hiding my other interests or could they feel I misled or deceived them?”

If Croakey subsequently discovers that relevant conflicts of interest have not been declared, they shall be published at a later stage.

The following is largely adapted from the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) statement on this topic.
Financial ties
Examples of financial ties to industry include payment for research, ownership of stock and stock options, as well as honoraria for advice or public speaking, consultation, service on advisory boards or medical education companies, and receipt of patents or patents pending. Also included are having a research or clinical position that is funded by companies that sell drugs or devices. Competing interests can be associated with other sources of research funding including government agencies, charities (not-for-profit organizations), and professional and civic organizations. Clinicians have a financial competing interest if they are paid for clinical services related to their research—for example, if they write, review, or edit an article about the comparative advantage of a procedure that they themselves provide for income. Financial competing interests may exist not just on the basis of past activities but also on the expectation of future rewards, such as a pending grant or patent application.

Academic commitments
Participants in the publications process may have strong beliefs ("intellectual passion") that commit them to a particular explanation, method, or idea. They may, as a result, be biased in conducting research that tests the commitment or in reviewing the work of others that is in favour or at odds with their beliefs.

Personal relationships
Personal relationships with family, friends, enemies, competitors, or colleagues can pose conflicts of interests. For example, a reviewer may have difficulty providing an unbiased review of articles by investigators who have been working colleagues.

Political or religious beliefs
Strong commitment to a particular political view (eg, political position, agenda, or party) or having a strong religious conviction may pose a conflict of interest for a given publication if those political or religious issues are affirmed or challenged in the publication.

Institutional affiliations
A conflict of interest exists when a participant in the publication process is directly affiliated with an institution that on the face of it may have a position or an interest in a publication. An obvious concern is being affiliated with or employed by a company that manufactures the drug or device (or a competing one) described in the publication. However, apparently neutral institutions such as universities, hospitals, and research institutes may also have an interest in the results of research. Professional or civic organisations may also have competing interests because of their special interests or advocacy positions.
Payments

1. As part of our revenue stream, Croakey Professional Services is occasionally commissioned to write a story. In such cases, it is clearly marked as sponsored editorial and the customer enters into a Memorandum of Understanding that makes clear that this arrangement has no bearing on our editorial independence.

2. Organisers often pay for a Croakey journalist and editor to attend their conferences via Croakey Conference News Service. Croakey only undertake these assignments under the following conditions:
   a. That the conference content is of interest to our readers.
   b. That the organisers agree that this service provides independent editorial and that any articles would not be vetted by the organisers prior to publication. This independence adds to the credibility and value of the service for the conference organisers and participants as well as to our readers and followers.

Priorities

We prioritise public interest matters in the selection and framing of articles.
Croakey generally receives more submissions than we can post. We select the best articles based on their relevance to current issues, readability and evidence-based arguments, with a preference for articles from authors not already covered in the public debate.

Accuracy

In the current environment of fake news, Croakey endeavours to only run evidence based arguments and as such, our journalists should consider the following:

- Focus on the issues, rather than on individuals. We do not publish personal attacks.
- Undertake fact checking.
- Provide URL links to evidence cited.

Copyright

Croakey holds the copyright for all images taken by the journalist or one of the Croakey team.
Any other images must be available under creative commons law, ie: from sources such as [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com) and [www.unsplash.com](http://www.unsplash.com).
# Managing errors

Refer all complaints or errors to the attention of the Managing Editor. These will be managed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Overview</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An error</td>
<td>We endeavour to minimise our errors and will act swiftly to correct any mistakes.</td>
<td>Correct and acknowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contested facts or views</td>
<td>The Croakey Editor and Managing Editor will assess the contested issues taking into account a range of factors, including evidence, the public interest, and relevance to our audience and mission</td>
<td>A decision on whether to publish alternative views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminology that people may find offensive</td>
<td>We are responsive to community standards and update our style terminology and editorial practices regularly</td>
<td>Escalate to Managing Editor for decision.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Asked to retract or remove article | • No error, not defamatory and is in the public interest  
• Error or defamation noted  
• Justified to retract or remove article | • Escalate to Managing Editor who may seek legal advice  
• Correct and acknowledge  
• Remain transparent and outline the reasons why we have taken this action |