**Press Council NZ**

[**http://www.presscouncil.org.nz/principles#principles**](http://www.presscouncil.org.nz/principles#principles)

**Principles**

1. **Accuracy, Fairness and Balance**

Publications should be bound at all times by accuracy, fairness and balance, and should not deliberately mislead or misinform readers by commission or omission. In articles of controversy or disagreement, a fair voice must be given to the opposition view.
Exceptions may apply for long-running issues where every side of an issue or argument cannot reasonably be repeated on every occasion and in reportage of proceedings where balance is to be judged on a number of stories, rather than a single report.

1. **Privacy**

Everyone is normally entitled to privacy of person, space and personal information, and these rights should be respected by publications. Nevertheless the right of privacy should not interfere with publication of significant matters of public record or public interest.
Publications should exercise particular care and discretion before identifying relatives of persons convicted or accused of crime where the reference to them is not relevant to the matter reported.
Those suffering from trauma or grief call for special consideration.

1. **Children and Young People**

In cases involving children and young people editors must demonstrate an exceptional degree of public interest to override the interests of the child or young person.

1. **Comment and Fact**

A clear distinction should be drawn between factual information and comment or opinion. An article that is essentially comment or opinion should be clearly presented as such. Material facts on which an opinion is based should be accurate.

1. **Columns, Blogs, Opinion and Letters**

Opinion, whether newspaper column or internet blog, must be clearly identified as such unless a column, blog or other expression of opinion is widely understood to consist largely of the writer’s own opinions. Though requirements for a foundation of fact pertain, with comment and opinion balance is not essential. Cartoons are understood to be opinion.
Letters for publication are the prerogative of editors who are to be guided by fairness, balance, and public interest. Abridgement is acceptable but should not distort meaning.

1. **Headlines and Captions**

Headlines, sub-headings, and captions should accurately and fairly convey the substance or a key element of the report they are designed to cover.

1. **Discrimination and Diversity**

Issues of gender, religion, minority groups, sexual orientation, age, race, colour or physical or mental disability are legitimate subjects for discussion where they are relevant and in the public interest, and publications may report and express opinions in these areas. Publications should not, however, place gratuitous emphasis on any such category in their reporting.

1. **Confidentiality**

Publications have a strong obligation to protect against disclosure of the identity of confidential sources. They also have a duty to take reasonable steps to satisfy themselves that such sources are well informed and that the information they provide is reliable. Care should be taken to ensure both source and publication agrees over what has been meant by "off-the-record".

1. **Subterfuge**

Information or news obtained by subterfuge, misrepresentation or dishonest means is not permitted unless there is an overriding public interest and the news or information cannot be obtained by any other means.

1. **Conflicts of Interest**

To fulfil their proper watchdog role, publications must be independent and free of obligations to their news sources. They should avoid any situations that might compromise such independence. Where a story is enabled by sponsorship, gift or financial inducement, that sponsorship, gift or financial inducement should be declared.
Where an author’s link to a subject is deemed to be justified, the relationship of author to subject should be declared.

1. **Photographs and Graphics**

Editors should take care in photographic and image selection and treatment. Any technical manipulation that could mislead readers should be noted and explained.
Photographs showing distressing or shocking situations should be handled with special consideration for those affected

1. **Corrections**

A publication’s willingness to correct errors enhances its credibility and, often, defuses complaint. Significant errors should be promptly corrected with fair prominence. In some circumstances it will be appropriate to offer an apology and a right of reply to an affected person or persons.