

The provision of credible, informative news is essential for effective participation in civil society. I absolutely agree. A balanced view of the news and current affairs is vital. News organisations should not be obviously biased. News organisations should be providing a forum for an exchange of ideas, holding governments and other decision makers to account. It is true they are keeping a record of our nation and the concerns of our times. When news is covering topics of vital importance to society they should be allowing both sides of a debate to have fair air time and should not be seen to support only one side and certainly not be party with those who join in with those who like to shut down debate with censorship of dissenting views, reporting only one side. They should be reporting the truth to the best of their ability. When this very important duty is not performed in an unbiased way and debates are shut down it leads to groups in Australia feeling unrepresented, persecuted and not part of society. It also leads to a lack of trust and a societal disconnect for those whose views are not represented fairly and are censored and ignored. I don't believe the news media is representing the views of the majority of Australians, instead amplified minority voices and make them seem like the majority with their level of coverage.

I also feel that the last Federal election 'shock' win by the Coalition is a sign of the disconnect between the view of news media organisations and the general public.

I'm not surprised that consumer trust is decreasing in our news agencies. I work in an industry that works closely with Channel Nine, Channel Seven. In the course of my job I watch news across all platforms in all states of Australia on a daily basis. I often cringe at the content I'm seeing. I feel the content of the mainstream news outlets, Nine and Seven, is heavily biased towards the Labor government to the detriment of the Coalition. I feel the constant coverage of Labor criticism of the government over just about everything and anything is unhelpful and destabilising and an unnecessary distraction when more important issues are being ignored. The majority of Australians, I believe, are sick of this.

I feel the so-called debate on climate change is unbalanced, left-leaning and biased towards Labor views and other pro-climate change advocates. The information has been sensationalised and is misleading and unbalanced. The word 'unprecedented' has been overused. If reporters had regard to the facts they would have discovered that our recent bushfires are indeed not unprecedented. We've had worse in the past.

I have seen segments evolve throughout the day from segments that, for example, have Pauline Hanson saying something completely credible and important in the morning news and by the end of the day the segment is edited so much that it is nonsensical and makes her look foolish.

I see continual beat-ups of stories to the point where it's just painful and it would honestly make any thinking viewer switch off. News media are out of touch and they are sensationalising topics to draw in viewers but I believe it is actually repelling viewers.

I feel investigative reporting has died a death and reporters are either extremely lazy or they are being told to produce stories along certain lines by their editors. I feel the same thing happens with other polarising debates such as anti-vaccination. To call that a debate also is unfair as there has never been one. When reporting on this topic the coverage is deliberately unbalanced and the people called anti-vaxxers are not given any forum to express their views.

I believe that the mainstream news media have used their position in our society to coerce our government into making changes to our public health policy that has wide-ranging ramifications for many citizens of Australia through a campaign of manipulating public sentiment, silencing and ridiculing opponents and stifling intelligent debate on the issue of No Jab No Pay. The original

impetus and concept for the 'No Jab No Pay' legislation was created by The Herald Sun who used their various media connections to campaign heavily with divisive daily 'editorials' and op eds in which parents who chose not to vaccinate their children or even question the science were "named and shamed", labelled 'antivaxers', as anti-science and even called them 'baby-killers'.

Despite a wide and varied response to vaccines in Australia across all socio/economic groups and varying demographics within the community, the 'vocal minority' at The Herald Sun claimed to be speaking on behalf of a 'silent majority' but by pushing the agenda of Big Pharma companies such as GSK (who incidentally manufactures 12 of the 18 vaccines on the Australian children's vaccine Schedule) the Herald Sun were actually manipulating public sentiment, silencing or ridiculing opponents and stifling intelligent debate on what is undoubtedly a serious topic with huge potential ramifications. There is a great deal more to this topic than is being reported.

The Herald Sun is published by The Herald and Weekly Times, a subsidiary of NewsCorp Australia which is a subsidiary of NewsCorp which is of course Rupert Murdoch's family business. In fact Rupert's family owns 59% of all the 17.3 million papers sold each week in Australia and as if that influence was not enough, Rupert Murdoch also has the lion shares in the vast majority of Australian and International Internet and Cable Programming, Television Channels, Radio Stations, Film, Production Companies and Book Publishers.

News organisations can wield an incredible amount of power when used in this way. Rupert Murdoch has conflicts of interest at play here. Pharmaceutical companies are a very large client for news media and have stood to gain billions of dollars from this change in Australian health policy. I feel news organisations should never have the power bring about changes in public health policy nor to badger the government through manipulating public sentiment with biased reporting of the issue, silencing dissenting voices, ridiculing and stifling debate on this serious topic.

I believe variety in news reporting has declined, integrity and truth have gone with it, and I can only conclude that is because of Australia's Media Ownership laws are letting us down. Rupert Murdoch and his family own far too big a share of our news media. In fact too few people own the news across our world and many of the agendas being pushed in Australia are the same ones being pushed and repeated all around the world. Funnily enough, all mainstream news media across the world are stifling debate on important issues and pushing their own agenda on climate change, vaccinations, dietary guidelines, LGBTQI attitudes, all simultaneously and in stereo crushing freedom of speech and thought, silencing dissenting views, and refusing to cover news stories that don't suit their agenda.

Comments on the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance Journalist Code of Ethics (1999) and Australian Press Council Standards of Practice (2014)

Journalists are either lazy or directed not to investigate certain issues. Their reporting on issues I have referred to earlier is biased, inaccurate, unfair, and does not disclose all pertinent facts. I have seen a number of raw interviews with various parties, recorded by the parties themselves because they didn't trust that the interviewer would fairly reflect the facts. When the segment appears on the news it has edited out just about everything that party has said on the unpopular topic of vaccination safety and only report one side, reducing that interviewee's contribution to a sound bite of no significance, leaving a viewer with only one-sided information. The information this interviewee was giving in the example I have seen was definitely in the public interest and she was a qualified person to talk on the subject and has a PhD in Australian Public Health Policy. One could

suspect that damaging information is being suppressed because pharmaceutical companies are a very large client of the news media.

Mass-media outlets are large profit-based operations, and therefore they must cater to the financial interests of the owners such as corporations and controlling investors. The size of a media company is a consequence of the investment capital required for the mass-communications technology required to reach a mass audience of viewers, listeners, and readers. The question begs to be asked, does this influence what we the viewers see and hear on a daily basis?

The media have become arbitrary destroyers of people's lives. When they choose to focus on someone they can ruin people's reputation and their business. George Calombaris, for example, the ABC went after him until they destroyed his reputation. He voluntarily handed himself in to the Fair Work Commission. The media piled it on him. His kids have been bullied and taunted. They've sold all their assets and are ruined thanks to the media. 400 staff lost their jobs – is this in anyone's interests? The media sees blood in the water and go into a feeding frenzy. Social media piles it on, hate groups, ugly mass retribution – disgusting. He admitted he underpaid staff when he realised that was the case. The ABC went after him until he went into voluntary administration even though the ABC were guilty of underpaying thousands of casual employees themselves. This is hypocritical. They shouldn't have the power to target high profile people until they destroy them. This behaviour is not in the public interest. People have had enough of them. They act like bullies.

#### Issues for comment

1. I do not believe this is happening and have given examples. Anything to do with health policy that can affect the lives of the citizens of Australia deserves a greater emphasis and balanced reporting and is not getting it. Anything to do with pushing views on climate change that influence public policy
2. It has to be feasible. It must be regulated and monitored, on important public issues it is vital that news is balanced, and only then can it be free from the accusation of bias and conflict of interest.
3. Truth in reporting and a real investigation being conducted whether it is current affairs or a news program shouldn't be distinguished. Reporters are entitled to their own opinion in commentary segments but of course it should be specified that this is their opinion and that others may not agree, not pass their opinion off as the majority view, because it isn't.
4. As I said, a reporter has to preface a comment as their opinion only. If the channel has a conflict of interest in the topic, such as advertising they have to disclose it. If a panellist is giving an opinion and they are sponsored by a pharmaceutical company, food company or other group they should disclose that.
5. The practical implications will be initially a fightback against change, an unwillingness to report both sides of a debate on polarising issues as directed by the ownership of the media outlet who has conflicts of interest in the outcome. In the end the public will be better informed and a better informed public makes better informed decisions.
6. I don't know of any better overseas models as it seems to me no one is employing a better way of presenting balanced views as this model of silencing debate and crushing of freedom of speech is a global issue.
7. ACMA have to ensure that our media is not owned by too few people who control the narrative, but I fear that is too late now. I thought media ownership laws were meant to have safeguarded us against this. Even if ACMA believe this is not the case I believe the

public has a perception that media ownership is too narrow and have lost faith in the integrity of our news media because of it. They are simply, I believe, not representing our views.

Concerned citizen of Australia