

17 March 2026

Copied from email

Dear [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED],

As you've been mentioned in, and are aware of, the issues raised regarding Tasmanian Times by [REDACTED], I wanted to update you on the outcome of those allegations and the subsequent investigations.

I will keep this summary focused rather than going into all of the detail.

The first step I took was to secure a full backup of the Tasmanian Times website to ensure that no information would be lost should any formal investigation require access to historical records.

ACMA – [REDACTED] indicated that he had lodged a formal complaint with ACMA concerning advertorials and potential links to illegal gambling services. While I was not provided with a copy of that complaint, I undertook a full manual review of all advertorial posts (1,941 in total) and their associated links. Any links that appeared questionable were removed, and we also reviewed and strengthened our business practices and processes around advertorial content.

I subsequently contacted ACMA directly to escalate the matter and ensure they were aware of the steps being taken. ACMA confirmed in writing on 9 March that they had reviewed the Tasmanian Times website, acknowledged the change in management and the actions undertaken, and identified one link they requested be removed, which was done. They also advised that they have decided not to commence a formal investigation.

ACCC – [REDACTED] also indicated that he had lodged a complaint with the ACCC regarding advertorials and the absence of paid content notices. Again, I was not provided with a copy of that complaint. As part of the same review process, I examined all advertorial content and implemented clear paid content notices at both the top and bottom of all advertorial posts, consistent with ACCC best-practice guidance.

I also contacted the ACCC directly about the issue. They replied in writing yesterday indicating that the matter is generally outside their scope, as they tend to focus on nationwide issues, and that concerns of this nature are more likely to fall within ACMA's remit.

Black-hat SEO and link farm concerns – [REDACTED] also raised concerns regarding potential black-hat SEO practices and link-farm activity. These issues were already part of the earlier independent third-party review. As a further step, I conducted additional analysis to understand how search engines might view the Tasmanian Times website considering legacy issues identified during the Tailored SEO review.

The analysis did not find evidence that Tasmanian Times operates as a black-hat SEO network or private blog network. It did note that a small number of articles, often attributed to generic contributor bylines and covering topics such as online gambling or cryptocurrency, resembled guest or promotional content sometimes used in external link-building campaigns. While this pattern is common on sites that accept outside submissions and does not indicate deliberate policy violations, it reinforces the importance of strong editorial oversight and transparency around sponsored or externally contributed material.

The analysis also indicated that the Tasmanian Times website appears on some SEO marketplaces, which can sometimes occur automatically. I am currently investigating whether this is the case and exploring options to have the site removed from those listings, particularly as we no longer accept advertorial submissions.

Overall, I am satisfied that these core issues have now been carefully examined and addressed where necessary. The process has also highlighted the importance of thoroughly investigating any allegations and ensuring that appropriate governance and operational practices are in place.

One positive outcome is that this review has prompted a broader examination of Tasmanian Times' governance and operating framework. I have begun implementing a comprehensive governance structure for the organisation. The first five policy documents have recently been published, and I am currently working on a further 34 policies, codes of conduct, and guidance documents. These will form the foundation of a strengthened Tasmanian Times platform capable of supporting staff, volunteers, and contributors.

These governance measures will also support the reintroduction of a new and improved comments section, as well as the development of investigative and solutions-focused journalism in the interest of Tasmania.

Finally, a claim has been lodged with the Fair Work Commission. While this is a matter between the parties involved, we hope it is resolved fairly and constructively for everyone, including Tasmanian Times.

Regards

Rod Holden

Chief Executive Officer

Tasmanian Times

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]