Sacrifice Investigation (BI-753)

Background

On 13 August 2025, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (the **ACMA**) received a complaint from The Hon Kim Beazley AC, AWM, Council Chairman (Mr Beazley) on behalf of the Australian War Memorial (the **AWM**) (the **complainant**) alleging the *Four Corners* report *'Sacrifice*', (the **Program**) breached the ABC Code of Practice 2024 (the **Code**) in its reporting on the management, funding, and redevelopment project of the AWM [also known as the AWM Development Project (the **Project**)].

In October 2025, the ACMA commenced an investigation under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (the **BSA**) into Program broadcast by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (the **ABC**) on 10 March 2025 on ABC TV.

Allegations

The draft preliminary investigation report considers the following allegations made by the complainant which were assessed as warranting further investigation (see Copy of the signed CIA):

Accuracy - *Allegation that the broadcast inaccurately presented misleading and distorted representations by manipulating the audio during the bugle sounding of the Last Post Ceremony (**Issue 1**).*

Impartiality - *Allegation that the broadcast was not impartial in its reporting about the Project and the Report. (**Issue 2**)*

Reasoning & Findings:

Issue 1:

The complainant alleged the solemn bugle call was edited into scenes depicting construction and accompanied by construction noise, creating a false impression that construction works were ongoing during Last Post Ceremony. The ABC Ombudsman Report concluded that the ordinary reasonable viewer would have understood that the footage of the Last Post Ceremony was not a continuous segment.

Staff consider that the ordinary reasonable viewer would have understood that the Last Post soundtrack was being used as background music and was used as a technique by the Program to further build the reverence and sacredness of the scene and not to infer that an actual Last Post ceremony was continuously being featured in the scenes. Staff are of the preliminary view that the ABC did not breach the accuracy provision of the Code in relation to Issue 1.

Issue 2:

The complainant alleged that the Program focused on the negative findings of the Report and failed to include contextually relevant information regarding the Project and Report despite the material being publicly available or provided by the complainant.

Staff considered the following parts of the broadcast were relevant to the allegation:

2.1 The ANAO Report and the omission of the Project's accolades

Staff considered:

- the Code does not prevent *Four Corners* from taking a stance and prosecuting an argument.

- the Program provided relevant context around the Report. A program that presents a perspective that is opposed by a particular person or group is not inherently partial.
- impartiality does not require that every perspective receives equal time, or that every facet of every issue is presented.

2.2 Mr Matt Anderson's (Director, Australian War Memorial) interview for the Program, including how it was edited;

Staff considered:

- The ordinary reasonable viewer would have understood from the discussion about the consultation process for the Project that Mr Anderson and the host disagreed about the outcomes.
- Mr Anderson was given a reasonable opportunity (for example, Mr Anderson had an opportunity to speak 21 times on the Program) to refute the assertions put to him by the host.

2.3 References to AWM's Executive Program Director, Mr Wayne Hitches;

Staff considered:

- Although not all of Mr Hitches' submissions were included in the Program, his answers were included in the broadcast to the extent that it was clear that he disputed the allegations made against him. Further, the ordinary reasonable viewer would have understood that Mr Hitches had provided a response to the Program, which began with the words 'In a statement to Four Corners, Mr Hitches did not answer our question…' and that the omission of all of his responses did not render the Program partial towards Mr Hitches.

2.4 The style and diversity of interviews; and

Staff considered:

- The Program made it clear that there were opposing views on the redevelopment of AWM. Within the specific context and line of enquiry of the Program, the material was prepared and presented in such a way that a range of alternative perspectives were included.

2.5 The interview style of the host and how the interviews were conducted.

Staff considered:

- The host did speak to a variety of interviewees on the Program and asked probing and, at times, quite pointed questions about the Project and Report.
- The nature of current affairs reporting requires reporters and presenters to be probing and, at times, sceptical in their analysis of important issues. It is appropriate for a current affairs Program to explore controversial issues. The canvassing of these issues must be fair in the context of the program and not deliberately attempt to portray the subject in a negative light.
- Although the ordinary reasonable viewer may consider the Program was critical about how the Project was conducted, there is no evidence that the Program was partial to critics of the Project.
- The treatment of these issues did not evince prejudgment, but rather provided sufficient material, in terms of information and viewpoints, for viewers to understand that the Project was a matter of contention.

Staff are of the preliminary view that the Program did not breach the impartiality provision of the Code with respect to this allegation.