



INDEPENDENT MEDIA COUNCIL

Determination

Andrew Mangano v Seven West Media.

Seven West Media (SWM) publishes 'The West Australian' and 'PerthNow' which have issued reports on a proposed children's hospice to be constructed on public land at Swanbourne. The land is within the City of Nedlands which strongly objects to the proposal.

City of Nedlands Councillor Andrew Mangano complains about an article published on 29th June 2022 under the heading "Sick Kids Will Be 'Bombed' – Council's Bizarre Hospice Excuses". He claims it sensationalised his remarks that the proximity of the hospice to the SAS Campbell Barracks would make it a military target during war. He further complains that the article did not report all reasons for objection to the proposal and disparaged the Council and himself.

In essence Mr Mangano alleges that the article had a distorting emphasis and failed to report all relevant facts. If so, this would be a breach the IMC Code of Conduct which requires



that reports be ‘honest, accurate, balanced and fair and disclose all essential facts.’

The article fully quoted Mr Mangano’s remarks about the risk of the hospice becoming a military target, and no inaccuracy is claimed in that regard. It also referred to the objections of other councillors to the hospice including that it will be a ‘white elephant’, is ‘too small’, is ‘on an A Class reserve’, and that terminally ill children ‘may not die at the facility’.

The question is whether the article lacked balance or failed to report all essential facts, which are issues to be considered in light of all SWM’s reporting on the hospice controversy.

In this regard SWM’s previous coverage of the Council’s deliberations included a report on 16th June outlining reasons given by various councillors as to why the proposal should not proceed. These included Councillor Mangano’s references to ‘the bushfire risk, the traffic impacts, and the ongoing costs to the Council’.

In our view, when the article is considered in the context of SWM’s overall reporting there was no breach of the Code. Readers interested in the hospice proposal were already aware of the general objections raised by councillors. The focus of the 29th June report was on further objections raised of an unusual nature which were fairly described as bizarre. These objections were highly newsworthy and likely to attract



strong public interest. Accordingly, they provided a reasonable and valid basis for the story as published.

In recent comments Mr Mangano has added the claim that the article's headline lacked objectivity and breached the Code. We do not agree. The headline fairly reflected not just the report but also Mr Mangano's more detailed public assertions to the effect that the hospice might become an aerial target for hostile forces on the assumption it formed part of Campbell Barracks.

For these reasons we do not uphold the complaint.

(Note that IMC member James McGinty has not participated in this determination. He withdrew as a result of a perceived conflict of interest due to him being a Commissioner of Lotterywest which is partly funding the proposed children's hospice).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P Blaxell".

Peter Blaxell

Chairman

**Independent Media
Council**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cheryl Edwardes".

Cheryl Edwardes

Member

**Independent Media
Council**