



## **Editorial Policy of West Australian Newspapers**

The Board recognises that it has a responsibility to develop and implement an editorial policy which will enable its newspapers, and web-sites, to fulfil their role as part of “The Fourth Estate,” a cornerstone of our democracy.

A newspaper is a commercial business, but the Board recognises it also has a role in our political and judicial systems that other businesses do not.

While the Board’s imperative is to drive returns for shareholders, the Directors recognise the papers have a duty to their readers, the communities they serve and the freedom of the press upon which our liberty depends.

The Directors also acknowledge that the rights and privileges extended to the newspapers’ journalists by the nation’s political and judicial institutions bring with them a duty to report the workings of those institutions fairly and accurately in the public interest. Fulfilment of this duty will require the newspapers to appeal to the widest possible cross-section of their communities, to maintain the highest standards and traditions of journalism and the English language and to provide training in the skills and principles of journalism to young people.

The Board has therefore laid down broad parameters for the type of newspaper it believes will best meet this duty and has developed a set of ethical guidelines for the papers to follow.

This in no sense implies any interference by the board in the day-to-day running of editorial.

The Board of West Australian Newspapers requires its journalists and editors to adhere to principles of integrity, balance and fairness in all news gathering and presentation.

The Board expects its newspapers to be probing, sceptical, honest, courageous and forthright.

Fact and comment should be clearly delineated in all news reports. Every possible step should be taken to ensure the accuracy of reports and significant errors should be promptly corrected.

Any technological alteration of a visual image used in the newspapers must be acknowledged.

No member of the editorial staff will be required to make an unwelcome intrusion on the personal grief of another person.

The papers should reflect the aspirations of all West Australians, with particular regard to the diverse nature of the community.

They should be engaged with the community and recognise their vital role in encouraging the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of community life.

At the same time they should recognise disadvantage.

Commercial factors must not override editorial decisions.

Any member of the staff who accepts any inducement from any third party in relation to the writing or presentation of a report or photograph will be instantly dismissed.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated.

Freedom of the press is a tenuous concept in this country. It is not enshrined in law and depends almost entirely on public support. That support can only be diminished if the public loses faith in the media as fair, honest and reliable sources of information.

The Company is a member of the Australian Press Council and therefore requires its editors to be mindful of Press Council principles. The Company will continue to support the Press Council as an advocate of press freedom and a shield against demands for greater government regulation.

As a general rule, an editor will be expected to publish adverse Press Council rulings involving his or her paper. If the editor decides an adverse Press Council ruling should not be published, the editor should advise the Board, in writing, of the reasons for that decision.

17 March 2009