

23 July 2020

Dear Editor,

I am writing to clarify facts in relation to recent reporting in the Meander Valley Gazette.

In June, opinion writer Ms Sharon Webb covered the appointment of Mr Neil Grose to Council. Council, for reasons of personal privacy, did not disclose details of Mr Grose's employment to Ms Webb. Yet the article included a figure purporting to be Mr Grose's salary. That figure is both incorrect and unnecessary in the service of the public interest. The Australian Press Council's standards enshrine "a person's reasonable expectations of privacy". It is disappointing that this standard appears to have been set aside.

Secondly, in July, an article by Ms Webb covered a decision in the Supreme Court relating to the use of the former Meander Primary School. Ms Webb wrote that the cost of legal action by Council was 'estimated at more than \$250,000'. To again highlight the Australian Press Council's standards, member publications have a responsibility to ensure material reported as fact is accurate and not misleading. Ms Webb did not disclose how she determined this estimate. Again, it is difficult to see how the community interest is served by such highly inaccurate and unverified coverage. For the record, Council's legal costs to date are below \$60,000, a figure that highlights the wild inaccuracy of Ms Webb's unverified estimate.

Council supports promoting community awareness through accurate reporting. This is particularly important when the reporting covers contentious issues with the potential to divide the community. The value and ethos of a community paper should be to build community considering a balanced and broad church of views without bias. The confidence of a community to express such views and to support a publication relies ultimately on a publications' capacity to present factual material and opinion in a fair and balanced way without omission of key facts or a reliance on the views of a few.

Yours sincerely,

John Jordan
GENERAL MANAGER