



Table of Contents

Chairman’s Foreword	5
Privacy and Freedom of the Press	8
The Lingering Pain for Those Left Behind	11
A Council Member Reflects	14
Press Council Personnel and Procedure	16
An Analysis	18
Statistics	19
Adjudications 2006	20
Decisions 2006	92
Statement of Principles	93
Complaints Procedure	96
Statement of Financial Performance	98
Statement of Financial Position	99
Auditor’s Report	100
Index	101

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Chairman's Foreword

Thirty two complaints were considered during the year. The Council upheld, either fully or in part, 11 of these complaints. In one case, the Council declined to adjudicate as that complaint involved an alleged breach of an interim name suppression order. The Council's policy on such complaints is set out elsewhere in this report.

The majority of the complaints upheld fell within Principle 1 of the Council's Statement of Principles, namely the "accuracy, fairness and balance" principle. Other grounds that led to or contributed to upholding complaints were insufficient regard for the privacy and sensibility of young people, the privacy principle as it relates to relatives of a person convicted of a crime, the failure to correct an error promptly, and the stand-first not accurately and fairly conveying the substance of the report.

There were two occasions where a complaint was upheld on a six-five majority. One of those involved the tension or the boundary between the right of a person to privacy and the person's freedom of speech and the right to report freely. Further reference is made to this matter in this report.

The number of adjudications issued by the Council has declined over the past four years (52 in 2003, 45 in 2004, 41 in 2005 and 32 in 2006). It is likely that the increasing practice of newspapers running correction columns and being prepared to acknowledge when a mistake has been made, has contributed to this decline. As the Council has noted in the past, complaints have come to the Council that would not have been made if there had been a prompt correction by the newspaper. The trend of publishing corrections and having correction columns is to be applauded.

In my Foreword last year, I indicated that the Council was of the view that it was now timely to conduct a review of the Council. This independent review has commenced and is being conducted by retired High Court Judge The Hon Sir Ian Barker, QC of Auckland and Professor Lewis Evans of Victoria University, Wellington. The aims of the review are:

- (a) to review the purposes, activities, performance, governance and resourcing of the Council;
- (b) to consider whether the Council's objectives are adequate in the light of changing circumstances and public perceptions and whether the Council is operating in a manner consistent with them;
- (c) to assess the range and scope of the Council's activities when concerned with the operations of similar bodies in other countries.

The Review Panel is seeking submissions from any person who has an interest in making such submissions. Information on the Review and on details of how to make submissions can be obtained on www.presscouncilreview.org.nz.

Submissions made by the Council on the Coroner's Bill did not lead the Select Committee to make the suggested changes, notwithstanding that some members of the Select Committee appeared receptive to the suggestions. The stated reason for not accepting the submissions that there should be greater freedom in publishing details of suicides is the fear that such publications will lead to copycat suicides. The fear is that a relaxation of the present restrictions on publication of suicide details would lead to a greater number of

