



## Public Interest Journalism Fund – Guidelines on Publishing Opinion and Analysis

August 2022

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*(Excerpts taken from the [NZ Media Council Principles](#))*

Public interest journalism plays a key role in ensuring citizens can participate in democratic processes by providing accurate, fair and balanced information especially in the lead up to elections.

Content funded by the Public Interest Journalism Fund (PIJF) is subject to the [NZ Media Council Principles](#), which include the following:

#### 1. Accuracy, Fairness and Balance

Publications should be bound at all times by accuracy, fairness and balance, and should not deliberately mislead or misinform readers by commission or omission. In articles of controversy or disagreement, a fair voice must be given to the opposition view. Exceptions may apply for long-running issues where every side of an issue or argument cannot reasonably be repeated on every occasion and in reportage of proceedings where balance is to be judged on a number of stories, rather than a single report.

#### 2. Comment and Fact

A clear distinction should be drawn between factual information and comment or opinion. An article that is essentially comment or opinion should be clearly presented as such. Material facts on which an opinion is based should be accurate.

#### 3. Columns, Blogs, Opinion and Letters

Opinion, whether newspaper column or internet blog, must be clearly identified as such unless a column, blog or other expression of opinion is widely understood to consist largely of the writer's own opinions. Though requirements for a foundation of fact pertain, with comment and opinion balance is not essential. Cartoons are understood to be opinion.

While media funded by the PIJF are free to pursue their independent editorial decisions, articles and roles funded by the PIJF must adhere to the parameters of our funding agreement. This includes ensuring the journalistic standards of fairness, balance and accuracy.

**The [PIJF General Guidelines](#) clearly state that opinion is NOT covered by the PIJF.** Public Interest Journalism is also not:

- Match reports of national sporting codes
- National political coverage\*
- Reporting on international entertainment content
- **Opinion**
- High-profile crime
- Celebrity news
- International news
- Sponsored content\*\*
- Lifestyle content with minimal connection to recent events

### **Analysis**

The PIJF accepts the role 'analysis' plays in public interest journalism and offers this definition as guidance.

- *Analysis (or professional judgement).* The primary purpose of analysis (including live commentary) is to aid understanding and provide richer context and information, rather than to pass judgement or sway opinion. Analytical content attempts to offer the audience a deeper understanding of an issue, often through detailed examination of the facts, and by making connections between them which may not be immediately apparent. This includes providing context and background against which current events can be better understood.

#### *Editor's Note:*

*\*National political coverage is widely provided by mainstream news media outlets across Aotearoa and is generally excluded under the PIJF. Exceptions will be considered in cases where national political coverage for underrepresented audiences can be identified, or is delivered via formats that provide investigative, in-depth or longer-form analyses (such as current affairs programmes), which are more difficult to fund commercially.*

*\*\*Sponsored content is content specifically marked as "sponsored", "in association with", "brought to you by", "advertorial" etc, and relates to news content where the advertiser has editorial input including the right of editorial veto.*