



News & Current Affairs Handbook

November 2014

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OUR NEWS & CURRENT AFFAIRS 'FUNDAMENTALS'

'THE FUNDAMENTALS'

- We act with integrity.
- We obey the law.
- Our health and safety is a priority.
- We support and trust one another.
- We uphold the highest standards of journalism, we show no fear or favour.
- We are each responsible for the actions we take and the decisions we make.
- Being first is important, but being right is more important.
- We comply with our editorial processes and checks.
- If in doubt – refer up.
- Any concerns – speak up.
- Need help – look up.

PART 1: EDITORIAL LIFE, LEGAL RISK AND RESPONSIBILITY

Refer:

[Free-To-Air Code of Broadcasting Practice](#)

[TVNZ Policy Manual](#)

[TVNZ Employment Code](#)

[TVNZ Code of Conduct and Editorial Guidelines for Presenters](#)

[TVNZ Social Media Rules](#)

KEY POINTS

Part 1

Pages 9 - 12

EDITORIAL LIFE, LEGAL RISK AND RESPONSIBILITY

- We all play a role, we all accept responsibility.
- We maintain the highest standards of journalism and ethics.
- Legal risk must be actively managed: identify risk and seek advice.
- If in doubt 'refer up'. But, refer up does not mean to "give up" editorial oversight and care.
- We operate without fear or favour.
- Any potential conflict of interest, refer up.
- All media interviews by staff must have prior HONCA approval.

1. Who we are and what we do

Television New Zealand (**TVNZ**) is New Zealand's leading television and digital media company. We provide high quality content that is relevant to, and enjoyed and valued by, New Zealand audiences, encompassing both New Zealand and international content and reflecting Māori perspectives.

For NCA this means providing independent, comprehensive, impartial and in-depth news and current affairs.

TVNZ's strategic vision is to engage the hearts and minds of New Zealanders with the most watched content. We provide viewers with the content they want and expect from an important national institution.

NCA prides itself in maintaining the highest standards of journalism and ethics. At the heart of what we do is great journalism, on all platforms.

2. Governance

TVNZ is a Crown Entity. It has a Board of Directors appointed by the Minister of Broadcasting and the Minister of Finance. The Board exercises stewardship on behalf of the shareholders ensuring the ongoing health and financial viability of the company, by its oversight of TVNZ's management.

The Chief Executive is also the Editor in Chief, who is ultimately responsible for ensuring all programmes comply with the law, programme standards and recognised standards of objective

journalism. The Head of News & Current Affairs (HONCA) is delegated the responsibility for the day to day operations and management of NCA activities.

3. Editorial responsibility

The Supervising Producer and Executive Producer have editorial control over their programme, and are responsible for its output. On air staff is required to comply with all editorial directions from them, and any referral up the editorial chain of management through to the HONCA and Editor in Chief.

Where an issue arises out of something we have published, it is the responsibility of the Supervising Producer and Executive Producer to ensure it is addressed at the earliest opportunity. Each case will depend on its own circumstances. Staff will follow the directions of the Supervising Producer and the Executive Producer, including making an on-air apology if they consider it appropriate. Any serious or sensitive issues should be referred up in accordance with NCA policy.

It is the Executive Producer's responsibility to ensure that any inappropriate comments are edited from all platforms and any repeat offering.

While the EP has overall editorial responsibility, it is important to be aware that each member of the team is also individually responsible for the actions you take and the decisions you make. While NCA supports you in what you do, in return we expect you to exercise high standards of care and skill in your work.

4. Legal risk and responsibility

Legal risk needs to be proactively managed. This involves a team approach:

- Identification of legal issue – we all play a role here. It's up to each programme's EP to ensure legal issues are identified and managed appropriately.
- Advice from NCA Legal – anyone can seek legal advice, but generally is coordinated by the programme EP. Please involve NCA Legal early enough to enable considered advice to be provided.
- The HONCA must be informed of any significant legal issue.

The decision whether to broadcast, or what to broadcast given the legal risks, is an editorial one. Any editorial decision that is inconsistent with legal advice must be referred to the HONCA.

Legal risk must be managed in respect of coverage on all platforms and channels. As a general rule, the EP is responsible to ensure that any legal issues are communicated across NCA to ensure a coordinated and consistent approach.

The company carries ultimate legally responsible for what we do. However, we are all responsible for the decisions we make and actions we take.

Where appropriate, external counsel will be appointed. Except in an emergency, this must be arranged by NCA Legal, with approval from the responsible Executive Producer.

All threats of legal action must be referred to NCA Legal, who will report to the HONCA and to TVNZ General Counsel.

5. The practice of referral up

The practice of referral up is vital to the successful operation of NCA programmes. The basic rule is - **“If in doubt - refer up”**. The rule applies at every stage of the news gathering process and in every aspect of news production.

When referring-up it is essential that full and accurate information must be provided so that a manager can make informed decisions. Refer Up does not mean ‘give up’ when it comes to editorial care and attention.

It is **mandatory** to refer up in the following situations:

- Covert filming/recording
- Door stepping/walk-ins
- Where legal action has been threatened or a lawyer is involved
- Any matter with legal implications, including where there is a risk of defamation, breach of privacy or any other form of legal action
- Where the matter is sub judice and the story goes outside a report of the case itself
- Where children are the subject matter
- Any matter where the content is controversial or is likely to have an extraordinary impact
- Under-cover work
- Death knocks
- Suppression orders
- Suicide/threat of self-harm
- Explicit material or language
- Footage of death or dead bodies
- Trespass or potential trespass
- Requests for anonymity
- Bomb threats

6. Editorial independence

The principle of editorial independence recognises the vital importance of separating control of editorial content from commercial or political interference, whether inside or outside TVNZ. Operating without fear or favour is fundamental to an objective and impartial newsroom, and critical to a free and democratic society.

Editorial decisions in NCA must be made freely, based solely on recognised principles of objective journalism. Any attempt to undermine that must be referred to the HONCA.

TVNZ’s freedom from editorial influence by its shareholders and Board is enshrined in the Television New Zealand Act 2003. It is also enshrined in policy through the [Board’s Editorial Protocol](#). The Editor in Chief is wholly independent editorially of the TVNZ Board.