

## MEDIA RELEASE

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## Mercury Must Adhere to Damming Australian Press Council Finding

The Australian Press Council has upheld a complaint by the Timber Communities Australia that *The Mercury* newspaper failed to comply with the Press Council's code of practice.

In its finding released today the APC found that a 7 April 2007 correction and 4 April follow up report to an inaccurate 31 March 2007 front page article headlined *Truck logjam* failed to meet **"the Council's requirement that harmful inaccuracies should be corrected promptly and with appropriate prominence."**

"It is now clear that if *The Mercury's* membership of the APC is to have any meaning then it must make good on its commitment to adhere to its Statement of Principles and publish a correction in accordance with what is a simple requirement," Barry Chipman Tasmanian State Manager Timber Communities Australia said on release of the finding.

Principle 2 of the APC Statement of Principles states:

*A publication should make amends for publishing information that is found to be harmfully inaccurate by printing, promptly and with appropriate prominence, such retraction, correction, explanation or apology as will neutralize the damage so far as possible.*

"This inaccurate 31 March article was very harmful to families that are looking to the pulp mill to secure their futures; the damage created by this inaccurate reporting by *The Mercury* has manifested itself in protest and public alarm," Mr Chipman said.

"*The Mercury* now knows it can no longer bury corrections, although a better outcome is for it not to publish harmful inaccurate reporting in the first place. TCA is now very interested in what steps the newspaper will take to avoid a repeat of this harmful and inaccurate reporting against the pulp mill and the State's sustainable timber industry.

"The forest industry has a legislated code of practice that oversees compliance. Perhaps this is a lead *The Mercury* could follow and actually support legislation that makes it comply with the Press Council Code.

"One simple protection could be for the Mercury, when quoting from a document or report, to publish the complete document on its web site. This would allow interested readers to check the accuracy of such quotes."

More.

This Press Council ruling upholds its principle of appropriate prominence for corrections as a basic tenet for its justification for self-regulation and freedom of the press.

The APC failed to uphold another complaint brought by TCA against a 16 January 2007 Mercury article titled *Scientist hits out at claims* relating to inaccurate reporting of Dr Warwick Raverty being *forced to resign* from the RPDC. The APC finding noted that Dr Raverty did not complain about the article despite a 10 January published letter to the editor written by him stating he *decided to withdraw from the RPDC*.

“The Press Council’s complaints committee provided a very fair and open opportunity for TCA to present its case and outline the damage caused by inaccurate reporting and the need for standards compliance by media editors,” Mr Chipman concluded.

Ends.

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See [www.presscouncil.org.au](http://www.presscouncil.org.au) for adjudications