

19th July 2011

The Editor
The Daily Telegraph
2 Holt Street
Surry Hills, NSW, 2010

Formal complaint regarding truth and accuracy of reporting

Dear Sir,

I would like to make a formal complaint regarding the accuracy and neutrality of three articles published in the Daily Telegraph (paper and website) in June and July 2011.

Article #1: ***Australian taxpayers' latest NBN horror show (Telegraph)***
Author: Gemma Jones
Published in:

- Daily Telegraph (Print editions), 9 June 2011
- The Telegraph (website), 9 June 2011 (Printouts attached)

Variations of this article were also published in *The Australian* and *The Herald Sun*. Separate complaints have been forwarded to these papers.

Complaints:

The statement in the article that the NBN is “*servicing just 561 customers*” is demonstrably false.

According to testimony at the Joint committee on the NBN hearing held and broadcast on 16 May, as at 6 May, the NBN had 712 active customers in Tasmania alone, plus another 11 applications.¹ In addition to this, as at 18 May, the NBN had 7 customers in Armidale (as reported in the Daily Telegraph). Therefore at the date of publication, the NBN had at least 718 customers.

The statement in the article that “*By the end of June NBN Co is expected to have 1000 staff - almost two employees for every customer.*” is demonstrably false, conjecture and unbalanced.

The inaccurate number of customers has already been dealt with, making the “almost two staff per customer” line false. The statement also assumes that the number of customers will not also increase “by the end of June”, which is unlikely given the launch of the mainland NBN trial sites. This makes the statement, overall, unbalanced.

The statement in the article that “*None of the customers is paying to access the NBN with the services free to internet providers during a trial period*” is demonstrably false.

Tasmanian NBN customers are currently paying various rates for their access to the NBN. The prices vary between \$29.95 and \$139.95 per month.^{2,3}

While internet providers are not paying a *monthly* charge to NBN Co for access, they are paying a one-off \$300.00 charge for each connection.⁴

This article contains a number of demonstrable errors and is written with considerable partiality, in contravention of sections 1.1 and 1.2 of the *News Ltd Code of Conduct* and Point 1 of the *Australian Press Council Statement of Principles*.

Article #2: ***Join the NBN or you'll be digging deep***

Author: Geoff Chambers

Published in:

- Daily Telegraph (Print edition), 17 June 2011
- The Telegraph website, 17 June 2011 (Printout attached)

Complaints:

The entire premise of this article – that NBN customers who don't consent to a trial could be charged "up to \$900.00 a day" is false. NBN Co has always connected houses free of charge, and have never stated otherwise.

No residents were told they could be charged for a future connection, and the same day of the article publication, NBN Co issued a press release again confirming that connections would be free of charge.⁵ The Daily Telegraph did not publish a correction.

The statement relating to \$900 costs from Stan Davies is presented as an NBN-related fact when it is actually conjecture.

Quoting only the maximum possible NBN price with the statement that "customers could be charged up to \$140 per month", while suppressing the lower available prices is biased and unbalanced. It would have been more accurate to say that future customers would be charged "between \$30 and \$140 per month".

Based on the above, this article contravenes sections 1.1, 1.2 and 1.4 of the *News Ltd Code of Conduct* and sections 1, 2 and 3 of the *Australian Press Council Statement of Principles*.

Article #3: ***Low interest in high speed internet***

Author: Gemma Jones

Published in:

- Daily Telegraph (Print edition), 6 July 2011
- The Telegraph website, 6 July 2011 (Printout attached).

The article states that the charges to access the NBN were "*between \$53 and over \$130 a month.*" This is demonstrably false. Published NBN retail pricing varies from \$29.95 to \$139.95 per month. iiNet, for example, currently offer an NBN connection with bundled phone connection for a total of \$39.90 per month.² This is \$30 per month less than Mr O'Neill is currently paying.

The article does not disclose that the \$39 Mr O'Neill is currently paying for internet is on top of his phone connection, taking his monthly total to \$69.00 per month.

Based on the above, this article contravenes sections 1.1 and 1.4 of the *News Ltd Code of Conduct* and section 1 of the *Australian Press Council Statement of Principles*.

Desired outcomes:

The newspaper should print corrections in the print edition as soon as possible. All online sources of these articles should be retracted, corrected or have a correction/update addendum placed at the bottom of the article.

I look forward to the above outcome being delivered as soon as possible. Should I not receive a positive response by 5 June 2011, I will be forwarding this complaint to the Australian Press Council.

Regards,

Jamie Benaud

References:

- 1 Joint committee on the NBN Hansard, 16 May 2011 (Page 4)
<http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/joint/commttee/j32.pdf>
- 2 iiNet NBN plans:
<http://www.iinet.net.au/nbn/>
- 3 Internode NBN plans:
http://www.internode.on.net/residential/fibre_to_the_home/nbn_plans/
- 4 ISPs to pay \$300 per connection in Tassie NBN stage one
http://www.computerworld.com.au/article/347765/isps_pay_300_per_connection_tassie_nbn_stage_one/
- 5 NBN Co not charging residents for cable-laying in First Release Sites
<http://www.nbnco.com.au/assets/media-releases/2011/kiama-first-release-17-jun-11.pdf>