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Quality Assurance of Scientific Reporting

How the ABC Distorts Science

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Introduction

The ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) is Australia's taxpayer-funded national broadcaster.

This article is about the quality of the ABC's reporting of scientific issues.

The ABC's reporting of some types of issues, for example political issues and women's issues, appears to be deeper, more accurate and of higher quality than other broadcasters.

Unfortunately, high quality does not extend to all of the ABC's reporting. Some of the ABC's science-related reporting appears to be defective.

The ABC appears to employ several political and socioeconomic commentators. They provide much-needed balance when compared with the reporting of right-wing news and propaganda outlets. But employing so many of them presumably must be at the expense of other categories of journalism. Does the ABC employ any scientist journalists? The ABC appears to be deficient in scientific expertise.

Below are two very different examples of how the ABC distorts science. The first example appears to be a consequence of a failure of scientific quality control. The second example appears to be a consequence of a lack of relevant scientific knowledge.

The [first example](#) is about scientific misinformation in some ABC reports about dementia. The evidence indicates that there may have been a deliberate intention to mislead. If so, then it can only be speculated as to what the motive might be, although there are a few possible clues.

The [second example](#) is about scientific misinformation in ABC reports about a beach collapse. Two days elapsed before the ABC stopped including alarming scientific misinformation in its reporting of the event.

The ABC has made a three-part TV documentary about misinformation called "*The Matter of Facts*". They ought to make a fourth episode about a pot and a kettle.

[Quality Assurance of Scientific Reporting](#) shows how and why the ABC must improve.

For the sake of brevity, the words "science" and "scientific" are used in this article to refer collectively to a wide spectrum of science, technology, engineering and medical science. The word "scientist" is used to refer collectively to scientists and technologists.

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Example 1

Apparently Intentional Scientific Misinformation

This example of scientific misinformation is about how the ABC misleads the public about the causes of dementia. The ABC's reports about the causes of dementia carefully avoid being blatantly false, but they are misleading because of a serious error of omission.

The ABC is a prolific producer of reports about dementia. Many of its reports about dementia are human interest stories about how patients and carers are coping with the illness. Some of its reports include information about the causes of dementia.

In an article published on 13 September 2025 in the ABC website, *"Advocates call for action on brain health as AIHW reveals dementia is leading cause of death"*, air pollution was inexplicably omitted from a list of the known main risk factors for developing dementia.

The list of dementia risk factors in the ABC's report was extracted from a report titled *"Dementia in Australia"* published on 12 September 2025 by the Australian Institute for Health and Welfare (AIHW) which is funded by the Government of Australia. The AIHW report appears to have obtained its information about the causes of dementia from an authoritative report about the causes of dementia published by "The Lancet" in 2024.

The AIHW's report stated:

"Risk factors that increase the likelihood of developing dementia include: Obesity, smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, air pollution, head injury, high blood pressure, untreated hearing loss, untreated vision loss, depression and diabetes."

Whereas the ABC's report stated:

"Obesity, smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, head injury, high blood pressure, untreated hearing and vision loss, depression and diabetes increase the risk of developing dementia."

The only difference is that *"air pollution"* was omitted from the ABC's version of the list. None of the other causes of dementia were omitted.

Main Causes of Dementia

See "[Dementia and Air Pollution](#)" for more information about the link between air pollution and dementia, including rankings of the main causes of dementia.

According to "The Lancet", air pollution ranks in equal fifth place with depression and brain injury as one of the leading causes of preventable dementia.

Air pollution ranks lower than only hearing loss, high cholesterol, less education and social isolation.

Air pollution is a bigger cause of dementia than each of physical inactivity, diabetes, smoking, high blood pressure, vision loss, obesity and excessive alcohol consumption.

Probably Not an Accidental Oversight - the ABC did it Again

The ABC cannot claim that the omission of air pollution from the ABC's report of 13 September 2025 was an accidental oversight.

The ABC was notified of the omission and was requested to rectify the error. The ABC did not even bother to reply. Then they did it again.

In an article titled "*Scientists find physical exercise can reduce risk of developing dementia*" published by the ABC a few days later on 22 September 2025, it was mentioned that there are fourteen modifiable risk factors for dementia.

Instead of taking the opportunity to correct the error of omission from its previous report of 13 September 2025, in its new report of 22 September air pollution was yet again not mentioned. This time, the ABC's report mentioned eight and omitted six of the fourteen non-genetic main causes of dementia. By omitting six of the fourteen causes, this time the ABC skilfully prevented any accusation from arising that the ABC had deliberately chosen to omit only air pollution.

The repeated omission leads to the conclusion that there is a high probability that the ABC deliberately chooses to actively prevent its audience from becoming aware that air pollution is a leading cause of dementia.

The ABC's misrepresentation of the causes of dementia helps to maintain a longstanding lack of public awareness about the strong link between air pollution and dementia.

Smoke is a Major Health Hazard

Many Australians love smoke. Some people like smoke so much that they will go to great lengths to prevent any restrictions being placed on the creation of smoke. Evidence for this can be found in the many ways in which the regulation of smoke is either absurdly inadequate or is completely absent.

For example, current regulations allow rural landholders in southeast Queensland, and probably also in other regions, to do as much burning-off as they please, subject only to conditions imposed by a local fire warden, which are usually only to do with such things as firebreaks, weather conditions, notifications, appropriate monitoring and availability of resources. The quantity of air pollution produced is unfettered and never merits the slightest consideration.

Paradoxically, the ABC seems to be aware that smoke is a substantial health hazard. For example, in an article published by the ABC on 28 July 2025, under a title that includes the phrase "*Wood heater pollution is a silent killer*", many of the health hazards associated with wood heater smoke are described. Except of course, as usual the article fails to mention dementia.

There is not the slightest doubt that smoke is a major health hazard, and there is not the slightest doubt that few people in Australia are aware of the magnitude of the

hazard, and there is not the slightest doubt that few people in Australia are aware of the strong link between air pollution and dementia. So, what exactly is the ABC's game?

What Changed at the ABC? Who is Responsible?

The ABC's apparent aversion to reporting that air pollution is one of the main causes of dementia seems to have begun after 17 September 2024. On that date the ABC published an article titled *"With dementia cases set to triple by 2050 in our region, there are 14 risk factors to watch for"*. The article stated correctly that air pollution is a cause of dementia.

Why then is it that the ABC now avoids informing the public that it is a scientifically-researched fact that air pollution is one of the main preventable causes of dementia? Something must have changed at the ABC since September 2024.

It would be logical to speculate that somebody at the ABC does not want the public to be aware that air pollution is one of the main causes of dementia.

It can also be speculated that some people who have vested interests in the creation of smoke may be able to influence what the ABC reports.

Could there be improper influence from burnoff-loving primary producers? The current Deputy Chair of the ABC happens to be a primary producer, whose Wikipedia entry states *"... is an Australian farmer and grazier, and a community advocate for the rural industry, particularly women in the industry."* Could this be the source of the ABC's apparent bias?

Alternatively, could there be improper influence from some of the many affluent users of smoke-spewing wood heaters in suburbia, perhaps some well-heeled employees of the ABC?

Quality Assurance

It is possible that the ABC has effective quality assurance procedures in place for most areas of its reporting, apart from science. Perhaps it is just scientific reporting that needs more resources.

Misleading omissions would be less likely to happen if the ABC had effective science-related quality control mechanisms in place.

Update

12 May 2026

The ABC website today published an article titled *"New study finds link between air pollution exposure and risk of ending up in hospital"*. It appears to be about a new study led by a researcher from Deakin University, published earlier today by CSIRO Publishing. The ABC's article states that *"The report warned air pollution contributed to breathing difficulties, heart problems and stroke, and acknowledged emerging links between pollution and neurological disorders like dementia"*.

This is evidence that the ABC now firmly accepts that air pollution is one of the causes

of dementia.

The use here by the ABC of the word "*dementia*" is more significant than might appear at first glance, because the study's report does not actually mention dementia specifically. The study's wording states "*the most widely recognised health impacts of air pollution are cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, such as ischaemic heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma, with emerging evidence for neurological disorders*".

Policy makers and regulators should take note of the conclusions of the new study, such as "*policies should continuously target air pollution reduction*."

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Example 2

Apparently Unintentional Scientific Misinformation

This example of scientific misinformation concerns ABC news reports about a "sinkhole" that opened up late in the evening on Saturday 26 September 2015 at Inskip Point, a popular holiday camping area in southeast Queensland.

Although it is now several years since this particular event happened, there are three good reasons for including it here as an example.

Firstly, the ABC's reports about a "sinkhole" at Inskip Point provide conclusive evidence that there is scientific incompetence at all levels throughout the ABC, from the top to the bottom of the organisation. The ABC's initial reporting about the "sinkhole" was scientifically laughable.

Secondly, the writer of this critique has an honours B.Sc. in geology and possesses the geoscientific knowledge required to accurately interpret the "sinkhole" that occurred at Inskip Point.

Thirdly, the writer of this critique visited and inspected the "sinkhole".

The "Sinkhole" at Inskip Point was Not a Sinkhole

In scientific reality, the "sinkhole" at Inskip Point was not a sinkhole. It was a collapse of a steeply-sloping sand beach, a "beach collapse".

Other frequently-used terms for the phenomenon are "*near-shore landslip*" and "*near-shore landslide*".

Without getting into a lengthy discussion about which term is best, "*beach collapse*" is the term used in this article.

The technically correct terminology is "*retrogressive breach flow slide*".

There is a new beach collapse at Inskip Point every few months or years. Beach collapses at Inskip Point have always been called "sinkholes" by the general public and by some media hacks. This will probably always be the case, but the ABC ought to be

capable of doing better.

The ABC's Reporting was Unjustifiably Alarmist

The "sinkhole" engulfed a vehicle, a caravan, a camper-trailer and some tents. Although there were lurid media reports of panic and people screaming and shouting in the darkness, in reality all campers had enough time to get out of harm's way, although a few of them lost their possessions.

For two days, some ABC reports about the beach collapse stated definitely that it was a sinkhole and other ABC reports inferred that it could be a sinkhole. These reports were scientifically false and misleading. One ABC report included a description of genuine sinkholes which created an impression that there was a risk to campers of sinkholes opening up anywhere at any time. In reality there was no sinkhole and no risk to campers, except for a risk of beach collapse along a band of land close to the shoreline.

Also, whereas real sinkholes remain dangerous and sometimes can increase in size catastrophically, beach collapses at Inskip Point stabilise within three hours of their inception. A beach collapse cannot re-start after it has stopped expanding. A day and a half after the start of the collapse, the ABC alarmingly reported that the "sinkhole" was still growing.

Provided that campers at Inskip Point did not camp close to the shoreline, then they were not in any danger. But for two days, the ABC's reports about the "sinkhole" helped to stoke fear, anxiety and alarm among campers.

Hundreds of campers left Inskip Point the next day. Queensland Government officials ordered campers in an area near the beach collapse to leave. It can be speculated that misleading alarmist news reporting may have influenced the officials and may have influenced other campers to pack up and leave.

The alarmist nature of the ABC's reporting about the "sinkhole" was unjustified. There is no reasonable excuse for the incompetence of the ABC that facilitated alarmist reporting. The ABC is expected to set a high standard for others to follow. The ABC ought to have had sufficient relevant scientific expertise to have known that what some people were calling a "sinkhole" wasn't actually a sinkhole.

Other media organisations made similar errors. Alarmist news reports are good for ratings. Some commercial media organisations still confuse beach collapses with sinkholes.

From the Beginning, it was Obviously Not a Real Sinkhole

A sinkhole forms when the roof of an underground cavern collapses into the cavern.

Underground cavities typically occur in limestone, parts of which have dissolved over geological time. There is no limestone at Inskip Point.

Another cause of near-surface underground caverns is mining of any type of solid rock. Inskip Point is a sand peninsula. Underground mining of unconsolidated sand is not possible because sand does not have sufficient structural strength to allow underground caverns to exist.

It should have been obvious that underground cavities are unlikely to exist at Inskip Point.

Also, "sinkholes" at Inskip Point only occur along the shoreline. To anybody who was aware of this, it should have been obvious that the "sinkholes" at Inskip Point must be related to something that occurs only near the shoreline, rather than being related to underground cavities that would be more widely distributed.

History of the ABC's "Sinkhole" Error

Here is a timeline of events. The ABC news reports mentioned here are those that are known to the author of this critique. There may well be other ABC reports that the author is not aware of.

This detailed timeline of events and its embedded commentary take up a lot of space. They have been included here to show the conclusive evidence for this example of scientific misinformation. Unless readers wish to read all the details, readers who would prefer to save time can easily skip this section. A condensed version of this section can be viewed in the "Timeline Summary" that follows this section.

On 29 April 2014 the ABC website published an article titled *"What causes sinkholes? - Ask an Expert (ABC Science)"*. This was an accurate and informative summary of how sinkholes form in areas of limestone rock. It did not mention any other causes of sinkholes, of which there are some. The article appears to have been written by two ABC journalists after they had interviewed two geoscientists.

The beach collapse at Inskip Point began late in the evening on Saturday 26 September 2015.

It can be speculated that, when the beach collapse at Inskip Point initially became known to the ABC, staff at the ABC may have been told by members of the public that it was a sinkhole. Alternatively, it can be speculated that maybe ABC staff looked into their records and found the 2014 ABC article about sinkholes and thought "bingo".

On Sunday 27 September 2015 at 5:25am the ABC website reported that *"A major sinkhole has swallowed vehicles at Inskip Point in Queensland."* The report also mentioned that *"geotechnical engineers"* would be approached by a government organisation to provide an assessment of the site.

Perhaps influenced by the term "geotechnical engineers", ABC staff appear to have decided that an engineer's skills would be more appropriate than a geologist's skills to guide the ABC's reporting.

In a report about the Inskip "sinkhole" on the ABC TV evening news program on Sunday 27 September 2015 the news announcer stated that *"..... a major sinkhole swallowed vehicles at Inskip Point"*.

An engineer from "Engineers Australia" appeared briefly on camera at a location that bore no resemblance to Inskip Point.

The ABC news announcer stated that the engineer had said that *"the region has a history of sinkholes, caused by cavities coming to the surface"*. So, as at 27 September, the ABC's go-to expert was talking about cavities and sinkholes in the region, with no mention of beach collapses. In reality, Inskip Point has no history of cavities or sinkholes. It does have a history of beach collapses.

On Monday 28 September 2015, on ABC Radio National Breakfast, the engineer was interviewed at length in Brisbane. She was introduced as a geotechnical engineer.

The ABC presenter said that the engineer had not yet visited Inskip Point but planned to visit there later in the week. Different geotechnical experts clearly had contrasting priorities. Inskip Point is only a few hours drive from Brisbane. The eventual report of the Queensland Government's geotechnical consultant stated that the consultant had visited Inskip Point on 27 September and on 28 September.

The presenter asked questions about sinkholes. The engineer talked about sinkholes and then went on to talk about slumps and slips. She said *"..... we really don't know at the moment whether this is actually a sinkhole or a slump or a slip"*. She talked about the processes by which a slump can happen. Some of her comments were well-informed and accurate. Overall, she does appear to have thought that it could be some sort of slump, while keeping her options open.

There was some discussion about the "sinkhole" continuing to grow.

On Monday 28 September 2015 at 11:58am the ABC News website reported that a *"lecturer in Earth Sciences said the incident was not considered a sinkhole - which are caused by rock dissolving beneath the ground. Instead, [the lecturer] said the phenomenon was known as a near-shore landslide and was caused by the fast-moving current alongside Inskip Point eating through the sand beneath the surface that occasionally collapses."* This report was accurate and should have put an end to the ABC's misleading nonsense about cavities and sinkholes. Fat chance.

On Monday 28 September 2015 at 4:39pm the ABC News website reported that the engineer from Engineers Australia, had said *"a series of tests would be conducted to check the area's stability. They [need to] do some analysis - use some geoscientific tools to test and see if there is a larger instability or a larger cavity underneath that area to know if it is going to get any bigger or not. There are many reasons that this could occur, but there appears to be elements of a slip or slump failure here, rather than just a sinkhole-type behaviour."*

Later in the report, the ABC's engineer stated that *"This area has a history where sinkholes occur regularly"*.

The engineer appears to still be undecided about whether the "sinkhole" was caused by a cavity or whether it was a slump. This is despite the previous ABC report that had categorically stated that it was a near-shore landslide and not a sinkhole.

More damning for the ABC's scientific credibility, this latest news report of 4:39pm also contained a section about real sinkholes and what causes them, presumably extracted from the ABC's 2014 information sheet about sinkholes referred to above. This demonstrates that at this stage there must have been confusion at the ABC. The ABC was here reporting yet again about real sinkholes, even though the ABC had reported several hours earlier that it wasn't a sinkhole.

Finally, on Monday 28 September 2015 at 11:45pm the ABC News website reported that a *"A Queensland Government geotechnical engineer today said that the event may have been a "near-shore landslide" rather than a sinkhole."*

Notice that here the government's geotechnical engineer has used exactly the same terminology that the geologist used in the ABC report of some twelve hours earlier, a *"near-shore landslide"*. This is evidence that the government's geotechnical engineer may have got the information from the geologist.

The Queensland Government's geotechnical engineer was probably not the same person as the ABC's geotechnical engineer, because the ABC's engineer had not yet visited Inskip Point.

Here, for the first time, two full days after the event began, in this latest report the ABC no longer referred to the beach collapse as being a "sinkhole". Instead, the ABC now referred to it as a "hole". This rather imprecise terminology suggests that the

ABC may still have been a bit confused, but at least it was progress.

Five months later, another beach collapse occurred at Inskip Point. In an ABC TV news program on 1 March 2016 the news announcer stated that there had been another "*near-shore landslip*" at Inskip Point. Mercifully, this time there was no mention of sinkholes.

Timeline Summary

At daybreak on 27 September 2015, the ABC incorrectly stated in a news report that "*a major sinkhole*" had occurred at Inskip Point the previous evening. It is not clear whether an ABC staff member made the error, or whether the ABC had been misinformed.

Late in the afternoon of 27 September, comments about "*sinkholes*" and "*cavities*" made by an engineer began to be quoted in ABC news reports. There was as yet no mention of slumps. It can be speculated that the ABC had probably told the engineer that it was a sinkhole, so it was probably not entirely her fault that her comments were about cavities and sinkholes.

On breakfast radio on 28 September, there was a discussion between the engineer and an ABC presenter. The engineer now indicated that it had not yet been determined whether it was a sinkhole or a slump. The engineer had not yet visited Inskip Point.

In the middle of the day, on 28 September, the ABC reported that a geologist had said that it was not a sinkhole. It was a "*near-shore landslide*".

Late in the afternoon, an ABC news report again referred to a cavity and sinkholes.

For two days, the ABC's reports about the beach collapse had contained alarming, misleading and irrelevant information about sinkholes.

Near midnight, the ABC issued a report about a "*near-shore landslide*" and did not use the word "*sinkhole*", instead referring to it as a "*hole*".

Scientific Incompetence at All Levels within the ABC

Some people might have been thinking that if the ABC has a department called "ABC Science" then the ABC must have lots of scientific expertise. Sorry to disappoint.

The article mentioned above titled "*What causes sinkholes? - Ask an Expert (ABC Science)*", published by the ABC website on 29 April 2014, had required the services of two journalists and two external geoscientists to produce it. That is a lot of resources to produce a lightweight summary that is less than two pages long.

If the ABC had any useful inhouse geoscientific skills then a single person could have produced the 2014 information sheet in a short time without needing to employ any external consultants. Clearly the ABC has little ability to produce anything scientific without expending ridiculous amounts of resources and employing external consultants.

The ABC's news reports about the beach collapse quoted an independent engineer several times. It appears reasonable to suppose that the ABC must have engaged the

engineer as an external consultant, presumably because the ABC lacked relevant scientific knowledge.

The engineer is described in the "Women in Technology WA" website as having "*a wealth of experience in mining, engineering, and business development, she has excelled in roles involving underground ventilation systems, project management, and technical services.*" She is obviously a very experienced and capable engineer, and she clearly had considerable geotechnical knowledge from her experiences in mining and underground ventilation systems.

For whatever reason, the engineer, as reported by the ABC, initially treated the event as a sinkhole. This may not have been entirely her fault. It can be speculated that the ABC had probably instructed her that it was a sinkhole.

Considering the circumstances prevailing at Inskip Point, it can be argued that it should have been crystal clear to the ABC that a geologist's skills might have been more relevant for the ABC's reports than an engineer's skills.

If there is any doubt about this, it was a geologist who is reported to have been the first to get it right, not an engineer.

It is one thing for the ABC to not have a clue about what has caused something that has a scientific explanation, which is possibly the normal state of affairs, but it is quite something else for the ABC to not even know which branch of science would be most relevant.

There must have been many ABC staff at all levels involved in producing the ABC TV news report about "*a major sinkhole*", broadcast on Sunday 27 September 2015. None of them appears to have noticed that the scientific segment of the report was incorrect.

Further Research (for those who are interested in Geoscience)

Following the sensationalist nature of media reporting of the Inskip Point beach collapse, the Queensland Government commissioned a geotechnical consultant to investigate potential risks from similar events at Inskip Point.

The consultant's report titled "*Risks associated with nearshore instability Inskip Point, Qld*" is available in either the website of the Queensland Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation or in the website of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. This article makes no attempt to provide website links to government departments or documents because such links tend to get broken easily. Earth scientists will find the report very interesting. It would be well worth the effort to search for it.

The consultant's report includes a scientific explanation of beach collapses at Inskip Point and several photographs and diagrams.

It would be ideal to reproduce images of beach collapses here, particularly aerial photos and video clips. However, such images are not shown here because of copyright considerations. The author's own photos have been mislaid.

Another way to view images related to the beach collapse of 26 September 2015 is to search the internet for media reports about it.

There have been several similar beach collapses at Inskip Point. Many reports about

them can be found on the internet.

Mechanism of the Beach Collapse

The detailed report of the geotechnical consultant employed by the Queensland Government is the source of some of the information in this section.

Readers should search the internet for relevant images.

Inskip Point is a sand peninsula. On its north side it borders a deep channel that connects the ocean to the Great Sandy Strait.

Strong tidal currents race through the channel. This is why the sand beach at this location slopes steeply. The consultant's report describes a depth of 5 m or more quite close to the edge of the beach.

By the way, the slope of the beach at Inskip Point is so steep that on one occasion a dolphin briefly popped up out of the water no more than a metre from the shore, just beside where the author of this critique was walking along the shoreline.

Around the world, much research has been done into flow slides. The initial failure mechanisms are not understood perfectly because slides begin underwater, invisibly and without warning.

The most likely trigger for a collapse seems to result from local erosion of the steep slope, making the slope even steeper. At Inskip Point, the erosion is caused by strong turbulent tidal flows.

Sand has relatively little structural strength. Sometimes, an over-steep submerged section of the steep sand beach collapses. According to the consultant's report, it *"shears as a response to exceeding its angle of repose"*.

In the primary mechanism of retrogression, when a local collapse of the steep face of the submerged slope has been initiated, sand grains falling through the water create a density current which carries the grains downwards and away, keeping the face of the slope steep enough to continue collapsing.

In a secondary mechanism of retrogression, a sub-aerial sand scarp with a near-vertical face forms at the edge of the collapse. Blocks of sand 0.5 m to 1.0 m thick calve off or slide from the scarp into the ocean.

At Inskip Point, after a collapse of the sand beach has been initiated, it steadily retrogresses inland and along the shoreline, resulting in an arc of coastline slowly crumbling into the ocean.

Videos of beach collapses that have happened during daylight hours show a fascinating spectacle, although maybe not so fascinating for the hapless campers who were obliged to witness their possessions disappearing into the sea.

Gradually a less-steep submerged beach forms beneath the scarp, causing the retrogressive density current to diminish and eventually cease. The beach is now once again fundamentally stable.

The slope of the submerged beach below the sand scarp at the edge of the collapse is now no longer steep enough for density current retrogression to re-start.

By this stage, the arc of the beach collapse may be more than 150 m long.

A "retrogressive breach flow slide" at Inskip Point takes two to three hours from initiation until retrogression ceases.

Subsequent erosion and flattening of the locally unstable remnant edge of the scarp may cause some observers to mistakenly think that retrogression persists.

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Quality Assurance of Scientific Reporting

Most people blithely assume that scientific information reported by the ABC is always accurate and dependable. Sadly, it isn't.

There appears to be a lack of adequate scientific skills at the ABC.

One of the problems that has been identified is that when a scientific issue becomes worthy of inclusion in a news report, the ABC may not possess sufficient scientific knowledge to even know which branch of science is involved. This can lead to the ABC obtaining opinions from experts whose expertise may not be the most relevant.

A big red flag is the ABC's apparent reluctance to report that air pollution is one of the main causes of dementia. This indicates that there may not be adequate quality control mechanisms in place for science-related reporting, which in turn suggests that there may be other scientific issues that suffer from distortion.

Misinformation influences people's opinions, behaviours and decision-making.

Misinformation is increasing. Politicians and some media organisations have always disseminated misinformation. Tech titans have adopted misinformation as one of the tools of their trade. Social media is awash with misinformation. The availability of artificial intelligence has made misinformation easier to create, both deliberately and inadvertently.

In the public interest, it is imperative that the ABC be prevented from becoming yet another grand edifice of delusion.

Some reform of the ABC is required.

The ABC needs to acquire sufficient scientific skills to be able to provide effective quality assurance of the ABC's reporting of scientific issues.

Quality assurance of media reporting of scientific issues requires a range of expert scientific skills.

The ABC does not seem to employ many scientists. There are not many ABC reports and programs that are fundamentally about science or technology. There are however plenty of ABC reports and programs about the effects of science and technology on people. These reports and programs don't require much scientific or technical knowledge to create.

The ABC does broadcast some science-related TV programs, for example "Dr Karl's How Things Work", "Operation Ouch" and "Mythbusters". The celebrity presenters of these programs all have excellent scientific credentials. However, while such programs can be interesting and entertaining, essentially they are science dumbed-down to produce infotainment.

It would not be ideal for the ABC to employ celebrity scientists because celebrities are more expensive than mere mortals and celebrities have their own priorities. Also, the principles of science stand on their own feet. Scientific principles don't need to be associated with media celebrities for people to be able to understand them.

To lift its game, the ABC should employ several competent scientists who do not have celebrity status. Then they could produce TV programs that concentrate on science rather than on entertainment. This would be of benefit to the education of the nation, a concept that should be part of the focus of a taxpayer-funded broadcaster.

Also, with a range of expert skills to draw on, the ABC would at all times have quality advice available for input to science-related news and current affairs reports.

As a first step, the ABC should employ some expert scientists as journalists. It would probably be of overall benefit if the ABC employed fewer experts on subjects such as politics and women's issues and instead employed some senior staff who possess expert knowledge of science, technology and engineering.

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