



ABC Apologises To The IPA

Publish Date:

May 2020

On the 6th of April, 2020, ABC Radio Melbourne Drive with Nicole Chvastek interviewed infectious diseases expert Mark Pellegrini from the Eliza Hall Institute about the IPA's video on the lockdown. Here is what was played prior to the interview on ABC Radio Melbourne:

"It's time these restrictions were eased. It's time to allow for the sensible reopening of churches, reopen the restaurants, cafes, bars and community sport. Do it safely, but do it; not in six months, not in one month, now."

Here is what the IPA's Director of Policy Gideon Rozner actually said [in the video](#):

"It's time these restrictions were eased. It's time to allow for the sensible reopening of churches, reopen the restaurants, cafes, bars and community sport. Do it safely, **with appropriate social distancing measures in place**, but do it; not in six months,



not in one month, now.”

Presenter Nicole Chvastek then said the IPA’s position was to open up “pretty much everything” and asked the guest three times whether the IPA’s position on the lockdown was irresponsible.

ABC Head of Capital City Radio Network defended the deliberate editing of the clip to the IPA at the time by saying that they played the full clip an hour and a half prior to the interview.

One could understand if a clip was shorted from end to end, many networks do this. But on this occasion the ABC has literally taken a very important qualifying phrase from the middle of the clip and removed it, which completely changes the context of what Gideon was saying in order to make the IPA’s position on the lockdown seem unreasonable.

After the IPA lodged a formal complaint, the ABC have done the right thing and apologised. Full complaint and response from the ABC is below.

Here is the apology:

On review of the edited clip and the interview with Professor Pellegrini, Audience and Consumer Affairs agree that Gideon Rozner’s qualifying phrase “with appropriate social distancing measures in place” should not have been omitted. The focus of the interview with Professor Pellegrini was on the specific quote from Gideon Rozner and the IPA’s call for restrictions to be eased; the reference to social distancing was *materially* relevant to the IPA’s position. On this aspect, the approach of the program was not in keeping with the ABC’s editorial standards for accuracy. ABC Radio Melbourne apologise for this error of judgment.

Chris Kenny summarised the incident on Sky News ‘Kenny on Media’ here:

Even the ABC’s own Media watch thought ABC Melbourne’s conduct was inappropriate:

Bolt versus Hadley – a classic schoolyard barney.

The ABC duds the IPA.

And What Day Is It? How to keep track of your days at home. [#MediaBites](#)
[#MediaWatch](#) [#COVID19](#) pic.twitter.com/KnxFqCiVDj

— Media Watch (@ABCmediawatch) [April 9, 2020](#)

From: ABC Corporate_Affairs8 <Corporate_Affairs8.ABC@abc.net.au>

Sent: Friday, May 1, 2020 2:53 PM

To: Evan Mulholland <emulholland@ipa.org.au>

Subject: re: Misrepresentation on ABC Radio Melbourne



Dear Mr Mulholland

Thank you for your email of 17 April regarding the 6 April edition of ABC Radio Melbourne's *Drive* program with Nicole Chvastek.

Your complaint has been considered by Audience and Consumer Affairs, a unit which is separate to and independent of content making areas within the ABC. Our role is to review and, where appropriate, investigate complaints alleging that ABC content has breached the ABC's editorial standards. These standards are explained in the ABC Code of Practice which is available here – <http://about.abc.net.au/reports-publications/code-of-practice/>. Most relevant to your complaint are the accuracy standards explained in section 2. We have reviewed the youtube video you have provided, and the relevant segments of the *Drive* program: the clips of Gideon Rozner played at 1530 and 1605, and the final clip of 17:23 which was the basis for the interview with infectious diseases expert Professor Marc Pellegrini. We have also given consideration to the interview with Gideon Rozner on the *Drive* program of 9 April.

On review of the edited clip and the interview with Professor Pellegrini, Audience and Consumer Affairs agree that Gideon Rozner's qualifying phrase "with appropriate social distancing measures in place" should not have been omitted. The focus of the interview with Professor Pellegrini was on the specific quote from Gideon Rozner and the IPA's call for restrictions to be eased; the reference to social distancing was *materially* relevant to the IPA's position. On this aspect, the approach of the program was not in keeping with the ABC's editorial standards for accuracy. ABC Radio Melbourne apologise for this error of judgment.

We note that on the 9 April edition of *Drive* Mr Rozner was given the opportunity to explain the IPA's position on easing restrictions, which he did so clearly and in some detail. Given the interview with Mr Rozner and the apology provided by ABC Radio Melbourne, Audience and Consumer Affairs are satisfied that appropriate actions have been taken by ABC Radio Melbourne to resolve your complaint.

Please be assured that your complaint has been carefully considered by our unit, and thank you for providing Audience and Consumer Affairs with the opportunity to respond to your concerns. If you are dissatisfied with this response, you may be able to pursue your complaint with the Australian Communications and Media Authority (www.acma.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

Investigations Manager

Audience and Consumer Affairs

To: Audience & Consumer Affairs

From: Evan Mulholland (emulholland@ipa.org.au)



Subject: Misrepresentation on ABC Radio Melbourne
Date: 17-Apr-2020 11:58

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by Evan Mulholland (emulholland@ipa.org.au)

ABC program: ABC Radio Melbourne Drive

Response required: Yes

Date of program: 6-Apr-2020

Contact type: Complaint

Location: VIC

Subject: Misrepresentation on ABC Radio Melbourne

Comments: On April 6, 2020, in an interview with Mark Pellegrini from the Eliza Hall Institute on ABC Drive the ABC played a segment of the IPA's video which said:

"It's time these restrictions were eased. It's time to allow for the sensible reopening of churches, reopen the restaurants, cafes, bars and community sport. Do it safely, but do it; not in six months, not in one month, now."

This is what Gideon actually said in the video: <https://youtu.be/Nn5adebL-Co?t=57>

"It's time these restrictions were eased. It's time to allow for the sensible reopening of churches, reopen the restaurants, cafes, bars and community sport. Do it safely, with appropriate social distancing measures in place, but do it; not in six months, not in one month, now."

Presenter Nicole Chvastek then said the IPA's position was to open up "pretty much everything" and asked the guest three times whether the IPA's position on the lockdown was irresponsible.

What has occurred is the deliberate removing a very important qualifying phrase to completely change the context of what Gideon was saying, to make the IPA's position seem unreasonable.

ABC Head of Capital City Radio Network defended the deliberate editing of the clip to the IPA by saying that they played the full clip an hour and a half prior to the interview.

I could understand if a clip was shorted from end to end, many networks do this. But on this occasion the ABC has literally taken a very important qualifying phrase from the middle of the clip and removed it, which completely changes the context of what Gideon was saying.



Just because ABC Radio Melbourne played the full clip an hour and a half earlier does not mean they are entitled to misrepresent us.

I note ABC Media Watch also thought the conduct here was poor.
<https://twitter.com/ABCmediawatch/status/1248176015613935616>

I am happy to send the original audio through as the episode audio online has now expired.

The IPA is asking for an apology and an acknowledgement of wrongdoing.