

SRC Media Code of Practice

Reviewed and ratified by the SRC Publications Committee 7/7/2026

Preamble: This Code of Practice provides clear guidelines for everyone involved in Honi Soit – editors, writers, visual artists, and SRC staff.

By following these principles, we uphold Honi Soit's proud tradition of independent student journalism while practicing responsibility, transparency, and ethical storytelling. *Reputable conduct by student journalists helps secure public trust and serves as the foundation for free and responsible student media.*

About Honi Soit:

Honi Soit was established in 1929 to correct the bias that was highly prevalent, and continues to be prevalent, throughout the Australian media landscape towards corporate and establishment interests. This mission continues to inform the core editorial policies of Honi Soit in providing a progressive, student-led publication.

1. Editorial Independence & Integrity

Honi Soit cherishes its editorial independence as a student publication. We are free to choose our content without undue influence from the university, advertisers, or special interests. With this freedom comes the responsibility to uphold the highest ethical standards. All contributors must:

- **Uphold Independence:** Make editorial judgments based on merit and public interest, not external pressure. Do not allow personal beliefs, political affiliations, or university authorities to dictate content decisions. *Personal interests should never undermine a journalist's independence, and no contributor should use their position for personal gain.* Avoid accepting gifts, favours or payments that could compromise your integrity or objectivity.
- **Resist External Influence:** Keep advertising and commercial considerations separate from editorial content. We transparently label sponsored content if any, and refuse any attempt by sponsors or officials to sway our reporting.
- **Exercise Integrity:** If you have a conflict of interest (for example, reporting on an organization you are involved in, or a friend), disclose it to the editorial

team. Whenever possible, recuse yourself from assignments where your objectivity could be compromised. Our decisions should always put journalistic ethics above personal agendas.

2. Accuracy & Fact-Checking

Accuracy is paramount in earning our readers' trust. All Honi Soit content must be truthful, well-sourced, and carefully verified. We strive for excellence in factual reporting and are mindful that mistakes can cause harm. As a contributor, you are expected to:

- **Seek Truth:** Research thoroughly and ensure **every claim, statistic, and quote is verified** against reliable sources. Never fabricate facts, quotes, or data. *Report and interpret honestly, striving for accuracy and fairness in disclosing all essential facts.* If uncertain, **double-check before publishing** rather than risking an error.
- **Fact-Check Rigorously:** Use multiple sources when possible to confirm information. Consult documents, ask experts, and gather first-hand evidence for contentious facts. Especially for investigative pieces or serious allegations, present the evidence to editors and consider legal or expert advice if needed.
- **No Fabrication or Plagiarism:** Under no circumstances should you make up quotes or events, or copy others' work without attribution. **Plagiarism is strictly prohibited.** Your writing and visual work should be your own or properly credited; when in doubt, cite your source.
- **Clarity and Context:** Present information in clear, unambiguous language. Don't mislead by omission or by sensational editing. Provide proper context so readers understand the full picture. Avoid distorting facts or quoting out of context to skew meaning.

3. Fairness, Respect & Community Standards

We treat our sources, subjects, readers, and colleagues with respect. Fairness means giving people a chance to respond to criticism and avoiding prejudiced or harmful portrayals. We also recognize that Honi Soit, while often provocative and satirical, should uphold basic community standards of decency and inclusivity. Contributors should commit to the following:

- **Fair Representation: Be fair and impartial** in your coverage. Strive to represent all relevant viewpoints and background facts in an unbiased way. When reporting on someone who is criticized or accused, make every effort to reach out and include their side of the story or response. Do not present assumptions or rumours as facts.

- **Respectful Communication:** Engage with sources, interviewees, and peers courteously. Identify yourself as a Honi Soit reporter when interviewing, and never mislead sources about how their information will be used. Even in opinion pieces or satire, avoid personal attacks that are purely malicious.
- **No Discrimination or Prejudice:** Avoid unnecessary emphasis on personal **characteristics** such as race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, or disability unless it is directly relevant to the story. Our storytelling should be inclusive and sensitive to the diversity of our campus community. Do not ridicule or demean individuals or groups on the basis of who they are. Honi Soit aims to challenge ideas and powerful entities, not to bully or defame private individuals.
- **Community Sensibilities:** Be mindful of the impact of our content on the student community and wider public. It's part of our ethos to push boundaries and provoke thought, but do so with purpose and journalistic merit, not shock value alone. When handling sensitive topics (e.g. trauma, sexuality, race, religion), exercise empathy and good judgment. If publishing potentially graphic or triggering material, consider content warnings or editor's notes as appropriate. Our goal is to inform and engage, never to needlessly harm or alienate our community.

4. Use of Sources & Attribution

Our credibility depends on how we source our information. Ethical use of sources means honesty about where information comes from and respect for the terms under which it was given. All contributors must:

- **Attribute Information:** Aim to attribute information to its source where possible. Clearly cite documents, reports, studies or interviews used in your reporting. If you quote someone, credit them by name and, if relevant, title/affiliation. When using information from other publications or websites, provide clear attribution (and a hyperlink when publishing online).
- **Handle Anonymous Sources Carefully:** Sometimes a source may request anonymity (for instance, to avoid retribution). Do not agree to keep a source anonymous without first considering their motives and whether the information can be obtained elsewhere on the record. Discuss with the editors before promising confidentiality. If anonymity is granted, **protect your source's identity at all costs**, and only describe them in ways that maintain that confidentiality. Where confidences are accepted, respect them in all circumstances.
- **Gather Information Ethically: Use fair and honest means to obtain material.** This means: identify yourself as a Honi Soit journalist when interviewing or communicating with sources; never misrepresent your intent; and do not use

covert recording or deception unless there is an overwhelming public interest and you have editor approval. Never exploit someone's trust or vulnerability to get information – for example, do not pressure inexperienced sources or those in distress. If someone is unwilling to talk, respect their choice.

- **Avoid Misquotation:** Quote sources accurately. It is unacceptable to alter a quote's meaning or to take words out of context. If a quote is unclear, you may clarify it in brackets or paraphrase, but ensure you are truthful to what the speaker meant. When editing interviews or videos, do not manipulate clips in a way that misleads – any editorial cuts should not change the speaker's intended message.
- **Credit Creative Works:** For visual contributors, ensure photographers, illustrators, and designers are credited for their work. Do not use images, music, or graphics without permission or proper licensing. If using someone else's creative work under fair use or license, attribute the source as required.

5. Visual and Multimedia Content Ethics

Our ethical standards apply equally to photographs, graphics, videos, and illustrations. Visual contributors and editors must ensure that images and multimedia content adhere to truth and respect principles:

- **Accuracy in Imagery:** Present photos and videos in a truthful manner. Do not digitally alter images or sound in a way that misleads the audience about what occurred. Basic photo editing (crop, brightness) is fine; however, adding or removing elements or heavy editing must be disclosed or avoided. Caption all images accurately, providing context like date, location, and what's depicted, especially if the context isn't obvious.
- **Consent and Privacy in Images:** When photographing individuals, especially other students on campus, respect their privacy. For private figures (non-public people) in non-public spaces, seek permission before photographing or publishing their image. Avoid using images of people in distress or grief without consent, unless absolutely newsworthy and handled with sensitivity.
- **Graphic Content:** Consider the audience when using graphic or disturbing images (accidents, violence, etc.). If such images serve a compelling news purpose, include a warning for readers. Never use shocking visuals merely to drive attention.
- **Illustrations and Cartoons:** Honi Soit often uses illustrations or cartoons for commentary and satire. Ensure that these, while creative, still fall within the realm of fair comment and decency. Avoid racist, sexist or otherwise grossly

offensive caricatures. Satire should be clearly recognizable (for instance, our annual parody edition is marked accordingly) to avoid issues.

6. Avoiding Defamation & Legal Risks

As a publication under the SRC (the publisher), Honi Soit has a legal responsibility to avoid defamation and other legal breaches. We **value robust journalism that can be critical**, but it must stay within the bounds of the law and journalistic fairness. To protect both our writers and the paper, contributors should:

- **Understand Defamation:** *Defamation* means publishing false statements or other content that unjustly harm someone's reputation. To avoid defamation, ensure all significant allegations are backed by solid evidence and facts. Before accusing a person or organization of wrongdoing, double-check the facts and give them a fair chance to respond to those claims. If we cannot verify something, we should exclude it or clearly qualify it as unverified.
- **Stick to the Truth:** Truth is the best defence against defamation. Never knowingly publish something false or unsubstantiated about someone. If a story involves claims that could damage reputations, work closely with editors to verify every detail. When in doubt, leave it out – or consult the SRC's legal advisors through the editors.
- **Avoid Unnecessary Harm:** Even when something is true, ask if publishing it serves the public interest or just spreads harm. This ties into the journalistic principle of minimizing harm. For example, identifying a private individual in a story about misconduct can have serious consequences for them; consider using discretion (or anonymity) for less-public figures if the story allows.
- **No Libelous Language:** Use calm, factual language especially when describing misconduct or controversial matters. Stick to what you know and can prove. Don't use defamatory labels.
- **If Legal Issues Arise:** If someone threatens legal action (like a defamation suit) or sends a complaint alleging libel, notify the Legal team immediately. Do not respond on behalf of Honi Soit without guidance. The paper's policy (in line with SRC oversight) is to handle such matters seriously and, if needed, involve legal counsel.

7. Accountability: Corrections, Retractions & Complaints

Nobody is perfect – errors and disputes can happen even with the best intentions. What sets ethical publications apart is how they respond when things go wrong. Honi Soit is committed to a culture of **accountability and transparency**. In practice, this means:

- **Prompt Corrections:** If you discover that you have made a factual error or published something misleading, inform an editor as soon as possible. Do your utmost to assist in correcting errors fairly. Corrections or clarifications should be clear about what was wrong and what is correct, without defensive or vague language.
- **Retractions:** In the rare case that an entire article or major claim is found to be fundamentally flawed or false, Honi Soit may retract the piece. Retractions are a last resort, done in consultation with the editorial team, faculty advisors (if appropriate), and the SRC's legal overseers. If a retraction is issued, it will be accompanied by a statement to readers explaining why (e.g. "*This article has been retracted due to [reason]*"). Contributors are expected to cooperate in this process and learn from the lapse.
- **Handling Complaints:** Treat complaints from readers, sources, or subjects seriously and professionally. If someone approaches you with a concern about an article (claims of inaccuracy, unfair portrayal, etc.), do not dismiss it. Listen respectfully and thank them for their feedback. Then, refer the matter to the editors. We have a duty to investigate credible complaints. If a mistake or oversight is confirmed, we will issue a correction/apology as outlined above.
- **Editorial Accountability:** Editors, in particular, are accountable for upholding this code. The editorial team should foster an environment where team members feel comfortable admitting mistakes or voicing ethical uncertainties. In internal meetings or training, we review any significant errors or controversies to understand what went wrong and how to prevent it in the future. Accountability is about continuously improving our journalism.
- **Conflict Resolution:** For conflicts within the team or production process, maintain professionalism. Disagreements over content or approach should be resolved through open discussion, guided by this code and Honi's editorial mission. Senior editors should mediate fairly. No contributor should feel pressured to act against their ethical judgment. We aim to handle internal conflicts with mutual respect.

8. Continuous Improvement & Living Document

This Code of Conduct is not static; it's a living document that we will update as media landscapes and community expectations evolve. We encourage all contributors to treat it as a day-to-day reference and to actively engage with it:

- **Training and Orientation:** New contributors will receive an orientation including this code. We will hold training sessions and discussions on ethical scenarios (e.g. handling sensitive stories, social media conduct, etc.) to bring the code's

principles to life. Seasoned team members should mentor newcomers by example, demonstrating how we apply these standards in real situations.

- **Periodic Review:** At least once a year (for instance, when a new editorial team is elected), we will review the code and consider updates or additions. Contributors are welcome to suggest changes or new sections based on their experiences. This ensures the code stays relevant and effective for emerging issues (such as digital media ethics, social media use, and so on).
- **Culture of Openness:** We strive to create a newsroom culture where ethics are openly discussed. If you're unsure about a decision or face an ethical dilemma not explicitly covered here, reach out to an editor or the editorial collective. We would rather pause and deliberate than rush into ethically grey areas. Mistakes can be forgiven and corrected (as noted above), but ethical breaches can cause lasting damage – so prevention is key.

Conclusion: By following this Code of Conduct, Honi Soit contributors collectively ensure that our newspaper remains a trusted platform for student voices – one that fiercely guards its independence while operating with maturity and integrity. We take pride in our work and hold each other accountable to these ideals. In doing so, we honour the long legacy of Honi Soit and help guarantee its future as a beacon of ethical student journalism.

I confirm I have read and agree to abide by the above Media Code of Practice

Name: _____

SRC Position: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____



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