

Australian Press Council rules Manly Daily “unfair”, “inaccurate” and “unbalanced” against De Luca

The Australian Press Council has ruled that the Manly Daily was “unfair”, “inaccurate” and “unbalanced” in two of its articles and the Editorial of 24 February 2011.

To see the full Statement of Decision go to

www.presscouncil.org.au/document-search/adjudication-no-1501-manly-daily-august-2011/?LocatorFormID=677&FromSearch=1

The Press Council has concluded that the newspaper’s highly prominent statements in both articles that Cr De Luca had “questioned [Cr Falinski’s] credentials as a father” were inaccurate and unfair descriptions of his remark to Cr Falinski, even assuming the words he used were as claimed by the newspaper. The description in the editorial was also inaccurate and unfair.

The Council has also concluded that the heading to the first article which said the Mayor “ordered” Cr de Luca to apologise was inaccurate and unfair, as was its implication that he had called the councillor’s remark “disgraceful”.

The lack of fairness towards Cr De Luca was aggravated by failure to include in either article any comment from councillors who he said had been verbally threatened by Cr Falinski, and by the entirely inappropriate claim that Cr De Luca has no children. The newspaper also failed to make reasonable efforts to check its prominent claim that Cr De Luca was a friend of Cr Falinski and his wife, which Cr De Luca disputes.

Accordingly, Cr De Luca’s complaints about the articles and editorial are upheld by the Press Council on the above grounds. The Council notes that he might have mitigated the problem to some extent by expressing his concerns in a letter to the editor. But this does not absolve the newspaper from its responsibility to report in an accurate and balanced manner.