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Thank you for the invitation to make a submission on "Making allegations of corrupt conduct public: Is it in the public interest?"

While *The Brisbane Times* appreciates the complexity of the issues involved in these investigations, we don't believe the solution is further regulation of the media or to wrest control of news decisions from newsrooms.

In consultation with journalists, editors carefully weigh up the public interest in and legal restrictions on reporting these investigations.

Open, transparent and accountable government

The overriding principle should be to ensure Queenslanders enjoy an open, transparent and accountable government, particularly in a state with a long history of official corruption.

Without an Upper House, the Crime and Corruption Commission provides an important check on abuse of power and the media has a critical role in informing the population.

Freedom of speech

The Brisbane Times would be concerned about any moves to curtail freedom of speech and believes existing legal provisions, such as defamation, are sufficient to protect people from harm.

Reputation of alleged subject officers

The Brisbane Times appreciates allegations of corruption can damage reputations but believes there is no difference between this scenario and accused facing criminal charges. It can also be argued that open reporting is even more important in corruption cases because these could involve public officials and public monies.

Defamation and other laws provide a sufficient legal check on the media. If people are making scurrilous allegations for political gain, the CCC could consider overhauling the complaints process rather than regulating the media.

The change in mass communication does mean allegations are widely transmitted and stay on the public record but both are the case with metropolitan newspapers.

Fair trial

The Brisbane Times agrees that a fair trial is a fundamental legal principle but reporting untested allegations is common practice in criminal proceedings, within the guidelines of sub-judice and contempt of court. We don't believe people facing corruption allegations should be afforded special protections not provided to the accused in criminal cases.

Effectiveness of the CCC

The Brisbane Times is not convinced that regulating the media will address concerns raised in the final topic of the discussion paper. The allegations could be publicised without any involvement of the mass media via, for instance, social media or the office grapevine.

If the issues involve the complaints process, the complaints process should be reviewed rather than curtailing the freedom of media outlets to make news decisions.

Conclusion

The Brisbane Times does not believe the CCC should impose further regulations on the media reporting of corruption. It is in the public interest and benefit to ensure Queensland has an open, transparent and accountable government and other public institutions. A strong fourth estate is critical to this goal.

If as the discussion paper suggests the issues involve the complaints process, *The Brisbane Times* is of the view that the complaints process should be reviewed rather than curtailing the freedom of media outlets to make news decisions.