

New Zealand Press Council

Dr Grant Hannis Complaint

**Response from Deborah Coddington
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North & South Magazine**

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Dr Hannis alleges that my article “Asian Angst” contravenes Principle 1 – that of accuracy, fairness and balance.

He also alleges my response to Keith Ng’s letter of complaint, published in *North & South* “was groundless”.

By his own admission, Dr Hannis bases his analysis on statistics “obtained from Statistics New Zealand on March 9, 2007...which [were] not available earlier.”

“Asian Angst” was published on November 13, 2006. I did my research for this article in the months of September and October, 2006. Clearly I could not have had access to the statistics Dr Hannis uses to come to his conclusion that my article was incorrect, and that my response was groundless.

Dr Hannis also makes the same mistake as the other complainants when he alleges I used the comparison “crime wave”. I did no such thing. I used the analogy “rising crime tide” which, based on comments by judges and police, was fair. A tide rises and falls. When the number of kidnappings was increasing by the week, as alleged by a member of the judiciary; when the number of Asians involved in the importation and distribution of methamphetamine has risen to 90%; when drug peddling is becoming the crime of choice for international students, as alleged by the head of the Asian Crime Unit, then it is fair to claim the tide was rising at that time. It goes without saying that that crime tide could easily ebb in the future.

On page 44, midway through the article, I pointed out the growth in the Asian population in New Zealand as 37 percent from 1996 to 2001, and 74 per cent from 2001 in the previous five years – at least, as Statistics define it, the number of people who identify as Asian. The final 2005 census statistics were not available to me on deadline.

Two paragraphs further on, I point out using national apprehension figures from 1996 to 2005 the total offences committed by Asiatics aged 17 to 50 has risen by 53 per cent. I did not intend to insult the intelligence of my readers by putting, in the same sentence, that this needed to be measured alongside the population growth.

Furthermore, immediately before this paragraph I wrote this: “At that time, although Asians made up 6.6 per cent of the population, they were responsible for just 1.7 per cent of all criminal convictions.”

I do not see how I could have made it more clear that Asians were under-represented in all criminal convictions, short of repeating myself.

I went on, then, to quote the national apprehension statistics, which are absolutely not the same as Dr Hannis’s “crime rate”. He may take issue with my using apprehension statistics, not crime rate, but as he points out, his statistics were not available when I did the research for my article.

In fact, when I was forwarded the apprehension statistics, I was told the following by NZ Statistics: “Please find attached a table of National Annual Apprehension Statistics for the last 5 years, broken down by ethnicity. Note that only apprehension statistics have an ethnic breakdown, offence statistics do not. Please be advised that this information has been compiled from *New Zealand Recorded Crimes Tables* from the *Statistics New Zealand* website.”

Dr Hannis is not comparing like with like. I find it interesting that someone who leads a journalism school at a university noted for its journalism training does not seem to understand the basic concepts in constructing a relevant and balanced argument.

I stand by my article, and the use of the apprehension statistics in the article.

Deborah Coddington