

12 April 2007

Mary Major
Secretary of the Press Council
NZ Press Council
PO Box 10-879
The Terrace
Wellington

Dear Ms Major

Thank you for forwarding me Ms Coddington's response (dated 5 April) to my complaint (dated 29 March).

To respond to Ms Coddington's comments in turn:

1. Ms Coddington says she could not use the same figures I used because the figures were not available prior to March 9, 2007, whereas she conducted her research in September and October 2006. However, there was nothing to stop her in September and October 2006 from making the same request of Statistics New Zealand for these population figures that I later made.

Even if the 2006 census figures had not been available at the time she was conducting her research, a population estimate for 2005 using 2001 census figures could have been undertaken – a common statistical procedure.

Even if neither the 2006 nor 2001 census figures had been available in September and October 2006, that was not a reason for *North & South* to publish an article that presented an incomplete statistical analysis. Instead, publication should have been delayed until the figures were available and a full statistical picture could be presented.

2. Ms Coddington says I made a mistake in utilising the term "crime wave" because her term "crime tide" is preferable, as a tide rises and falls. However, a wave also rises and falls. Her metaphor of a tide and mine of a wave are equally apt. In any event, this seems a trivial semantic point.

3. Regarding the anecdotal evidence from a member of the judiciary and the head of the Asian Crime Unit, my complaint was about the statistics used in the article, not on such anecdotal evidence. The article should have been based on hard, statistical fact, not merely on stories - stories that, to compound the problem, were merely "alleged" (Ms Coddington's term) by her sources. Ms Coddington uses these cases to continue to claim the Asian crime tide was rising, when the statistics demonstrate it was not.

4. Ms Coddington notes that the number of Asians in New Zealand has risen, claiming that "[t]he final 2005 census statistics were not available to me on deadline". Again, a

population estimate could have been calculated. Incidentally, the census was in fact conducted in 2006.

5. Ms Coddington continues to insist the Asian national apprehension figure rose by 53 per cent between 1996 and 2001. As I made clear in my complaint, the rise was in fact 54 per cent.

6. Ms Coddington says she did note the rise in total offences committed by Asians, based on national apprehension figures, but that putting this alongside the fact the Asian population had also risen would “insult the intelligence of my readers”. But rather than insulting her readers, this would have given them the complete picture. Nowhere in the article does Ms Coddington note that the rise in the national apprehension figures and the rise in the Asian population should be taken together, nor does the article consider the implications of this.

This is the central point. The percentage rise in offences committed by Asians must be considered in light of the percentage rise in the Asian population. As Ms Coddington did not consider the two simultaneously, she concluded there had been an increase in Asian crime, without taking into account the much larger rise in the number of Asians in New Zealand. If she had done this, Ms Coddington would have discovered that in 2005 Asians were more law-abiding than they were in 1996. More digging would have told her that in both 1996 and 2005 Asians were far more law-abiding than the general New Zealand population.

7. Regarding repeating herself, Ms Coddington needed to do the correct statistical analysis, not repeat herself.

8. Ms Coddington says my figures are not the same as the national apprehension figures. In fact, the crime rate I calculate quotes the national apprehension figures as a proportion of the Asian population, as defined in the original article. The crime rate uses both data series to tell the whole story.

Ms Coddington refers to “Dr Hannis’s ‘crime rate’”, as if the statistic is one of my own devising. As I mentioned in my original complaint, the crime rate is the standard statistical measure of crime. For instance, in December 2006 Statistics New Zealand published a major report on crime in New Zealand, *Crime in New Zealand 1996-2005*. The measure of crime used in that report is the crime rate: the number of offences per 10,000 members of the population. To prove this, I have attached relevant pages from that report as Appendix 1. The report can be downloaded from the Statistics New Zealand website.

9. Regarding the quote from Statistics New Zealand, Ms Coddington apparently believes I did not use the national apprehension figures in calculating the crime rate. I *did* use the same national apprehension figures she used.

10. Ms Coddington says I did not compare like with like. She has provided no evidence to support this contention. Let me be clear. To construct the Asian crime rate I used the same Asian population for the same offence measure and years Ms Coddington used in her article: I used the population of Asians (excluding Indians)

aged 17 to 50, national apprehension figures for Asians (excluding Indians) aged 17 to 50, and I conducted my analysis for 1996 and 2005. I *did* compare like with like.

11. Ms Coddington says she stands by the use of apprehension statistics. That is fine. I also used apprehension statistics. I have attached a short, simple statistical discussion (Appendix 2) that more fully explains how I calculated the Asian crime rate using national apprehension statistics. The point of difference between Ms Coddington and me is that, in calculating the Asian crime rate, I simultaneously considered changes in the number of offences committed by Asians with changes in the Asian population, thereby giving the complete, accurate picture.

Thank you for this opportunity to respond.

Yours sincerely,

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