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PRESS COUNCIL ADJUDICATION

THE Press Council has considered a complaint from Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia about an article published in the *Herald Sun* on June 20, 2017, headed "Gun trolls target charity: Members distraught" in print and "Gun lobby trolls trying to shut down Alannah & Madeline Foundation over anti-firearm stance" online, published the prior evening.

The article reported that the AMF "has had to offer counselling support for staff distressed by 'aggressive' trolling from the firearms lobby". The remainder of the article comprised statements attributed to the chief executive of the AMF who said that "gun-lobby bullies have tried to 'intimidate, shout down and abuse' the foundation".

The article also included comments by the chief executive saying that "the gun indus-

try worked to increase demand by telling disenfranchised men they were being victimised if their right to own better weapons was denied".

The council considered that the article claims that there was "aggressive trolling" from the firearms industry and drew no distinction between reputable organisations in the firearms industry and online trolls.

Accordingly, the council considers that the publication failed to take reasonable steps to avoid the misleading implication that reputable members of the firearms lobby may have

been involved in the abuse.

The council also considered that the article implicates reputable organisations within the "gun lobby", "firearms lobby" and "gun industry" as being involved in the online abuse of AMF staff, and appealing to "disenfranchised

young men".

Accordingly, the publication breached General Principle 1. As the misleading aspects of the article were not addressed by a correction or other adequate remedial action, the publication

breached General Principle 2.

The council also considered that the failure to seek a response or comment from any organisation or body in the gun lobby, firearms lobby or the gun industry amounted to a failure to take reasonable steps to ensure the article was presented with reasonable fairness and balance. Accordingly, the publication breached General Principle 3.

FOR THE FULL ADJUDICATION,
SEE: [presscouncil.org.au/
document-search/adj-1742](http://presscouncil.org.au/document-search/adj-1742)

