



10 September 2026

Fiona Cameron
ABC Ombudsman

Dear Ms Cameron,

RE: Formal complaint regarding ABC Hobart reporting and the continued characterisation of Women Speak Tasmania as “anti-trans”

Women Speak Tasmania (WST) writes to you following the response provided by Emily Bryan, Tasmania Editor, Regional, Rural and Metro News, to ten complaints concerning ABC News Tasmania coverage broadcast and published on Saturday 29 August 2026.

WST has received copies of the ten complaints, including former WST Director Isla MacGregor, and agrees with the substantive concerns raised by the complainants. We are attaching those complaints for your consideration and to provide the Ombudsman with the full range of concerns raised independently by members of the public.

We are dissatisfied with Ms Bryan’s response because, while she acknowledges that “women’s rights advocacy group” may have been a more precise and neutral description of WST, she nevertheless does not address the substantive concerns about the use of the term “anti-trans”, nor the significant omissions and editorial choices identified in relation to the 29 August report.

We therefore ask that the Ombudsman review this matter independently, including the broader pattern of ABC reporting concerning WST and other organisations advocating for sex-based rights.

1. The context of the 29 August ABC report

The ABC report concerned the Tasmanian Deputy Premier and Attorney General, Guy Barnett, and his position regarding the Greens’ proposed *Conversion Practices Prohibition Bill 2026*.

Two days before the ABC report, on 27 August, WST had issued a media release calling on the Attorney General to:



- acknowledge the gravity of the 29 testimonies presented to him in December 2025, together with WST's *Dossier on the Impacts of Tasmania's Sex Self-ID Laws on Women, Girls, Families and LGB People*; and
- establish a Parliamentary Inquiry into Affirmative Care and Conversion Practices, including in-camera hearings, before the proposed Conversion Practices Prohibition Bill was debated.

On 29 August, WST issued a further media release following correspondence from Deputy Premier and Attorney General Guy Barnett in which he agreed with WST that the proposed Greens Bill was “flawed and extreme.”

WST responded by again urging the Government to establish a **Parliamentary Inquiry into Affirmative Care and Conversion Practices** before any Conversion Practices Bill was debated, and to properly consider the extensive evidence, documentation and testimonies WST had provided.

WST stated that only a Parliamentary Inquiry could properly examine this important public health and human rights issue.

It was this WST media release that was subsequently used by ABC News Tasmania in its report.

2. The ten complaints

The ten complaints raised a number of consistent concerns, including:

1. WST Director Dr Elizabeth Caballero was not interviewed or asked to comment on the issues being reported.
2. WST was repeatedly described as an “anti-trans” organisation or group.
3. The report did not accurately convey the full nature of the inquiry WST was calling for — namely a Parliamentary Inquiry into Affirmative Care and Conversion Practices.
4. The ABC report omitted significant context contained in WST's media releases concerning affirmative care, evidence supplied to the Government and WST's concerns about the proposed legislation.
5. The story used WST's media release to construct a narrative concerning an alleged disagreement or factional dispute between the Premier and Deputy Premier/Attorney General, rather than properly explaining WST's substantive position as a stakeholder and recognised political lobby group in Tasmania.
6. The report included footage and commentary from other political and advocacy figures but did not include an interview with WST or Dr Caballero.



7. The complainants questioned whether this treatment was consistent with the ABC's obligations concerning accuracy, impartiality, diversity of perspectives, independence and fair and honest dealing.

These complaints should not be dismissed as a single disagreement over terminology. Taken together, they raise questions about both the description of WST and the editorial treatment of WST's substantive position.

3. The ABC's response to the “anti-trans” description

Ms Bryan states in her response:

“While WST disputes the label, the descriptor is connected to the organisation’s publicly stated positions and is not without foundation.”

She then acknowledges:

“However, there is a reasonable argument that a more precise and neutral description drawn from WST’s own published description, such as ‘women’s rights advocacy group’, may have been preferable.”

This admission is central to our complaint.

WST does not dispute that ABC journalists may report, scrutinise or question WST's public positions, but as there were no interviews with us they failed to do these things.

Nor does WST suggest that the ABC must adopt WST's views.

The issue is different:

Why should ABC use a contested and pejorative political characterisation of WST as its descriptor when a more precise and neutral description of the organisation is available and, by Ms Bryan's own assessment, may have been preferable?

WST describes itself as a network of women and their supporters based in Tasmania. It operates as a secular group, is not aligned with a political party or ideology, and states that it lobbies the Government to protect the human rights of women and children and shares research and information concerning women's rights issues.

The ABC’s role is to report WST positions opposing particular laws or policies when appropriate. This will require reporting that WST advocates for sex-based rights, single-sex spaces, or changes to legislation concerning gender identity.

4. “Anti-trans” is not a neutral description

The term “anti-trans” is inherently framed around opposition to another group.

It does not tell the audience what WST advocates for.

WST's advocacy is directed towards matters including sex-based rights, women's and children's rights, single-sex spaces, safety, fairness, privacy, dignity and freedom of expression.

Those are substantive policy positions capable of being reported and debated.

The ABC is aware that these matters are highly contested. In Australia and internationally, governments, legislatures, courts, regulators, medical bodies and advocacy organisations have taken differing positions concerning matters such as medical treatment of minors, women's sport and single-sex facilities and opportunities. In some jurisdictions, policies have subsequently been reviewed or wound back.

Whether particular policy changes are correct is a matter for public debate. Their existence demonstrates, however, that these are legitimate and contested questions of public policy and cannot simply be reduced to an “anti-trans”/“pro-trans” binary.

WST therefore rejects the ABC's apparent reasoning that opposition to particular gender-identity-related policies provides sufficient justification for describing an organisation as “anti-trans”.

The same concern applies where the ABC substitutes “anti-trans rights” for “anti-trans”. Changing the wording does not resolve the underlying problem if advocacy for women's sex-based rights continues to be defined primarily as opposition to another group rather than described according to the substance of the advocacy itself.

5. The ABC's acknowledgement that a neutral descriptor was available

Ms Bryan concludes her response by stating:

“The only editorial issue warranting consideration is whether a more precise descriptor could have better reflected WST’s own self-description while still conveying the nature of its public advocacy. This is something I will discuss with our team.”

WST considers this unacceptable.



The question is not whether ABC staff personally consider WST's positions objectionable but rather whether their personal views are being inserted routinely into reportage that should be objective and impartial.

6. Significant omissions from the 29 August report

Ms Bryan's response states that the report accurately reflected the contents of Mr Barnett's letter and the broader policy debate, and that ABC policies do not require every perspective or all aspects of an organisation's position to be included in a single report.

WST accepts that no individual news report can contain every aspect of a complex issue.

However, this does not answer the specific concerns raised by the complainants.

The issue is not simply that “everything” WST believes was not included.

The issue is that the report concerned a WST media release and WST's response to proposed legislation, yet the report omitted the central and specific purpose for which WST was calling for an inquiry.

WST was calling for a:

Parliamentary Inquiry into Affirmative Care and Conversion Practices.

This was not an incidental detail. It was a central part of WST's stated position.

The ABC's decision to refer merely to an “inquiry” removed important information about the subject matter WST wanted examined.

WST has publicly raised concerns about affirmative care, including concerns relating to gender-distressed young people, and has published information obtained through Right to Information processes concerning the Tasmanian Gender Service. These matters form part of the evidence base underlying WST's position.

Yet the ABC has never provided an opportunity for WST to explain our recent concerns publicly, while organisations representing opposing perspectives have received repeated ABC exposure.

7. WST was contacted by the reporter but was not interviewed

This point is particularly important.



The reporter, Josh Duggan, contacted WST and requested a copy of the letter from the Attorney General.

However, WST was not asked questions about the letter, was not asked to explain its position and Dr Caballero was not invited to participate in an interview.

The resulting television report ran for more than two minutes and included file footage and commentary involving Rodney Croome, Greens leader Rosalie Woodruff, the Premier, and curiously enough Minister for Sports Nick Duigan.

8. The story's framing

The headline was:

“Tasmania's Deputy Premier Guy Barnett potentially at odds with premier over conversion ban.”

WST's concern is that the ABC decided to utilize our media release to frame the story as an alleged disagreement between the Premier and the Deputy Premier over conversion laws.

As a consequence the ABC withheld vital information about why WST was calling for a Parliamentary Inquiry into Affirmative Care and Conversion Practices.

9. A broader pattern of terminology

The concerns raised by these ten complainants do not arise in isolation.

Anthony Johnsen previously analysed ABC reporting concerning the Let Women Speak Rally held in Melbourne in 2023. In a complaint submitted to the ABC in May 2025, he analysed 80 ABC articles and broadcasts and concluded that 74% described the event as “anti-trans” or otherwise led readers to that conclusion, while only 13% referred to it exclusively as the “Let Women Speak Rally”.

<https://womenspeaktas.au/2025/10/10/abc-bias-in-terminology-used-to-describe-the-let-women-speak-rally-letter-to-the-abc-ombudsman/>

His complaint was ultimately rejected on the basis of the ABC's three-month complaint timeframe, rather than by a finding that the underlying analysis was without basis.

We refer to it because it provides relevant context to the recurring use of “anti-trans” terminology when reporting on women advocating for sex-based rights.

The repeated use of this terminology warrants consideration as a broader editorial issue rather than treating each complaint as an isolated disagreement about wording and supplying a standardised fob off response.

10. Relevant concerns about ABC editorial culture

WST also asks the Ombudsman to consider the broader editorial context in which these complaints arise, including concerns previously raised with the ABC about its relationship with ACON and the Pride in Diversity program.

On 9 June 2023, ABC Hobart journalist Leon Compton appeared on *The Drum* and discussed the difficulty of determining which perspectives were “reasonable” to broadcast when reporting on transgender issues. He said:

“As a journalist it’s sometimes hard because you want to air a balance of perspectives but what perspectives are reasonable to air? Particularly those that dress up opposition, particularly in the most recent cases to drag queens or to dealing with trans issues. You ask yourself, are we just dealing with a continuum of those opposed to civil rights... Is it better to have NO debate at all than to have a debate which might be really damaging for that young gay or young trans person growing up and listening to that as the adults have a fight about something that is often a clash of civilizations or some big battle of faith while there are human ears, young ears, listening to that?”

WST has previously raised concerns about that discussion with the ABC.

<https://womenspeaktas.au/2023/06/28/leon-compton-saying-no-debate-on-the-drum/>

In the context of the repeated concerns now being raised about terminology, omission of WST's perspective and failure to provide WST with comparable opportunities to participate in reporting, we believe the broader editorial culture in the ABC following the dropping of sponsorship from ACON Pride and Diversity program, is pivotal to the Ombudsman's consideration of this matter.

11. WST's history of engagement with the ABC

WST has been publicly advocating on women's rights issues since 2018 and has issued more than 90 public statements and media releases concerning matters within its stated area of advocacy.



Despite this, WST has had very limited opportunity to participate directly in ABC Hobart reporting over the past eight years.

By contrast, organisations opposing positions on sex and gender policy have routinely been sorted out by the ABC Hobart and regularly interviewed.

On our previous correspondence dated 6 July 2026 with Jo Spargo, Local Manager 936 ABC Hobart, we were assured that “feedback has been carefully considered, and the team will use it to inform further interviews”, this was after our complaint about a one sided interview between Ryk Goddard and Rodney Croome which aired on ABC Hobart. It doesn’t seem the ABC is doing better.

<https://womenspeaktas.au/2026/05/22/abc-hobart-breakfast-one-sided-interview-on-anti-discrimination-law-reform/>

<https://womenspeaktas.au/2026/05/21/misleading-terminology-and-lack-of-balance-in-rodney-croome-segment-complaint-to-abc/>

Where a significant public-policy debate is being reported, and where WST is a key stakeholder with publicly available evidence, submissions, testimonies and policy positions, the repeated absence of WST from ABC reportage would imply a serious bias from ABC Hobart.

12. The public-interest dimension

The issues being debated in Tasmania concerning conversion-practice legislation, affirmative care, gender identity, sex-based rights and the rights of women and children are matters of significant public interest.

They involve questions of law, medicine, human rights, child welfare, women's rights and public policy.

We ask the ABC to report these contested matters in a manner that allows Tasmanians to understand the arguments being made by the relevant stakeholders without first categorising one side using a contested political label.

A public broadcaster should be particularly careful where terminology itself may be used by a particular editor or journalist to influence how an audience perceives the legitimacy of any participants in a public debate.

13. Requested remedies

WST respectfully asks the ABC Ombudsman to consider the following remedies:



1. Acknowledge that “anti-trans” is not an appropriate neutral descriptor for Women Speak Tasmania, particularly where WST's own description as a women's rights advocacy organisation is available.
2. Require or recommend appropriate correction of the 29 August ABC report and associated online material, where the “anti-trans” characterisation has been presented as an objective description rather than clearly attributed opinion.
3. Provide a public apology to Women Speak Tasmania for the repeated use of the “anti-trans” descriptor in ABC Hobart reporting where WST has repeatedly disputed the characterisation.
4. Ensure that replacing “anti-trans” with “anti-trans rights” is not treated as resolving the underlying editorial concern, where the terminology continues to define a women's rights organisation primarily through opposition to another group.
5. Ensure that WST is given a fair opportunity to respond when its media releases, submissions, evidence or policy positions form a material part of future ABC reporting.
6. Invite Dr Elizabeth Caballero for an interview concerning WST's concerns about affirmative care and the proposed Conversion Practices Prohibition Bill, so that Tasmanians can hear directly from a relevant stakeholder about the evidence and reasoning underlying WST's position.
7. Review the recurring use of “anti-trans” and “anti-trans rights” terminology in ABC reporting concerning women's sex-based rights organisations, their public statements or activities.
8. Ensure that broader editorial guidance is provided to all ABC bureaus to ensure that advocacy for sex-based rights is not routinely characterised through a pejorative “anti-” label, and that relevant perspectives are fairly represented in contested public-policy reporting.

Conclusion

WST, on the basis of the complaints outlined above, requests accurate, impartial and fair reporting of our views.

As previously outlined, WST has raised concerns with the ABC about the editorial approach reflected in comments made by ABC Hobart journalist Leon Compton regarding which perspectives are “reasonable” or “safe” to broadcast on transgender issues, and about the ABC's former association with ACON's Pride in Diversity program. The ABC ended that sponsorship in April 2026. The continued concerns outlined in this



complaint therefore warrant consideration of whether the underlying approach to these contested issues has genuinely changed.

The central question for the Ombudsman is therefore straightforward:

If the ABC's own Tasmania Editor accepts that “women's rights advocacy group” may be a more precise and neutral description of Women Speak Tasmania, what objective editorial basis justifies describing WST instead as “anti-trans”?

That question becomes more significant when considered alongside the failure to seek an interview with WST, the omission of the full nature of the Parliamentary Inquiry sought by WST, the limited reporting of WST's substantive concerns, and the framing of the story primarily as a political dispute between the Premier and Deputy Premier.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth Caballero', with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Dr Elizabeth Caballero
President
Women Speak Tasmania

Attachments

1. Ten individual complaints concerning the ABC News Tasmania report of 29 August 2026.
2. WST Media Release — 27 August 2026, *Push for Parliamentary Inquiry into 29 Testimonies*.
3. WST Media Release — 29 August 2026, *Deputy Premier agrees Greens Bill is “flawed” and “extreme”*.
4. WST *Dossier on the Impacts of Tasmania's Sex Self-ID Laws on Women, Girls, Families and LGB People*.