

Thank you for your email of 14 August concerning the article by Professor Ian Plimer titled 'Legislative time bomb', published on the ABC's Unleashed website on 13 August.

The ABC's Unleashed website is committed to presenting and stimulating free speech and debate through the presentation of diverse and robust opinion pieces about politics, society, belief and behaviour. The published opinion pieces are regarded as conversation starters, as the site then allows readers to post their thoughts on the articles, and debate the issues amongst themselves. The ABC has specific editorial requirements for opinion content, outlined in the ABC's Code of Practice and Editorial Policies. These provisions recognise that such content is commissioned or acquired to provide a particular perspective or point of view on matters of contention or public debate.

Unleashed opinion pieces on the subject of climate change typically attract a lot of interest, with a large number of reader posts and vigorous debate on each article's message board. Whilst we acknowledge that individual opinion pieces on Unleashed present a particular viewpoint, we believe the site presents a range of perspectives and viewpoints on subjects such as climate change. This is consistent with the ABC's impartiality provisions for opinion content, which requires the presentation of a diversity of perspectives in an appropriate timeframe. By way of example, around the same time as Professor Plimer's piece was published, Unleashed also presented opinion pieces on climate change by Dr Andrew Glikson (12 August and 22 July), Owen Cordes-Holland and Donald Rothwell (13 August), Tom Switzer (10 August), Jeff Angel (7 August), and Don Henry (24 August).

Professor Plimer is a credentialed scientist, currently the Professor of Mining Geology at The University of Adelaide and Emeritus Professor of Earth Sciences at The University of Melbourne. As a high-profile participant in the climate change debate, his opinion was considered a legitimate voice for the debate, contributing to the diversity of perspectives on the topic presented on Unleashed.

The ABC does not endorse opinions expressed in opinion content, nor present those opinions as factual content. Instead, the ABC's Code of Practice requires that opinion content is clearly signposted to audiences, enabling it to be viewed in the context of presenting a particular viewpoint. We acknowledge that it is the nature of opinion writing that information is often used selectively or interpretatively to support the particular argument being advanced by the writer. In this context, Unleashed provides the opportunity for readers to debate the matters raised and the merits of the argument, including disputing the facts or information on which an argument is based. In the case of Professor Plimer's article, more than 400 posts have been published on the message board to date, with several disputing Professor Plimer's scientific claims, such as those to which you refer.

Having reviewed the article in respect to your concerns, we are satisfied that it was in keeping with the ABC's editorial requirements for opinion content. Nevertheless, please be assured that your concerns have been noted and brought to the attention of the Unleashed team. We strongly encourage you to participate in the debate on the subject and correct what you believe to be errors of fact in Professor Plimer's article by adding a comment to the message board:

<http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/stories/s2655036.htm>.

Thank you for taking the time to share your concerns with us, and for your interest in ABC Unleashed. For your reference, copies of the ABC's Code of Practice and Editorial Policies are available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/corp/pubs/charter.htm>.

Yours sincerely

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Audience & Consumer Affairs