



**12 Feb 2010**

**Inaccuracies and Imbalance In the Bay Buzz Article “Dying in Hawke’s Bay”**

The above mentioned article is extremely unbalanced and misleading. Presbyterian Support East Coast considers that it breaches the principles of reasonable journalism as indicated by the Press Council. The Press Council’s Principles are attached for your information. Our concerns particularly focus on the following principles.

*1. Accuracy*

*Publications (newspapers and magazines) should be guided at all times by accuracy, fairness and balance, and should not deliberately mislead or misinform readers by commission, or omission.*

*6. Comment and Fact*

*Publications should, as far as possible, make proper distinctions between reporting of facts and conjecture, passing of opinions and comment.*

**I draw your attention to the following concerns within the article and ask that you publish a prominent correction and apology on your website and in your next hard copy issue.**

**Detailed Concerns**

**One**

“Up until this time (Feb 2001) Presbyterian Services had taken a hands off management attitude towards Cranford “

This is at best misleading and at worst inaccurate. The staff of Cranford Hospice have always been accountable to the CEO of Presbyterian Support. During the 1990s an executive manager from Presbyterian Support had oversight of Cranford Hospice and was frequently on site. The Director of Cranford has always had regular management supervision meetings with the CEO of Presbyterian Support. Your statement implies a significant change in management relationship occurred in 2001 which is simply not true.

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**Two**

“From the outset, Cranford was a community asset. The first volunteers came from women’s groups associated with the churches and from the Country Women’s Institute. Fundraising and donations were the sole source of income,”

This is inaccurate and misleading as it fails to mention that Presbyterian Support underwrote any shortfall in income for Cranford for the first 10 years of its existence at considerable expense to the organisation.

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### Three

“A change in Presbyterian Support management also occurred in 2000 with the appointment of Shaun Robinson as CEO.

This marked a change in the relationship between PSEC and Cranford which saw PSEC assume more and more control over Cranford affairs until arriving at the situation we have today, where Cranford staff are directly answerable to the CEO of PSEC.”

This is misleading and inaccurate as it implies that Cranford staff have not previously been accountable to the Presbyterian Support CEO, which is not factually correct. There has always been direct line accountability to the PSEC CEO.

In addition Shaun Robinson was appointed CEO in Oct 2002.

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### Four

“In August 2007 a Review of Management and Leadership Functions and Structure (Harper/Devine) recommended that: *“PSEC recognises the dynamic tension between Cranford and the rest of PSEC, valuing the individuality and uniqueness of the strong Cranford brand and what it offers PSEC while encouraging the development of collaborative innovative organisational wide synergies.”*

To PSEC this was an invitation to restructure Cranford, and within a year the three top positions were filled by new appointments from outside Hawke’s Bay, old relationships were severed, with many people feeling very badly treated.”

This is highly selective use of the material is misleading, inaccurate by omission and totally imbalanced. The article implies that PSEC used the *“the dynamic tension between Cranford and the rest of PSEC”* etc as an excuse to restructure Cranford. This is a deliberate misrepresentation of the report. The article fails to point out that the report actually recommended a restructure of Cranford. Nor does the article indicate any of the issues that the report was investigating that led Harper Divine to recommend a restructure.

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### Five

”We do not intend to participate in any further debate via the media. We believe that most reasonable people would agree with our decision” is how the PSEC Board concluded an “open letter to assure the public, staff and supporters that they can have total confidence in Cranford Hospice.” (*HB Today* advert, November 2009)

This is a deliberate misquotation from the PSEC Board letter and a misrepresentation by quoting out of context. It represents ”We do not intend to participate in any further debate via the media” as a full sentence when in fact the statement was *“The recent misguided public criticism diverts energy from the important work of caring for patients. This work is the board’s priority and we do not intend to participate in any further debate via the media.”* Misquoting out of context in this way is a deliberately misleading and inaccurate.

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**Six**

“Presbyterian Support’s response was to commission a review of Cranford by Dr Sandy McLeod, a Palliative Care Physician from Christchurch. Dr McLeod’s report has not been released by PSEC, but what is known is that when he asked staff which regime would they rather be under if they were dying – the old or the new – the majority chose the old.”

This section is inaccurate by omission and is misleading in that it does not make clear the distinction between “conjecture, passing of opinions and comment” ( principle 6) i.e. *but what is known is that when he asked staff which regime would they rather be under if they were dying – the old or the new – the majority chose the old* there is absolutely no evidence provided to substantiate this opinion.

In addition the article fails to mention the conclusion of Dr McLeod’s report which has been made public and which the Bay Buzz had a copy of i.e.

*“As always there will be room for improvement and refinement of the art of medicine. I don’t think these improvements will be difficult to achieve and indeed I gained the impression that many are already being achieved. The measures in place are having effect. Cranford’s scar from the changes will be the staff casualties but, these aside, the future of palliative care services in the Hawke’s Bay would appear, to me, to be encouraging.” Dr Sandy McLeod.*

This omission totally misrepresents the message of the report and PSECs response to the issues raised by Dr Smales.

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**Seven**

“Keip developed a close working relationship with Shaun Robinson, giving her access to confidential information, which caused distress to those involved. She now holds the position of Palliative Care Planning and Funding Manager with HBDHB, and is the primary day-to-day monitor of Cranford’s performance ... relied upon by senior management to reassure that “all is well.”

This statement is misleading and inaccurate by omission. It implies that consulting Dianne Keip in the development of ideas for Cranford’s structure was clandestine and inappropriate. A range of key informants were consulted in the early stages of thinking around the direction and structure of Cranford hospice. Dianne Keip’s role in strategy for palliative care made her an appropriate person to consult.

The statement that Ms Keip’s role at the DHB means she is “relied upon by senior management to reassure her that “all is well” implies that her opinion is the only source of monitoring and quality assurance used by the DHB in relation to Cranford. This is patently incorrect and ignores the regular reporting on patient information, the cycle of independent quality assurance certification audits (the last of which occurred in 2009 and the next scheduled for March 2010) and of contract monitoring audits.

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**Eight**

“Numerous incidents were related where staff have been treated with disrespect and intimidation. Many are convinced there was an orchestrated campaign of ‘constructive dismissal’ where abusive behaviour was employed as a weapon to move along old time employees. Only in past weeks has an employment action brought by three Cranford nurses been settled by mediation.”

This statement is inaccurate and misleading. The opening sentence “Numerous incidents were related where staff have been treated with disrespect and intimidation” is presented as a statement of fact. Allegations of ill-treatment, disrespect and intimidation are serious. PSEC has clear policies and procedures to address this and there are employment laws to deal with such issues. No such allegations have been made and your article presents no evidence of this behaviour; yet your article states as fact that “staff have been treated with disrespect and intimidation”.

By using the words “Only in past weeks has an employment action brought by three Cranford nurses been settled by mediation” the article implies that this resolution is negative and that it supports the assertions of staff that there is a campaign of ill-treatment. This is biased unbalanced and misleading.

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**Nine**

“Also the “reality” in February 2010: The situation remains sufficiently “negative” that a mediator has been brought in to help rebuild morale.”

This statement is also inaccurate and misleading. It is factually incorrect to say that a mediator has been brought in to Cranford with a brief to improve morale. An independent facilitator has been used to run a workshop with staff focusing on change management. This is a very common practise in any organisation.

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**Ten**

He noted that DHB’s contract is with PSEC and how they deliver their services is up to them ... “unless we felt there was some threat to the organization that could make that contract difficult to deliver.” Clearly, DHB, through Mr Foote, sees no such threat. Why? Because PSEC has assured them there is none!

This statement is inaccurate and misleading. As stated above in point Seven above the DHB has a wide range of means of monitoring the quality and performance of Cranford Hospice. It is completely inaccurate to state that the reason the DHB see no threat is because “ PSEC has assured them there is none.”

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**Eleven**

The inaccuracy outlined in point Ten above is also repeated in the Bay Buzz Editorial where Mr Belford states that the DHB have

“ passively accepted reassurances from the implicated Presbyterian Support management”

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**Shaun Robinson**  
**CEO**  
**Presbyterian Support East Coast**

Press Council Principles

1. Accuracy

Publications (newspapers and magazines) should be guided at all times by accuracy, fairness

and balance, and should not deliberately mislead or misinform readers by commission, or omission.

## 2. Corrections

Where it is established that there has been published information that is materially incorrect then the publication should promptly correct the error giving the correction fair prominence. In some circumstances it will be appropriate to offer an apology and a right of reply to an affected person or persons.

## 3. Privacy

Everyone is entitled to privacy of person, space and personal information, and these rights should be respected by publications. Nevertheless the right of privacy should not interfere with publication of matters of public record, or obvious significant public interest.

Publications should exercise care and discretion before identifying relatives of persons convicted or accused of crime where the reference to them is not directly relevant to the matter reported.

Those suffering from trauma or grief call for special consideration, and when approached, or enquiries are being undertaken, careful attention is to be given to their sensibilities.

## 4. Confidentiality

Editors have a strong obligation to protect against disclosure of the identity of confidential sources. They also have a duty to take reasonable steps to satisfy themselves that such sources are well informed and that the information they provide is reliable.

## 5. Children and Young People

Editors should have particular care and consideration for reporting on and about children and young people.

## 6. Comment and Fact

Publications should, as far as possible, make proper distinctions between reporting of facts and conjecture, passing of opinions and comment.

## 7. Advocacy

A publication is entitled to adopt a forthright stance and advocate a position on any issue.

## 8. Discrimination

Publications should not place gratuitous emphasis on gender, religion, minority groups, sexual orientation, age, race, colour or physical or mental disability. Nevertheless, where it is relevant and in the public interest, publications may report and express opinions in these areas.

## 9. Subterfuge

Editors should generally not sanction misrepresentation, deceit or subterfuge to obtain information for publication unless there is a clear case of public interest and the information cannot be obtained in any other way.

## 10. Headlines and Captions

Headlines, sub-headings, and captions should accurately and fairly convey the substance of the report they are designed to cover.

## 11. Photographs

Editors should take care in photographic and image selection and treatment. They should not publish photographs or images which have been manipulated without informing readers of the fact and, where significant, the nature and purpose of the manipulation. Those involving situations of grief and shock are to be handled with special consideration for the sensibilities of those affected.

## 12. Letters

Selection and treatment of letters for publication are the prerogative of editors who are to be guided by fairness, balance, and public interest in the correspondents' views.

## 13. Council Adjudications

Editors are obliged to publish the substance of Council adjudications that uphold a complaint.

Note: Editors and publishers are aware of the extent of this Council rule that is not reproduced in full here