

Name: Michael Byrom

Submission:

I write in support of a Royal Commission into the diversity, independence, and reliability of the Australian media. I note on <https://newsroyalcommission.com/senateinquiry/> that the concerns leading to a request for a Royal Commission include "deliberately polarising and politically manipulated news" and news that "is routinely used to attack opponents".

In late 2019 and early 2020 I was the subject of a series of front page articles in The Australian newspaper. These articles presented pieces of information provided to a journalist at The Australian by former business colleagues of mine with titles such as "Heart surgeon allowed to operate after patients die", "RPA, heart surgeon face scrutiny over deaths", "Hospitals and medical regulators 'must reveal patient safety risks' ", "Watchdog failed to investigate eight surgery deaths", and "Bad doctors to lose their anonymity under reforms".

These articles have destroyed my career as a young cardiac surgeon. The complainants, my previous business colleagues, have been found by independent investigation to have falsified patient safety concerns and conducted a campaign of bullying against me, and have lied to investigators. I have provided evidence that patients may have been deliberately harmed as a result of the actions of my previous business colleagues in their attempts to remove me from my employment, a result which would have significantly benefited them financially. Despite this evidence and repeated attempts to provide balance to the stories, The Australian continued to provide a totally one-sided narrative to these events, selectively included statements that I provided, and did not include statements from the Australian Medical Association or others that would have demonstrated that the implication that I was in any way "unsafe" was totally unfounded. Indeed, the final outcome of these investigations was that I have never, at any time, operated outside the range of results of my peers and have never posed a risk to patient safety. It is not possible to see the truth of this finding in the series of articles published by The Australian.

At the completion of this series of articles, the journalist said that she wasn't interested in me but rather wanted to expose "the system". It is clear to me that the attacks against me were part of a motivated campaign to pursue some agenda, presumably against the Medical Council of NSW, the Sydney Local Health District, or perhaps the NSW government.

It is my understanding that as a privately-owned newspaper, I have no recourse to these events other than through the courts, which I cannot afford. I strongly support a Royal Commission and would be very pleased to provide further details of these shameful events.