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# Australian Press Council

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## Adjudication No. 1151 (January 2002)

The Australian Press Council has dismissed a complaint from Richard Buchhorn against *The Australian* over a book review written by Peter Coleman published in the weekend edition on 28 July 2001.

Mr Coleman, in his review of *An Indelible Stain? The Question of Genocide in Australia's History* by Henry Reynolds, alluded to the debate of the distinction between genocide and homicide as related to the treatment of Aborigines in Australia's history. In so doing, Mr Coleman stated, "there is no doubt about racial homicide in Australia" and cited the examples of the Myall Creek Massacre of 1838 and the Coniston Station Massacre in 1928. He wrote further, that "several other massacres have been alleged" - this sentence is central to the complaint lodged by Mr Buchhorn.

Mr Buchhorn considered that this sentence misrepresented and suppressed relevant facts so as to breach the Press Council's principles. Mr Buchhorn asserts that an accurate sentence would read, "scores of other massacres have been alleged". Mr Buchhorn attached an article published in *Overland* magazine by Raymond Evans and Bill Thorpe (*Indigenocide and the Massacre of Aboriginal History*) in support of his concern that massacres of Indigenous Australians were not limited to several others only.

In considering the complaint, the Press Council does not agree that the sentence, when read in context of the review of the book, misrepresents or suppresses relevant facts resulting in readers being unfairly treated. Mr Coleman made it clear in his article that the research and debate of controversial issues relating to this period of Australia's history "is for scholars and experts to settle".