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ABC admits significant gas website errors

The peak body representing Australia's oil and gas industry, has welcomed the findings of an ABC investigation into the broadcaster's website *Coal Seam Gas: by the Numbers* which found "significant" inaccuracies and has given rise to an official apology.

The report by ABC Audience and Consumer Affairs was released late last Thursday (just before the Easter long weekend); almost four months after APPEA lodged its first complaint about the site's inaccuracies and well outside the ABC's own 30 day target response time.

In a letter to the Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association, the ABC's Head of Audience and Consumer Affairs, Kirstin McLeish, said the investigation found seven material inaccuracies on the site, six in contravention of ABC's editorial standards.

The letter says: *"The ABC is trusted by its audience as a credible source of information, and we take pride in the rigour of our editorial standards. It is regrettable that a number of material inaccuracies were published."*

"ABC accepts that these inaccuracies were significant and apologises for these errors."

APPEA's Chief Operating Officer - Eastern Region, Rick Wilkinson, said: "It's disappointing the investigation took so long, that so many inaccuracies have remained on the site, and that the final report was released in a manner which clearly attempted to avoid scrutiny of what is an extremely embarrassing series of editorial breaches and factual errors.

"The ABC's own inquiry has found six contraventions of the ABC's editorial standards and it is worth considering whether any single piece of ABC journalism has ever achieved such a damning report card.

"However, I welcome assurances that the findings have been discussed at length with the ABC's website production team, management, and will be reported to the ABC Board.

"One would hope that such a serious failure will be one of the first matters of attention for the organisation's new Chair.

"Unfortunately, APPEA still believes the site contains a multitude of factual errors which the ABC has failed to substantiate and which APPEA will continue to challenge."

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The Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association represents the upstream oil and gas industry in Australia. APPEA member companies produce around 98 per cent of Australia's oil and gas.