

Matthew

[Your item](#) on the Press Council adjudication about my reporting of Slater & Gordon's role in the AWU slush fund affair is headlined my shame. Be assured I feel not the slightest shame about my reporting of these matters. Indeed, I am proud of my work last year exposing aspects of this still unresolved scandal.

The Slater & Gordon complaint was vigorously rejected by The Age and this finding is flawed and illogical - like so much of the work of the Press Council. While the Council prohibits reporting of its meandering deliberations, suffice to say it has taken almost a year for them to conclude this relatively trivial matter.

A key element of the finding is criticism of me for failing to seek a comment from Slater & Gordon on a subsidiary assertion in a news story that was deeply embarrassing for former prime minister Julia Gillard. The story revealed for the first time that Gillard, then a partner at Slaters, had written to West Australian corporate authorities in the early 1990s vouching for the legitimacy and therefore assuring the incorporation of a union workplace welfare association she later confirmed she knew was actually a "slush fund" for union electioneering (from which her then boyfriend, AWU official Bruce Wilson, later misappropriated hundreds of thousands of dollars).

My story quoted former lawyer and activist Harry Nowicki accusing Slaters of stalling on requests to hand over details of an unofficial file Gillard kept in her office detailing her slush fund legal work. We made a considered decision not to seek a response from Slaters on this relatively minor point - and a feature article published the same day - because we had obtained correspondence which confirmed Slaters was indeed stalling and, as we explained in our response to the Press Council, we had genuine concerns that if we flagged details of our reporting we risked a court injunction to stop publication.

Slaters subsequently announced that it could not find the incorporation file. We are left wondering why a big law firm can be so sloppy in handling files - especially documents that dealt with matters that, in 1995, had the potential to bring down the firm. That, I would have thought, is the real shame.

Regards, Mark