

Department for Culture, Media and Sport
Secretary of State's Office

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Date 17 October 2005

MEETING WITH SIR CHRISTOPHER MEYER, PCC

The SoS met Sir Christopher Meyer and Tim Toulmin of the PCC on Thursday October 13.

- CM reported good progress on all areas of promised improvement since their last meeting a year ago. In particular, the PCC is now being used increasingly by editors as an advisory service.
- PCC is keeping reforming momentum by running workshops for newspaper employees (not just journos and editors) to inform them about the Code.
- Papers are also reflecting the Code in the contracts for their employees. All national newspaper groups do this bar the Express. CM thought that the system didn't work quite so well for freelancers but that if they did breach the Code they would most likely not be employed again.
- There was some discussion of the activities of journalists post-7/7 and other disasters. SoS expressed concern about journos pretending to be relatives, breaking into hospitals etc. CM was aware of the problem but had only had actual complaints about Australian and US journalists behaving unscrupulously. The Cabinet Office wash up also concluded this.
- CM stressed how quickly the PCC can react to an issue or allegation. SoS confirmed that we would alert them if we heard any complaints ourselves.
- **Action: CM agreed to send over some of their briefing packs prepared for 7/7 victims' families so that we can disseminate them in an emergency.**
- On TVWF CM confirmed they were concerned but that the Govt position was a good one. SoS underlined desire to

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strengthen and develop this stance. CM said that they were working on how you might define an exclusion in relation to the regulations and then get full Press exclusion if they agree to sign up to the Code - a simple and blanket carve-out.

- CM trying to focus industry on this, especially on issue of treating a complaint about a moving picture on a website in the same way as any other issue. SoS thought this was a reasonable approach.
- **Action: CM to write to SoS setting out concerns and proposed solution in the next few weeks and by mid-November; as SoS will take this forward before end of the Presidency.**
- On regional matters, CM said that regional open days had proved very successful especially in engaging all ethnic groups. He thanked DCMS officials for their help on this. SoS thought there was a key constructive role for the PCC in relation to groups such as the Muslim Council of GB. She said it would be very helpful for the cross-Whitehall strategy to know that the PCC was actively engaged in brokering respect, understanding and fair representation.
- **Action: PCC to talk to DCMS officials about arranging a one-off open day-type independent event or lunch in London on this specific issue.**

Kate McGavin
Private Secretary