



From the Chairman

19 June 2007

Rt. Hon. John Prescott MP
Deputy Prime Minister
26 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2WH

Dear Deputy Prime Minister,

Thank you for your letter of 10 May. I am sorry for the delay in replying, but the letter was sent to the wrong address.

I am pleased that we were able to help get a quick apology to you from the Daily Express. As some of the issues raised in your letter relate to the internal handling of your complaint at the newspaper, we asked the editor of the Daily Express for an urgent response. Please find attached his reply, which I hope explains things to your satisfaction. Perhaps you could let me know which charity you would like to benefit from the proceeds of the phone calls?

Dealing with your other points, the prominence of corrections and apologies is one of those thorny issues on which there will always be differing opinions. My own view is that things have improved a lot, but there is still more to be done. This is an issue we highlight with the industry all the time. But the size and location of any apology will be determined by a number of factors: the length of the apology; how serious the mistake or intrusion is; and how prominently in the newspaper the original article appeared. Incidentally, I would caution against thinking that the longer the apology the better it is – people's attention tends to be drawn and held by shorter items. The key is to put them where the reader will notice them in the first place.

As you say, we cannot recall having a complaint before this one about phone polls based on inaccurate information. I would have thought that Clause 1 (Accuracy) would apply nonetheless; but I will of course refer the specifics to the Code of Practice Committee, which writes and reviews the Code.

CHAIRMAN
Sir Christopher Meyer

MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION
Matti Alderson
Roger Alton
Paul Dacre
Spencer Feeney
Colleen Harris MVO, FRSA
Vivien Hepworth
Peter Hill
Simon Irwin
Ian Nichol
Adam Phillips
Eve Salomon
Dianne Thompson CBE
Derek Tucker
The Right Rev. John Waine KCVO
Rear Admiral Nick Wilkinson CB

DIRECTOR
Tim Toulmin



Your final question concerns how newspapers should limit the damage once inaccurate information has been published. It is a good point. The PCC expects publications to take steps to minimise the fall-out once they have got something wrong. This includes amending their internal and external databases (many newspapers share information); withdrawing inaccuracies from websites; and making clear to readers online that a subsequent correction or apology was necessary.

With kind regards.

Yours ever,
Christopher Meyer

Sir Christopher Meyer

