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Press Complaints Commission

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Guy Black

From the Director

The Rt Hon Michael Jack, MP,
House of Commons,
London,
SW1A 0AA

21st March 2003

Dear Mr Jack,

Thank you very much for your letter of 28th February to Les Hinton. He has asked me to reply on his behalf as he is currently away. I am sorry for the delay in doing so.

As you may know, the Code Committee has recently amended the rules in the Code relating to witness payments – which are now forbidden where proceedings are active under the Contempt of Court Act 1981. This issue should therefore no longer arise.

In regard to other areas where payment is an issue, the Code of course covers payment to criminals. Where such payment is made, the PCC will normally investigate the matter in the public interest, in which case the sums involved are likely to become public. Other issues of payment are often covered by contracts, and therefore subject to normal rules of confidentiality.

The Code Committee is always happy to consider suggestions for changes to the Code. If you would like them to look at the issue of whether all payments should be transparent, please do let me know and I will ensure the matter is discussed at the next meeting of the Committee.

With kind regards.

*Yours sincerely
S. Black*

1 Salisbury Square London EC4A 3JB Telephone 020 7353 1248 Facsimile 020 7353 8355
Textphone for deaf and hard of hearing: 020 7583 2264
email: complaints@pcc.org.uk web site: www.pcc.org.uk