

PCC rejects complaint against Loaded magazine

The Press Complaints Commission has rejected a complaint from a woman that an article headlined "Wanted! The Epic Boobs girl!", published in the February 2010 edition of Loaded, intruded into her privacy in breach of Clause 3 (Privacy) of the Editors' Code of Practice.

The article featured a number of photographs of the complainant - who was said to have the "best breasts on the block" - taken from the internet and offered readers of the magazine a reward of £500 for assistance in encouraging her to do a photo shoot with it. The complainant said that the article was intrusive: the magazine had published her name and the photographs, which had been uploaded to her Bebo site in December 2006 and had since been taken from there and published without permission across numerous websites. The publication of the article had caused her upset and embarrassment.

The magazine said that that it had not taken the photographs from the complainant's Bebo site, but rather was commenting on pictures that had been given extremely wide circulation on the internet. The complainant's photograph, for example, came up in the top three in a Google image search on the word "boobs". At the time of complaint, there were 1,760,000 matches that related to her and 203,000 image matches of her as the "Epic Boobs" girl.

The Commission had some sympathy with the complainant, and accepted that the tastefulness of the article was questionable. However, the issue for the Commission was whether the publication of the information was intrusive. It decided that it was not. The magazine had not taken information out of context from a social networking site, but had discussed material that had already been made widely available for a considerable time. The Commission did not think it was possible for it to censure the magazine for commenting on material already given this type of circulation, and which had already been contextualised in the same specific way, by many others.

Stephen Abell, Director of the PCC, said:

"The PCC has done a lot of work on the use of material taken from social networking sites. This case is slightly different: it rests on material that has been given much broader dissemination online. The Commission had to pay regard to the extent to which the information had already been made available, and also the context in which it had appeared. It judged that it would not have been proportionate to criticise an editor for republishing this material, bearing in mind how - and how far - it had already spread. The Commission has instituted an ongoing working group to consider issues thrown up by online publication, and will continue to think and act flexibly in relation to this challenging area".

To read the full adjudication [click here](#).

ENDS

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