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18 October 2011

Dear Lord Justice Leveson

**Enquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the press -
An ombudsman alternative to the Press Complaints Commission?**

I note the comment Paul Dacre made in his address to the enquiry on 12 October that there may be a case for the appointment of a Press or Newspaper Ombudsman to consider complaints about the press. As I understand it, his proposal would allow customers to seek redress for unfair press coverage, while also maintaining the independence of the press and ensuring free speech.

You may be interested to hear about our model of providing redress, which occupies a similar position - independent of government and of the industry we are investigating. Ombudsman Services is a company limited by guarantee that is appointed or approved by the relevant regulators to run ombudsman schemes for the energy, telecommunications and property sectors throughout the UK. We provide dispute resolution and redress to domestic consumers and micro businesses.

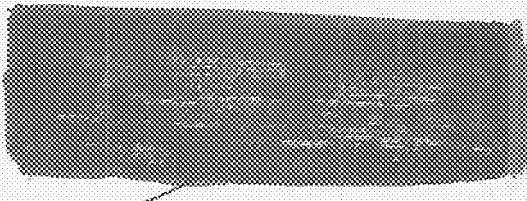
Our service is free to the consumer and paid for by the participating companies under our jurisdiction by a combination of subscription and case fee. We do consult with our participating companies on our annual budget and business plan, but they are unable to exert financial control over the service as the governance arrangements ensure that we are entirely independent from the companies that fall under our jurisdiction.

Established in 2002, Ombudsman Services now has over 8,500 participating companies and last year sent out over 20,300 complaint forms and completed over 16,500 investigations. The company employs 170 people and has a turnover in the region of £6.4 million. Our Chair is Dame Janet Finch.

We have considerable experience in the field of dispute resolution, and I feel this is a model of redress you might like to consider during your inquiry. If you would like to discuss this further, I would be happy to arrange a meeting and explain in more detail how we operate and the advantages it offers to both the consumer and our participating companies.

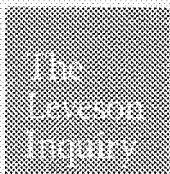
I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely



Lewis Shand Smith
Chief Ombudsman





culture, practices and ethics of the press

Steps before publication

1. If you are happy for the inquiry to publish your submission please add and sign the following statement of truth to the end of your submission/statement:

Statement of Truth

I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.



Signed

Date 27 January 2012

Please be aware that by signing the statement of truth you are confirming that you agree that the contents of the submission/statement are true. Please take extra time to ensure that you are completely happy with your submission/statement before you sign it.

If you have provided a submission/statement in your private capacity you should state your full name in the submission/statement but should provide in a separate document personal details (e.g. address, contact address, mobile telephone number and e-mail address), which will not be published.

Please remove any personal details such as home address or telephone number before forwarding the final signed submission/statement.

If you have provided the submission/statement on behalf of an organisation, please state this clearly in the first line of the submission/statement.

2. Your signed submission/statement, in its entirety, should be returned to us by email.
3. Returning your signed submission/statement will confirm that you are content for the inquiry to publish it on its website in the form you have provided. If this is not the case and you have any concerns or wish for certain sections to be withheld please make this clear in any response.
4. Your signed submission, once received, will initially be provided to those groups who have been designated as Core Participants to the Inquiry (a full list is available on our website: www.levesoninquiry.org.uk).
5. If the Core Participants do not raise any matters your statement will then be referred to in open session and at that point it will be published, along with your name, on the Inquiry's website.

The Inquiry intends to begin publishing submissions/statements on the website shortly and would therefore be grateful for your response by return.