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Press Complaints Commission

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

From the Director

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Selborne House,
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13th January 2003

Acting Chairman
Professor Robert Pinker

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David Pollington
The Right Rev. John Waine
Neil Wallis

Director
Guy Black

Dear Sir,

Pre-trial publicity

I am writing further to our meeting before Christmas as which we had some useful discussions about the issue of guidance on pre-trial publicity.

Following talks within the industry, our view is that it would be inappropriate for such guidance to emanate from the PCC itself. The issue does not form part of the Code – and the Commission can have no jurisdiction over it. Any reference to guidance in the Code would raise expectations that the PCC would deal with complaints about it – which it never could. (The PCC is, indeed, prohibited by its own rules from dealing with matters which are the subject of legal proceedings). Indeed, the PCC could even open itself up to judicial review as a result of failing to deal with a case.

However, we felt that it might well be appropriate for the individual newspaper trade associations to draw up guidance – perhaps in association with the Attorney General's office – which could then be circulated via publishers to all editors.

You may like to take this initiative forward through the individual trade associations themselves, or to co-ordinate it through the Board of the Press Standards Board of Finance (or Pressbof) on which they are all represented.

The Chairman is Sir Harry Roche, and you could contact him at Pressbof, 142 Queen Street, Glasgow, G1 3BU.

Do let me know if I can be of further help.

With very kind regards.

Guy Black

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