

I understand that this Autumn, you, the Press Recognition Panel, will have to report to Parliament on the state of the press regulatory system and that you wish to know what I, as a member of the public, thinks about the current situation.

Firstly, the current voluntary set up is a sham. We have a situation where when newspapers step out of line, the current regulatory body has no teeth at all to force the newspapers to follow the guidelines. This is obvious by the number of times the guidelines are ignored and paltry apologies subsequently made. Parliament should be reminded by the PRP what the Leveson Report said should happen if the industry tried to veto his recommendations and refused to comply. The Leveson Report says: ***"if some or all of the industry are not willing to participate in effective independent regulation, my own concluded view is to reject the notion that they should escape regulation altogether. I cannot, and will not, recommend another last chance saloon for the press. With some measure of regret, therefore, I am driven to conclude that the Government should be ready to consider the need for a statutory backstop regulator being established, to ensure, at the least, that the press are subject to regulation that would require the fullest compliance with the criminal and civil law, if not also to ensure consequences equivalent to those that would flow from an independent self-regulatory system."***

Secondly, regardless of whether IMPRESS is recognised by the PRP, the PRP should strongly recommend to Parliament that the key 'guaranteed access to justice incentive' (section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act) should be brought into effect as Parliament had intended.

Regards

Bill Howlett