

This Autumn, the Press Recognition Panel (PRP) – set up to assess whether self-regulators meet Leveson’s criteria – will have to report to Parliament on the state of the press regulatory system. It will likely report one of two situations: either that a recognised regulator exists (if IMPRESS is recognised) but that most significant publishers remain outside the recognised system, or that no recognised regulator exists (if IMPRESS is not recognised), and that all significant publishers remain outside it. Either way, it is an inescapable conclusion that the big newspapers have rejected this system.

Ahead of that report, the PRP is consulting the public on what we think about the current situation, and this is what I think the PRP should tell Parliament:

- 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.***"
- In the meantime, 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.

Robin Nuttall