

Lee Taylor.
RJT17

PRESS COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

From the Chairman

12 September 2006

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Richard Thomas Esq
Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
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Jean Richard,

What price privacy?

I am writing because you wanted a formal response from us to your report *What price privacy?* by the end of September, although for one or two reasons set out below a complete response from the newspaper and magazine industry might be later than this.

On the general issue, our position is unambiguous. I reiterated publicly last month that 'offering money for confidential information, either directly or through third parties, may be illegal and that journalists must have regard to the terms of the Act'.

Turning to your report and what the next steps might be, you will remember that during our meeting on July 13th we discussed the possibility of amending the Code of Practice to include a ban on paying for certain types of information. We outlined the mechanics involved in changing the Code, and specifically highlighted the role of the Code of Practice committee, which is a separate body from the Commission. I understand that you are meeting the secretary of the Code Committee shortly. We also discussed whether the Commission could introduce some 'plain English' guidance. The Commission's Guidance Notes generally expand on the provisions of the Code, so it makes sense for the Commission to await the outcome of the October meeting of the Code Committee. Of course, it might be that the Committee itself wants to publish guidance on the subject.

Any response to your report is also complicated by the DCA's consultation on increasing penalties for breaches of the Act. If the penalties are increased it might make enforcing rules duplicated in the Code more difficult. But we are of course yet to see how the DCA will take things forward.

CHAIRMAN
Sir Christopher Meyer

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With kind regards.

Yours ever,



Sir Christopher Meyer

