



## **Press Release: Immediate**

The Press Council of Ireland and the Press Ombudsman do not comment on current civil or criminal proceedings nor do they consider complaints about any article if the subject matter of the article is at the same time the subject of court proceedings.

However, I have received a number of requests for a response to recent statements about the Council and the Office of the Press Ombudsman which appear to be based on a lack of knowledge of the record of these institutions, and a lack of awareness of its effectiveness and relevance in the matter of disputes concerning the press.

In the interests of clarifying these issues, I would like to emphasise the following:

There are two fundamental principles on which the policies of the Press Council and the Office of the Press Ombudsman are based.

One of these is the importance of a free and vigilant press as an essential component of any democratic society. The other is that the freedom of the press must be exercised within an independent system of accountability and redress.

This is achieved because the editors of all member publications have committed themselves to observe their Code of Practice, because the decisions on whether there has been a failure by any publication to observe this Code are made by an independent system which editors do not control, and because members of the public now have ready and free access to this system for the resolution of their complaints about the press.

Public confidence in this system can be gauged from the fact that in the five years since it was established, it has received almost 2,000 complaints, some of them from very senior figures in Irish public life. In all cases where complaints were upheld, newspapers have published our decisions – some of them of substantial import – upholding the reputations of individuals and correcting serious errors.

As monetary compensation is specifically excluded from the redress we offer, all decisions upholding complaints about articles that reflect on the integrity or good name of complainants have been made in favour of individuals whose primary concern has been with the protection of their good name.

Nothing in our procedures prevents anyone having recourse to the courts.

It is also important to note that the conciliation service operated by the Office of the Press Ombudsman has been, and continues to be, instrumental in helping to achieve resolutions of complaints satisfactory to both parties in a large percentage of cases – one-third of all processed complaints in 2012, for example.

The Council and the Press Ombudsman continually examine their policies and procedures with a view to improving them. Equally, it is important that criticisms of the Council and the Office of the Press Ombudsman should be founded on fact.

Details of our record are available on our websites [www.presscouncil.ie](http://www.presscouncil.ie) and [www.pressombudsman.ie](http://www.pressombudsman.ie).

Dáithí O’Ceallaigh  
Chairman, Press Council of Ireland  
19 February 2013

ENDS