

# NEWSLETTER OF THE PRESS COUNCIL OF IRELAND AND THE PRESS OMBUDSMAN



## Press Council Chairman calls for new members at launch of 2010 Annual Report



*The Press Ombudsman, Professor John Horgan, the President of the Irish Human Rights Commission, Dr Maurice Manning and the Chairman of the Press Council of Ireland, Dáithí O'Ceallaigh, at the Annual Report launch.*

The benefits of Press Council membership, and the value of press freedom, were emphasised by the Chairman of the Press Council of Ireland, Mr. Dáithí O'Ceallaigh, and the Press Ombudsman, Professor John Horgan, at the launch of the Press Council's Annual Report in Dublin on 1 April.

By joining the Council, Mr. O'Ceallaigh said, publications that were not yet members would both demonstrate their support for a responsible form of press regulation and would enable their readers to avail of a quick and easy form of redress in the event of a complaint.

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All national newspapers in Ireland, many of the most prominent regional newspapers, and a large number of magazines, were already member publications of the Council, he pointed out. As such their readers benefited from an independent regulatory system that was wholly absent from the internet.

He said that he was sure that publications that were not as yet members, as well as web-based publications, would in time come to see the value of quality control and best professional practice.

The Press Ombudsman, Professor John Horgan, noted in his address that the freedom of the press did not exist for the press itself, but existed and was exercised for and on behalf of the public.

“Some recent examples are relevant”, he said. “Would the phenomenon of child physical and sexual abuse still be under wraps if we did not have a free press? Also those who have read the small print of Judge Moriarty’s report will note that he singles out two instances of information disclosed by the media – one in the print, the second in the broadcast media – which prompted him to extend his investigation in significant ways. This is journalism in the public interest, in the most classic sense of the word.”

As in previous years, the majority of complaints were made under Principle 1 of the Code of Practice, relating to truth and accuracy. This, Professor Horgan suggested, offered “evidence of the high value that members of the public place on such matters”, and he noted that newspapers frequently published corrections of factual inaccuracies without any need for the involvement of the his Office. Privacy, fairness and honesty, distinguishing fact and comment, and prejudice were other Principles of the Code most frequently cited in complaints.

The Chairman’s full speech can be accessed [here](#).

The Press Ombudsman’s full speech can be accessed [here](#)

The 2010 Annual Report can be accessed [here](#)

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### WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY LECTURE

The Press Council of Ireland, in association with Ireland Aid, will host a World Press Freedom Day Lecture on Tuesday, 3 May.

The Guest Speaker is Mr Lal Wickrematunge, a Sri Lankan newspaper publisher whose brother, Lasantha, was named a “Hero of Press Freedom” by the International Press Institute following his assassination in 2009 by forces opposed to the freedom of the press.

Mr Wickrematunge started the national title *The Sunday Leader* in Colombo with his brother Lasantha as managing editor in 1994. Its pioneering brand of investigative journalism, often with politicians under the spotlight, saw it gain rapid popularity. Less than one year into the paper’s existence, Lasantha and his wife were attacked, the former coming under automatic gun fire, and the newspaper was shut down using draconian emergency regulations. Publication resumed following a Supreme Court battle, but nine attacks were to take place on the Wickrematunges in the subsequent 17 years, with the printing presses being burnt down on two occasions

Details of the Lecture are as follows:

Date: Tuesday, 3 May 2011, 2.30 pm – 4 pm

Venue: The Neil Hoey Lecture Theatre, Trinity Long Room Hub,  
Fellows Square, Trinity College Dublin.

Entrance is free but attendance must be confirmed in advance at [info@presscouncil.ie](mailto:info@presscouncil.ie) or (01) 6489130.

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### STATISTICS—2010

The statistics for 2010 show that similar to the previous two years, the largest number of complaints were submitted under Principle 1 of the Code of Practice in relation to truth and accuracy, followed closely by complaints under Principle 5 about privacy.

A total of 315 complaints were received by the Office in 2010, which is also quite similar to previous years.

91 complaints were either processed or being processed by the Office at 2010 year end, on the following basis:

Successfully conciliated:	6
Resolved informally:	13
Being processed:	10
Decided by Press Ombudsman:	53
Decided on referral to Press Council:	2
File closed:	7

A file is closed when a complainant has declined to engage with the publication's response to a complaint following the intervention of the Office of the Press Ombudsman, or where it has been established that legal proceedings have been initiated by the complainant.

Of the 224 complaints that were not processed by the Office, 98 were not pursued beyond a preliminary enquiry by the complainant, 30 presented no *prima facie* evidence of a breach of the Code of Practice, 76 were out of remit and 20 related to complaints about non-member publications.

Full details of all statistics for 2010 can be accessed [here](#).



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