

The Press Complaints Commission and the Media Standards Trust: game over?

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Last week I [expressed my puzzlement](#) at the [Media Standards Trust](#) report on reform of the [Press Complaints Commission](#). Indeed, this blog then became a little piece of a battle field that rapidly developed between the two organisations – one a journalist research and lobby group, and the other the industry self-regulation body for newspapers.

I thought the report was ill-conceived. Apart some disagreement with the actual content, I wondered why have a preliminary ‘stage one’ report without consultation which had so obviously made up its mind about the conclusions?

Anyway, various radio interview arguments, stiff letters and blog comments followed. Now I find myself in (slightly unexpected agreement) with [Roy Greenslade](#):

“I was shocked when I read it because its scatter-gun attack on the PCC was such a missed opportunity. When it was released 10 days ago, I did my best to see some of the questions it raised in a positive light.

But it failed hopelessly, lacking any academic rigour. It also lacked any sense of history, either of press self-regulation in general or the PCC in particular....One of its key claims is that trust in journalists is low, “and overall may be declining further” (note the may). As I pointed out [in my London Evening Standard column](#), we journalists have grown used to the public saying they do not trust us. ‘Twas ever thus.

*The report’s major mistake, however, was in calling into question the PCC’s statistics. This is territory that Meyer and his able director, **Tim Toulmin**, can command with ease. If one is to have any hope of defeating them, proper investigation and analysis is required”*

But we all make mistakes and this does not mean that the MST are wrong to want reform of newspaper regulation. As Roy Greenslade puts it:

“The PCC is imperfect (and I readily agree that self-regulation in any form is never going to be perfect). It does require reform. But the trust may as well abandon part two of its report now because no-one will take it seriously. That does not mean that we should give up the struggle to reform the PCC. We have to find a way of raising concerns, most definitely at the upcoming select committee hearing, without being trapped inside the statistical web spun so brilliantly by Meyer.”

You can read a [report](#) of the dispute, including the PCC [letter](#) to the MST [here](#).

You can read the original MST report with links to the Director’s blog [here](#).

You can read the MST Director’s response to my [original blog](#) within the blog article itself, but also a response from report co-author Stephen Barnett in the [comments](#).

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