# For a better Press Council - don't leave out the little guy

Part of the problem regarding the poor attendance by members of the public at Press Council hearings around the country is that most members of the public don't know the hearings are actually taking place. Secondly, the procedure for laying a complaint presently mitigates against an individual who is not directly aggrieved actually laying a complaint.

By Julie Reid 28 Feb 2011

So, if the intention of the hearings is, as claimed, to listen to public opinion on revisions to the Press Code, the complaints procedure to the Press Ombudsman and the constitution of the council, then one basic requirement is advertise the hearing more effectively.

Secondly, apart from the issue of publicising the hearings, is that of how members of the public can lay complaints against journalists and/or publications. At the moment it seems that doing so is not for the faint-hearted - and nor for anyone who is offended by a news report or whatever. This is because in terms of the Press Council's complaints procedure and their definition of a complainant, an individual who wishes to lodge a complaint cannot do so - unless they are personally implicated by the press story in question.

Procedures and definitions are very different in New Zealand and Germany, for example - where 'the little man' can have a complaint relating to a published item heard - even when that individual is not personally aggrieved.

Continue reading the full article on www.FreeAfricanMedia.com, a Daily Maverick initiative.

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## ABOUT JULIE REID

Julie Reid is an academic and media analyst at the department of communication science at Unisa. She tweets about media issues regularly at @jbjreid.
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