

IN THE MATTER OF:

AN INQUIRY UNDER THE INQUIRIES ACT 2005

INTO THE CULTURE, PRACTICES AND ETHICS OF THE PRESS

CHAired BY THE RT HON LORD JUSTICE LEVESON

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF VINCENT PETER MOSS

I, **VINCENT PETER MOSS**, of the Sunday Mirror, MGN Limited, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5AP **WILL SAY** as follows:

1. I am the Political Editor of the Sunday Mirror, which is published by MGN Limited ('MGN'). MGN is part of Trinity Mirror plc ('Trinity Mirror').
2. I am making this statement in response to a notice dated 5 August 2011 pursuant to section 21(2) of the Inquiries Act 2005 (the 'Notice') addressed to me at Trinity Mirror. A copy of the Notice is annexed hereto at pages 1-4 of the Exhibit to this statement which I refer to as Exhibit VPM-1.
3. I understand that the Notice has been sent to me in connection with Part 1 of the Inquiry chaired by The Right Honourable Lord Justice Leveson into the culture, practices and ethics of the press (the 'Inquiry'), the Terms of Reference for which were published by The Right Honourable Mr David Cameron MP, Prime Minister on 20 July 2011 (the 'Terms of Reference'). The Notice requires me to provide evidence to the Inquiry panel in the form of a witness statement and to provide any documents in my custody or under my control as specified in the Notice.
4. Where the contents of this statement are within my own knowledge they are true and where the contents are not within my own knowledge I indicate the source of my belief and believe them to be true.
5. I am not authorised to waive any privilege on behalf of Trinity Mirror and nothing in this statement is intended to constitute a waiver of privilege on behalf of Trinity Mirror.

Overview of statement

6. I deal with the matters asked of me in the Notice in the order set out in the Notice, referring to them as 'Matter 1', 'Matter 2' and so on, using the Inquiry's numbering.
7. As the Notice is addressed to me as Political Editor of the Sunday Mirror, other than in setting out my career history for Matter 1, in this statement I refer to the period since September 2006 when I was appointed to this position by MGN.

Matter 1: Who I am and my career history

8. Matter 1 asks me to cover who I am and to provide a brief summary of my career history in the media.

9. I have been a journalist since 1989, when I started work at the weekly Clevedon Mercury in Somerset as a trainee before securing a post-graduate diploma in newspaper journalism from City University in London in 1990.
10. From 1990 to 1995, I spent five years on the Bristol Evening Post, a regional newspaper published six days a week in Bristol. While at the Bristol Evening Post I was indentured as a journalist, gaining my National Council for the Training of Journalists Certificate (NCTJ). In 1995, I moved to work as a political correspondent at the House of Commons for Central Press, a long-established news agency supplying political stories to regional papers and TV stations across the UK.
11. During my 16 years at the House of Commons, I have also worked as a staff political correspondent for the Mail on Sunday from 1998 to 2000 and as a freelance journalist for several national newspapers, including the Sunday Mirror, from March 2000 until I joined the Sunday Mirror as the paper's Political Editor in September 2006.

Matter 2: Corporate governance at the Sunday Mirror

12. Matter 2 asks me to cover how I understand the system of corporate governance to work in practice at the Sunday Mirror, with particular emphasis on systems to ensure lawful, professional and ethical conduct.
13. My understanding is that the system of corporate governance cascades down from the Chief Executive of Trinity Mirror, Sly Bailey, to the Editors of Trinity Mirror's national titles; in my case, the relevant Editor is the Editor of the Sunday Mirror, Tina Weaver. From my perspective, the Editor is responsible for the Sunday Mirror's content and the Directors of Trinity Mirror are responsible for corporate governance.
14. With regard to how this system relates to me in my position as Political Editor, I understand that I must act within the law and in accordance with the Editors' Code of Practice (the 'Code') published by the Press Complaints Commission ('PCC'), as is expected by Trinity Mirror of all journalists. The Code is part of my contract of employment. I report to the Editor Ms Weaver and to the Sunday Mirror's Head of News, Nick Buckley.

Matter 3: My role in adherence to corporate governance

15. Matter 3 asks me what my role is in ensuring that the corporate governance documents and all relevant policies are adhered to in practice, and if I do not consider myself to have been

/ be responsible for this, to tell the Inquiry who I consider to hold that responsibility and why.

16. At the most elementary level, my role is to act within the law and the Code. I am confident that I act, and have always acted, within the Code and the law. As a journalist, I always seek to maintain my professional standards.
17. I believe the responsibility for making sure that staff adhere to Trinity Mirror's policies rests with the line managers on individual newspapers: for example the Head of News, Head of Features or the Sports Editor on the Sunday Mirror. I myself am not a line manager. Ultimately, responsibility rests with the Editors of each newspaper on editorial matters and the Board of Trinity Mirror on corporate governance matters.

Matter 4: Adherence to company policies

18. Matter 4 asks me whether the documents and policies that I have referred to in Matter 2 are adhered to in practice, to the best of my knowledge.
19. As I stated in Matter 2, all journalists at the Sunday Mirror are expected to abide by the law and the Code. As stated in Matter 3, I am confident that I uphold these standards. The same standards are expected from all staff at the Sunday Mirror. To the best of my knowledge, they abide by the law and the Code.

Matter 5: Changes to policies

20. Matter 5 asks me whether the practices or policies that I have identified above have changed, either recently as a result of the phone hacking media interest or prior to that point, and if so, what the reasons for the change were.
21. The policies and practices that require adherence to the Code and the law have not changed in light of the phone-hacking scandal at the News of the World. As far as I am aware, neither have they changed during the time in which I have been employed at the Sunday Mirror.

Matter 6: Responsibility for checking sources for information

22. Matter 6 asks me where the responsibility for checking sources of information lies (including the method by which the information was obtained): from reporter to political editor to editor and how this is done in practice (with some representative examples).

23. There are no reporters who report to me in the Sunday Mirror structure and I am not responsible for checking the accuracy or source of anyone else's information at the Sunday Mirror.
24. Most information that comes to me does so from trusted political sources whom I have known over many years. I do not recall any time when I have had doubts about the source of a story. I focus on establishing whether the information is accurate, which includes taking into account its source. I take seriously my responsibility to check my stories are accurate and make every reasonable effort to do so. My professional reputation is built on delivering major exclusive and agenda-setting stories. It is therefore very important to me that these stories are correct. I work in a world where politicians have a vested interest in portraying their political opponents in a negative light. That always presents the risk that the information is partial, incomplete or inaccurate. By the time I present a story to the Editor or the Newsdesk, I have already made my own checks.
25. When it comes to checking the accuracy of information, there are a number of ways in which I do this. I often cross-check or source data for potential stories in official parliamentary documents such as Hansard (the official record of Parliamentary proceedings), the Register of MPs' Interests, Select Committee Reports, departmental publications, as well as the websites of individual MPs and political organisations such as the Electoral Commission which has a database of political donations. It is not uncommon for potential political stories to be 'buried' amid the data on a departmental website. When the information comes direct from a reputable source such as a Government department, departmental website or a Government press statement, I would make the reasonable assumption the information is correct.
26. Where possible, I always seek to double-check information provided by sources, who include Prime Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, Cabinet Ministers, MPs, peers in the House of Lords, diplomats, special advisers, journalists, public relations people, financiers and the wider business community. My most common method involves contacting the MP or Minister involved for comment, or contacting their special adviser or Press spokesperson to run the information past them. I will ask a source where and how they obtained their information if I have any doubts about its accuracy. If I remain unsatisfied, I will not pursue the story.
27. Checks on my stories may also be made in a number of ways by other members of the Sunday Mirror. The Head of News or his deputies might ask for certain facts to be

checked if they have concerns. These checks could range from something as minor as questioning the spelling of a name or place, to a more substantial check on a story such as a full search of our cuttings database to see if the political story is entirely new, or if it has been published in another newspaper previously. The Editor may also ask questions on a particular story in order to be satisfied about it.

28. To give a representative example, when a confidential political source told me the coalition Government planned to cut Cold Weather Payments for some of the country's most vulnerable people, I made several checks to establish the accuracy of 'the tip': i.e. the information supplied to me. I searched newspaper cuttings to see what had been written on the subject previously; I also searched the department's public database for policy details about the payments and the websites of charities and special interest groups for any information that might corroborate the original tip.
29. I spoke to MPs with knowledge of the issue, and officials within the Department for Work and Pensions (which is responsible for the policy area) and the departmental Press Office. My conversations were both 'on the record' – meaning the individuals concerned consented to being named and quoted in the Sunday Mirror if required – and 'off the record' – where sources were happy to provide background information, but did not wish to be identified as sources of that information.
30. As a result of my conversations and my research, I was confident the story was correct and it was published in the Sunday Mirror on October 10, 2010 (see pages 5-6 of Exhibit VPM-1). The issue was subsequently raised with the Prime Minister David Cameron three days later at Prime Minister's Question Time on October 13, 2010. The planned cuts to Cold Weather Payments were shelved after protests following publication of the story.

Matter 7: Awareness of sources of information

31. Matter 7 asks me to cover the extent to which a political editor is aware, and should be aware, of the sources of the information which make up the central stories featured in the Sunday Mirror each day (including the method by which the information was obtained).
32. Firstly to clarify – the Sunday Mirror is published weekly, on Sundays. I have explained my responsibilities in Matter 6 above in relation to my role as Political Editor and the political stories that I provide. On the stories in the Sunday Mirror for which I am not responsible, I do not feel I need or should be required to know the source of the information on which the story is based (particularly given the importance of protecting the

confidentiality of informants), or the method by which it was obtained. Sometimes I do happen to be aware of the sources and methods by which stories published in the Sunday Mirror, other than my own, are obtained, for example where this is apparent on the face of the story.

Matter 8: Ethics

33. Matter 8 asks me to cover the extent to which I consider that ethics can and should play a role in the print media, and what I consider 'ethics' to mean in this context.

34. I think it is vital that there should be an ethical code of conduct for journalists. I believe that the Code is a good template to remind journalists of their responsibilities. I also believe it is important that the industry continues to regulate itself if we are to have a press free from state control.

35. In addition to the Code, I have always had a strong ethical sense of what is the right thing to do. What I mean by the 'right thing to do' is that I would consider each situation or potential story on a case-by-case basis. I would make a judgment call based on my experience, training (as set out in Matter 1 above) and my own sense of ethics about the correct course of action.

Matter 9: Financial and / or commercial pressure

36. Matter 9 asks me to cover the extent to which I, as a political editor, felt any financial and / or commercial pressure from Trinity Mirror, the Editor or anyone else, and whether any such pressure affected any of the decisions I made as political editor (such evidence to be limited to matters covered by the Terms of Reference).

37. I have not felt any financial or commercial pressure from the management or Editor of the Sunday Mirror, which has affected any of the decisions I have made as Political Editor.

Matter 10: Financial incentive to print exclusive stories

38. Matter 10 asks me the extent to which I, as a political editor, had a financial incentive to print exclusive stories.

39. It is a matter for the Editor which stories are published in the newspaper. There is no financial incentive for me in relation to exclusive stories. I am paid a fixed salary. There is a company-wide bonus scheme under which I am eligible to receive a small annual

bonus to the extent that the scheme is triggered, but this is not linked to my sourcing and provision of exclusive stories.

Matter 11: Private investigators and other external sources of information

40. Matter 11 asks me to cover whether, to the best of my knowledge, the Sunday Mirror used, paid or had any connection with private investigators in order to source stories or information and / or paid or received payments in kind for such information from the police, public officials, mobile phone companies or others with access to the same; if so, I am asked to provide details of the numbers of occasions on which such investigators or other external providers of information were used and of the amounts paid to them, but I am not required to identify individuals, either within the Sunday Mirror or otherwise.
41. I have not paid or used private investigators in order to source stories or information, or had any connection with them. I have not paid or received payments in kind for such information from the police or mobile phone companies. I cannot answer Matter 11 more widely than setting out my own position during my time at the Sunday Mirror.
42. The public officials I come into contact with during the course of my work are Ministers, Members of Parliament, peers in the House of Lords, Whitehall civil servants, and Government special advisers. I do not pay them for information. To the best of my knowledge, the Sunday Mirror has not paid public officials to obtain information or stories.
43. I am aware that in common with other national newspapers, the Sunday Mirror does pay MPs and others on occasion, if requested, when they write an article or comment piece for the newspaper. Sometimes I am involved in commissioning them for this purpose. I understand that MPs are required to declare such payments above certain financial thresholds in the Register of Members' Interests.
44. In addition, I meet sources for lunch, dinner, a drink or coffee in connection with my work. I generally reclaim this as an expense from Trinity Mirror and do not see this as a 'payment in kind'. I find lunches and similar one-to-one meetings with politicians provide a convenient way of discussing a range of issues with politicians away from the restraining influences of their entourages of civil servants and advisers.

Matter 12: Role in instructing private investigators and other external sources of information

45. Matter 12 asks me to cover what my role was in instructing, paying or having any other contact with such private investigators and / or other external providers of information.
46. Following on from my response to Matter 11, I have had no personal role in relation to private investigators.
47. In relation to other external providers of information, I investigate hundreds of potential stories every year for the Sunday Mirror, not all of which are published. I have sometimes arranged and requested payments for freelance journalists to cover events that I was unable to attend in person, such as press conferences, political rallies and political speeches. In addition, freelance journalists have sometimes provided me with political stories or information that has led to political stories.
48. If I have overall responsibility for the story and the source requests a payment, I will submit a request to the Sunday Mirror's Newsdesk that such a payment is made. If the payment is approved, my understanding is that the payment will be processed through our centralised accounts department. I am not authorised to approve payments for contributions of stories.
49. I cannot myself recall a specific instance where a source other than a freelance journalist has been paid by the Sunday Mirror for information that has led to a political story, although I am generally aware that the Sunday Mirror does pay external providers of information.

Matter 13: Policy / protocol and external providers

50. Matter 13 asks me: *"if such investigators or other external providers of information were used, what policy / protocol, if any, was used to facilitate the use of such investigators or other external providers of information (for example, in relation to how they were identified, how they were chosen, how they were paid, their remit, how they were told to check sources, what methods they were told to or permitted to employ in order to obtain the information and so on)"*.
51. As explained in Matters 11 and 12, I have not used private investigators. I cannot comment more widely than setting out my own position during my time at the Sunday Mirror.

52. Further to my response to Matter 12, I do use freelance journalists as external providers of information. They are usually fellow political journalists who I believe are aware of the Code and the law and the requirement that they abide by both in gathering stories or information for the Sunday Mirror, from their own previous experience working for titles other than the Sunday Mirror. As explained in Matter 12, I am not authorised to approve payments for contributions of stories.

53. So far as a policy/protocol is concerned, I do not believe there was any specific policy/protocol, simply the obligation to abide by the Code and the law.

Matter 14: Following of policy / protocol

54. Matter 14 asks me, in relation to Matter 13, if there was such a policy / protocol, whether it was followed, and if not, what practice was followed in respect of all these matters.

55. I refer to my answer in respect of Matter 13 above. I do not believe there was any specific policy/protocol - simply the obligation to abide by the Code and the law. To my knowledge, from my experience at the Sunday Mirror, they have been followed.

Matter 15: Situations where policy not followed

56. Matter 15 asks me, in relation to Matter 13, whether there are any situations in which neither the existing protocol / policy nor the practice were followed and what precisely happened / failed to happen in those situations. I am also asked what factors were in play in deciding to depart from the protocol or practice.

57. I refer to my answers in respect of Matters 13 and 14 above.

Matter 16: Expenses or remuneration paid to other external sources of information

58. Matter 16 asks me to cover the extent to which I am aware of protocols or policies operating at the Sunday Mirror in relation to expenses or remuneration paid to other external sources of information (whether actually commissioned by the Sunday Mirror or not). I am asked not to cover 'official' sources, such as the Press Association.

59. My experience is that the Sunday Mirror has a centralised and tightly controlled system in place for the approval of expenses or remuneration paid to external providers of information.

60. My awareness of this system as it relates to me is that if I wish to organise payment to an external source of information, I must submit a prior request to the Newsdesk for approval.

I understand that the Newsdesk has authority to approve payments up to a certain amount and that if that amount is exceeded, there is a more senior chain that follows, with authority increasing alongside the level of seniority.

Matter 17: Sunday Mirror practice in relation to payments to external sources

61. Matter 17 asks me to cover the practice of the Sunday Mirror in relation to payment of expenses and / or remuneration paid to other external sources of information (whether actually commissioned by the Sunday Mirror or not). I am asked not to cover 'official' sources, such as the Press Association.
62. I refer to my responses to Matters 11 to 16 above. With freelance journalists, my understanding of the Sunday Mirror's practice is that where appropriate, travel, accommodation and subsistence expenses are reimbursed to the freelance journalist on the production of receipts by him or her to the Newsdesk for the Newsdesk to process. If approved, the payment would be processed through our accounts department and a payment made to the contributor – usually via BACS into their bank account. In rare cases, cash is paid, at the request of the contributor.

Matter 18

63. Matter 18 asks me: "*[i]n respect of editorial decisions [I] have made to publish stories, the factors [I] have taken into account in balancing the private interests of individuals (including the fact that information may have been obtained from paid sources in the circumstances outlined under [Matter] 11 above) against the public interest in a free Press.*" I have been asked to provide a number of examples and to explain how I have interpreted and applied the foregoing public interest.
64. Decisions on whether or not to publish stories rest with the Editor of the Sunday Mirror. But, in order to assist the Inquiry, I have identified three examples which are illustrative of the factors that I take into account in pursuing a story and in presenting it to the Editor. The sources for these three examples are confidential. I did not request any payments for them. For each, the initial information which sparked my inquiries was already in the public domain in some form.

Example 1: Politicians' holidays

65. Politicians might believe they have reasonable expectation of privacy when taking a holiday. But there are occasions when I have pursued stories about their trips, believing

that the public interest in exposing Government hypocrisy outweighs the privacy of politicians on certain occasions.

66. For example, I wrote a story about the Chancellor, George Osborne, who was on a family skiing trip to the exclusive ski resort of Klosters (see page 7 of Exhibit VPM-1). The trip flew in the face of the Government's 'austerity' message in the wake of the economic crisis – a message that he and other senior ministers had been hammering home to the public for months.

Example 2: MPs' expenses

67. As the Inquiry will know, MPs' expenses are funded by the taxpayer. Politicians might expect details of their housing arrangements to remain private. But where there are suggestions of impropriety regarding their claims for taxpayers' money to cover their accommodation costs, in my view the public interest overrides an MP's concern over his or her privacy.
68. For example, I wrote several stories highlighting potential abuses of the system by Conservative MP Jeremy Hunt, now the Culture Secretary (see pages 8-11 of Exhibit VPM-1). My stories exposed his conduct when he was a Shadow Minister, explaining that his agent had been living in his taxpayer-funded constituency home while Mr Hunt was living in London. Eventually, Mr Hunt was ordered to repay taxpayers following my inquiries – marking the culmination of a legitimate enquiry. Other MPs later faced much tougher sanctions including jail for inappropriate claims in connection with their housing costs.
69. Another example of when I considered that public interest concerns overrode those of an MP's right to privacy in respect of his housing arrangements is the story that I wrote in response to what I felt was a misleading interview given by the Conservative MP Chris Grayling, now a senior Government Minister, in *The Times* (see pages 12-14 of Exhibit VPM-1). He had suggested that his taxpayer-funded London base was a leaky ex-council flat with faulty wiring and gave an impression of less than salubrious living circumstances. In fact, Mr Grayling, then the Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, was a wealthy landlord with four homes worth a total of at least £2 million. In balancing private and public interests, we were careful not to give exact addresses of the properties.

Example 3: Decision not to pursue a story

70. The Sunday Mirror was contacted this year regarding a politician's son adopting a gangster-style pose in a prominent picture on his Facebook page, and holding what appeared to be a gun. The politician concerned had previously spoken out strongly against street violence and crime. However, in light of the boy's young age, we decided not to publish the story.

Matter 19

71. Matter 19 asks me whether I or the Sunday Mirror ever engaged in or procured others to engage in 'computer hacking' in order to source stories, or for any reason.

72. I have never engaged in or procured others to engage in computer hacking in order to source stories or for any reason. To my knowledge, no one at the newspaper has hacked into a computer.

Documents

73. The Notice includes a request to me to provide any policies or protocols to which I have referred and any details or documents relating to 'expenses' paid to private investigators and / or other external sources of information. I have interpreted 'expenses' as referring to 'payments' for information or stories and external sources of information as being those named in the Notice, namely the police, public officials, mobile phone companies or others with access to the same. The policy to which I have referred above is the Code, the current version of which is, I understand, being produced by Trinity Mirror to the Inquiry (see Category B, Tab 1). In relation to payments, as explained above, I am not authorised to approve payments. I have my emails requesting payments to the Newsdesk, however further to my response to Matter 11 above, none of these request payments to the external sources of information identified by the Inquiry.

Signed.....



Vincent Peter Moss

Dated: 13 October 2011