

# **Avusa Media Editorial Policies**

## **Contents**

- a) The Avusa Media pledge
- b) Policies
- c) Code of Conduct for reporting on issues of race, religion and cultural difference
- d) SA press code
- e) Avusa blogging policy
- f) Undertaking to be signed by all staff

## **a) The Avusa Media pledge**

Avusa Media titles recognise that the right to media freedom flows from the right to freedom of expression guaranteed in Section 16 of the Constitution of South Africa.

Freedom of expression entails the right of the public to be informed, and to receive and impart information, ideas and opinions freely.

These rights make it possible for citizens to make decisions and judgments about the society they live in; to exercise their rights and duties as citizens; and to facilitate greater understanding among the people of South Africa and the world.

Freedom of expression, by its nature, protects and defends other rights necessary to the functioning of a democracy where every citizen enjoys equality, human dignity and freedom.

Our newspapers play a vital and indispensable role in facilitating the dissemination of information in South Africa. This role places on us a duty to act as a trustee for the public interest. In performing this duty, we uphold the values of the Constitution.

We pledge to perform our duties to the highest standards of excellence and integrity.

We pledge true, accurate, fair and balanced reporting.

We pledge to investigate and expose abuses of power – whether political, economic, commercial or social – with courage and with commitment to the truth. We will do so without being beholden to any interest group other than our readers and the citizens of South Africa.

We pledge to take seriously our role as a watchdog over the people, institutions and forces that shape our society. We do so on behalf of our readers and of the citizens of South Africa, especially those who otherwise would not have a voice.

We pledge to seek diversity in the views and opinions we publish.

We pledge to uphold the South African Press Code.

## **b) Policies**

These policies are binding on all staff members of Avusa Media Limited. Freelancers and contract staff are expected to adhere to the same policies.

The policies are intended to establish clear, ethical principles to ensure that our actions are always above reproach. If you have any doubt, ask your head of department or the editor. Any contravention of these policies could result in disciplinary action.

### **SOURCES**

On-the-record sources are always preferable.

All stories require at least two independent on-the-record sources with personal knowledge of the facts, or three off-the-record sources with personal knowledge of the facts.

Wherever possible, we try to persuade anonymous sources to go on the record. We use anonymous sources only when there is no other way to publish the story. Where it is unavoidable to use anonymous sources, we adhere to the following:

Anonymous sources must have direct knowledge of the facts. Wherever possible they should provide evidence.

We try to confirm the information using other sources.

We should describe, in as much detail as possible without revealing his/her identity, who the source is. For example, “an official in the Treasury/a Swedish diplomat/a guest at the party” rather than “source” or “reliable source”. We need to explain to our readers how close to the information the source is, and why we consider him/her to be reliable.

We should always interrogate a source’s motive in supplying us with information. If there is any hint of malice or vindictiveness, we should pass this information on to the editor/the deputy editor or our lawyers prior to publication.

We should indicate why the source wishes to remain anonymous.

The editor should know the identity, when required, of any anonymous source and must expressly approve the use of the source for the story. If the editor is not available, the deputy editor must approve the use of the source.

Stories using single anonymous sources without supporting evidence are not acceptable under any circumstances.

We should not as a matter of course say that we are in possession of documents as this could open us to legal action demanding access to the documents.

Where we do say we are in possession of documents, we should, wherever possible, say how we came into possession of documents.

We are ethically bound to protect the identity of our sources and to honour undertakings we make to our sources. Agreements reached by a journalist are binding on the newspaper as a whole. When making undertakings, it should be made clear that we regard dishonest or malicious information as a breach of the agreement and will not be bound by it. Only the editor may decide that an agreement is in breach.

We do not offer sources anonymity when they offer only gratuitous opinion, trivial comment or speculation, or when they make personal or partisan attacks on others.

We do not accept anonymity for a source unless we are convinced of their reason for wanting it, or when it is the only way to get the information.

Under no circumstances do we mislead our readers by disguising the number of sources we have, or referring to “other officials/sources” when we have already quoted their on-the-record comments.

We will be circumspect in saying someone was not available for comment if we have used an anonymous quote from that person or if they provided the information.

Editors/subs/news editors should not change the description of the source without consulting the reporter.

Wikipedia, other newspapers, Legal City, Facebook, Twitter, etc are research tools and should not be regarded as authoritative sources without verification.

Our public editor will, from time to time, conduct spot checks on the use of anonymous sources and whether their use was justified.

## **CHILDREN**

The South African Constitution states that the “child’s best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child”.

In our reporting on the lives and welfare of children, we undertake to act in accordance with the Constitution and in appreciation of the vulnerable situation of children.

We recognise that children’s rights to privacy and dignity deserve the highest degree of protection, and we undertake to respect these rights in every

situation. We will maintain the highest possible ethical standards in reporting on children.

We undertake to consider the consequences of our reporting to children, and to take steps, where appropriate, to minimise the harm. We undertake not to stigmatise children, to stereotype them, or to sensationalise stories about them. We undertake not to expose children to abuse, discrimination, retribution, rejection or harm by their communities or by society at large.

We will always protect the identities of children who have been victims or perpetrators of sexual abuse or exploitation; and those who have been charged or convicted of a crime or been a witness to a crime.

We will not disclose a child's HIV status unless it is in the interests of the child, and the child wants it known, gives informed consent and is aware of the consequences. Where appropriate, the guardian can make these decisions. In the absence of such consent, we will not identify HIV-positive children directly or indirectly.

We will not identify child soldiers, asylum seekers, refugees or displaced people if this will expose them to a risk or harm or retribution.

We undertake to avoid using sexualised images of children.

When we take photographs of children in situations where they may be embarrassed or vulnerable, we will, in all possible situations, do so with the knowledge and consent of the children and/or their guardians. We undertake to consult the child's guardian about the impact our stories may have on the child's life.

We recognise that children have the right to have their voices heard and to participate in decisions affecting them.

Where appropriate, we undertake to give children access to the media to express their views. When verifying information provided by children, we will take care not to place the children at risk.

We will not ask children to comment on anything that is outside their own experience.

We will also avoid questions or comments that could expose children to humiliation, embarrassment, grief or danger, or cause them to relive any trauma they may have experienced.

We will take care to use appropriate photographs of children already existing in our archive.

Children are all human beings under the age of 18.

## **PLAGIARISM**

We give credit whenever we use another person or entity's words, ideas, opinions or theories.

We give credit whenever we use information from another source.

We place quotations in quotation marks, and properly attribute reported speech.

We do not borrow excessive amounts of copy, even when properly attributed. When in doubt, check with an editorial manager.

We do not change a few words in a sentence or paragraph and pass these off as our own.

We do not fabricate comments and situations.

Where reporters pull together international stories from other sources, all sources must be acknowledged. No bylines will appear unless the reporter has done substantial original work on the story.

Plagiarism is a breach of the trust our readers have in us and reflects badly on the entire newspaper. Reporters caught plagiarising will face disciplinary action and, possibly, dismissal. Columnists and occasional contributors will not be used by the newspaper if they are caught plagiarising. A first offence will result in disciplinary action.

Stories will be randomly checked for plagiarism.

## **PRIVACY**

Section 14 of the Constitution provides that

“Everyone has the right to privacy, which includes the right not to have:

Their personal homes searched;

Their properties searched;

Their possessions seized; or

The privacy of their communications infringed.”

“Privacy is acknowledged in the truly personal realm, but when a person moves into communal relations and activities such as business and social interaction, the scope of personal space shrinks accordingly.” (Bernstein v Bester Constitutional Court 1996).

The right to privacy must be balanced against the right to freedom of expression as enshrined in Section 16 of the Constitution. Neither right trumps the other and a balancing and reconciling exercise must be undertaken where these rights compete.

In balancing these competing rights we will generally not publish:  
Details of home circumstances and what takes place in people's homes;  
Intimate or humiliating details about people's private lives;  
Details of medical conditions;  
Personal financial information;  
Private communications between people;  
Addresses or telephone numbers of the subjects of our stories;  
Identity numbers, bank account numbers, PINs, codes or passwords.  
We will not gain access to a person's home without their permission.

We will not initiate any unlawful conduct which gives rise to the invasion of a person's privacy. We acknowledge that sources may have breached another's privacy and that all such information is treated circumspectly.

We will, as far as is possible, obtain consent where privacy issues arise for the publication of those facts germane to our story.

While the law does not recognise a distinction between public and private individuals, we recognise that people occupy positions of importance and/or seek public attention. We will take this distinction into account in publishing our reports.

## **ACCURACY**

All reporters are to conduct an accuracy check on their stories ahead of publication. Accuracy checks should be conducted with a colleague. News editors/managers are required to keep a record of reporters' accuracy checks and to produce them when asked to do so, particularly in the event of a complaint about the accuracy of a story. News editors/manager are required to ensure that accuracy checks are done on stories.

Copies of the accuracy check are available from the office manager. The accuracy check follows:

REPORTER:

NEWS EDITOR:

CHECKER:

SLUG:

SYNOPSIS OF STORY:

BACKGROUND

How did the report originate?

Prime source and telephone number/address.

Other people contacted and telephone numbers/address.

CHECKLIST

Are all names correct and spelt correctly?

Are all figures and percentages correct?

Are all dates and ages correct?

Are all facts correct? (Are there two on-the-record sources?)

Are quotations correct (check against notebook/tape)?

## CONTENT

Are you satisfied that the story is accurate?

Are you satisfied that it is angled correctly?

Are you satisfied that it is fair to all parties?

Did you contact all parties involved?

If not, what steps did you take to contact them?

## LEGALS

What legal problems do you foresee?

Were you threatened with legal action?

Does this report need to be checked by lawyers?

## ADDITIONAL CHECKING

Do you object to us contacting your source for checking?

Do you object to them receiving a questionnaire?

Was the story changed to make it inaccurate? Did you raise this with your manager ahead of publication?

SIGNED  
REPORTER  
CHECKER  
DATE

## **CORRECTIONS**

Corrections and apologies for page 1 stories must always be published on page 1.

Minor corrections and apologies – eg, misspellings and miscalculations - should be published on page 2.

For more serious errors, all corrections are to be published on the same page number as that on which the original report appeared. If that page is not available (due to a full-page ad or a smaller paper), the closest earlier page should be used.

The apology should, where warranted and as far as practical, carry the same weight and prominence as the offending report. In the case of page 1, the apology need not lead the page but should be as prominent as possible.

The headline on apologies should not be deliberately obscure and should reflect, as accurately as possible, the gist of the apology.

Corrections will be corrected promptly.

Corrections regarding photographs, captions and graphics should include the republication of the picture, or publication of the correct picture, whichever is appropriate.

Corrections should be clear about what the error is, and what the correct position is. They can correct, clarify and add new information that has come to light.

If the errors are the result of incorrect information from attributable sources, we can explain this in the correction.

Letters to the editor are not substitutes for corrections.

Errors of omission should be corrected.

If the error was not introduced by the writer, we will attribute it to an editing error in the correction. Beyond this, the corrections will not seek to apportion internal blame.

Apologies should be issued where appropriate.

We will regularly publish contact details so that our readers can bring errors to our attention. Our corrections policy is to be published on our website.

A database of errors will be maintained. Managers are to include corrections in the performance assessments of staff.

Serious breaches in accuracy, or frequent corrections, will result in disciplinary action.

## **HOW COMPLAINTS ARE TO BE HANDLED**

Anyone who brings errors to our attention should be treated courteously. It will be considered a breach of duty if employees fail to respond when alerted to errors. People who complain of errors should be told that we will look into the complaint and get back to them. We should not assume we are wrong.

All complaints of errors should be referred to the editor, or the designated person to deal with complaints, even if you do not think the complaint has merit.

If a complaint is not in writing, either the designated person or the person who first receives the complaint, should ask for it to be put into writing.

If there is no resolution of the complaint, the complainant should be referred to the relevant external body, eg the Press Ombudsman.

## **GIFTS AND FREEBIES**

The basic policy of Avusa Media Limited newspapers is that we do not accept anything for free. We pay our own way, and we do not accept gifts, freebies, inducements, special offers, tickets, free trips, and so on that are not available to us as ordinary citizens.

### **Small gifts**

The best option is to decline a gift by courteously explaining our policy. However, where a small gift is given and the recipient feels it would be churlish to turn it down, it can be accepted, but it should be handed in at the deputy editor's office.

No gifts should be kept by staff members – all gifts are to be handed in. They will be auctioned and the money donated to charity.

Staff members in bureaus should submit gifts to their bureau chiefs. These gifts will be auctioned and the money donated to charity.

In certain cases, perishable goods will be distributed to staff, but this can be done only by the editor, the deputy editor or the managing editor.

A gift must be seen to be appropriate to the relationship.

A gift should be an acknowledgement of good business relations and, by its nature, it should not be perceived as a bribe.

If you are offered a gift and feel embarrassed to return it, please advise whoever sent it to you that it is in no way an exchange for something favourable from the company, for example, placing an advertisement at no charge, an assurance that a story will be published or the unauthorised use of a company vehicle.

Cash gifts are never acceptable.

## **Tickets**

Where season tickets are given to sports reporters for coverage purposes only, the sports editor and pictures editor should be notified. All individual tickets to sports matches are to be paid for.

Movie reviewers can attend special press previews of movies, but all other tickets to cinemas will be paid for. Reviewers who have gold access cards issued by the cinemas should be noted. No full-time staff member is entitled to hold or use a cinema gold card or accept free tickets.

Media invitations to music concerts, shows, theatre performances, and so on must be declared to the staff member's manager. They may be accepted with the approval of the manager. We may also accept invitations to media previews with the approval of our manager. In all other cases we pay for ourselves. Under no circumstances are staff members permitted to solicit invitations to events.

Repeat invitations should be treated cautiously.

Staff members may accept invitations to sporting events and concerts from third parties who have bought tickets to the events. For example, Standard Bank can invite a financial journalist to the bank's private box at a cricket match, or MTN can invite a journalist to attend a symphony concert. The journalist concerned must ensure that he/she is attending the event with his/her contact from the organisation to maintain these contacts. It is acceptable to take a partner along.

Drinks and lunches with contacts are accepted as part of daily news-gathering and need not to be declared. However, staff members should not continually accept free meals and drinks from one contact.

Expenses for meals and drinks with contacts should be discussed with the reporter's manager ahead of the invitation. The purpose of the invitation should also be discussed.

In the case of motoring journalists, it is acceptable for a staff member to accept a car for test-drive purposes. These cars should not be kept for longer than three days. They must be returned with a full tank of petrol, for which the publication will pay.

It is unacceptable for a staff member to take a personal loan from an individual on whom staff members may have to report or with whom a staff member is involved in a professional capacity.

### **CDs, DVDs and books**

CDs, music, computer games, DVDs, computer programs or books intended as promotions or for review purposes may be retained by the journalist only if a review is submitted. Those that are not reviewed must be handed back to the editor's PA and auctioned for charity.

Restaurant reviews

We pay for meals at restaurants and do not accept free meals for review.

### **FREELANCE WORK BY STAFF**

All freelance work has to be cleared by the editor in writing. No staff member is permitted to work for a rival publication, radio or TV station, website or blog. Requests should be directed to the editor.

Journalists may accept invitations for conferences, seminars, annual general meetings and exhibitions where the aim is to report on proceedings at the event. In the case of a commercial conference where an entrance charge is waived for the journalist, this should be noted in the register (for example – April 27 2002: Adam Smith accepted free entrance to the Law and Human Rights Conference from Systems Organisers). This should always be cleared with the head of department first.

### **EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

Journalists may not serve as advisers to politicians, political parties, business executives, private companies, state enterprises or government agencies. However, journalists have the individual right to be members of any public service or civic action group or organisation and may report on their activities as long as the reports remain accurate, fair and balanced. Membership of these groups should be disclosed in reports about them.

Journalists may, but only with prior approval from their section editor and the editor, become members of committees or subcommittees determining national policies which serve the public interest. However, their participation must be temporary.

### **TRAVEL**

No staff member is permitted to accept a travel invitation for themselves. All such offers are to be made to the editor of Travel&Food, who will decide whether to accept the trip. He/she will assign the trip.

Editors should take care that trips are undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced journalists. Particular care should be taken in accepting copy from freelancers or people from other departments.

All trips are for a writer and a photographer. Even if partners offer to pay for themselves, they are not permitted to accompany staff members on work trips. Under no circumstances are partners permitted to represent themselves as part of an Avusa Media team.

A trip will be accepted on the clear understanding that there will be no exchange for something favourable for the company providing it. This must be made clear to the host upfront and in writing.

No staff member may consistently accept an invitation from the same sponsor, client, business associate, and so on.

No gift may take the form of a bribe. We do not accept “spending money” from our hosts and we pay our way at all times, including room service charges for “extras” like laundry or drinks or calls back home.

If a reporter is assigned a trip he/she may not solicit any discounts or special favours from the host.

The trip must be appropriate to the objectives.

No staff member can accept any travel offer – free or reduced flights, accommodation or tours – on behalf of their newspaper. Travel offers will be considered only by the editor or a section editor in consultation with the editor. All trips (even those that are “news” related, eg, a minister’s visit to Ghana) will be noted in a register.

Staff members on trips will be representing their newspaper and we expect that they will at all times conduct themselves in a manner that will not bring our publications into disrepute. If there are any incidents/disputes etc during a trip they should be brought to the attention of the editor as soon as possible.

## **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

All staff must inform the company secretary and the editor, using the prescribed form, of the names of any shares bought, investments made or any business or investment property in which they are involved.

Anyone trading in shares must declare the names of the shares in which they traded at the end of every month. The amount traded need not to be disclosed.

At the end of every year, all staff have to declare the names of the shares in which they have holdings. Staff members with interests in businesses or

whose spouses have interests in businesses must declare these to the company secretary.

Journalists may not accept offers of shares and stock options of any company prior to their listing on the stock exchange. They may not purchase any such shares below the market price prior to the listing.

Journalists may own stocks and shares of firms listed on the stock exchange and may report on their activities as long as the reports are accurate, fair and balanced.

Journalists should not report on businesses owned by household members or relatives, or write favourable reports on areas in which they have a vested interest, eg, writing about a remote town where the journalist may hold investments in property.

Journalists must declare any interests or ownership of shares they may have in companies or businesses affiliated with their news sources, which may result in conflict of interest. These disclosures are to be kept in a register administered by the company secretary.

The news editor/editor should be informed by the journalist of any conflict of interest by a note at the top of the story. Eg, "The writer holds shares in MTN".

### **LUCKY DRAWS, ETC**

Journalists may not accept cash, cheques, shares or any valuables from sources of information, either directly or indirectly.

Journalists may not participate in lucky draws or sweepstakes and receive prizes that are linked to entities with which they have a close working relationship.

Journalists shall not use their positions to demand special discounts for goods and services or personal favours from sources, or anyone else.

Invitations to meal or drinks or other kinds of entertainment with sources may be accepted with extreme caution and only if they are part of the legitimate news-gathering process.

Journalists may not invite themselves to free meals or drinks or any other forms of entertainment.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Journalists may not work for business concerns in direct competition with the company.

Journalists may not hold another full-time job.

Any outside, paying work must be approved in writing by the editor or, in his/her absence, the deputy editor.

Any approved part-time or temporary work must not infringe on the company's resources or be disruptive to the journalist's responsibility to the company.

Journalists will not promote the business, political or other interests of family members in their stories.

## **INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES**

Any approach to journalists by intelligence agencies, local or foreign, should be immediately reported to the editor.

Journalists are forbidden to disclose any information pertaining to their work, the work of their colleagues or the day-to-day operations of our newspapers to any intelligence agency, operative or intelligence source.

## **POLICE SERVICE**

No information, other than that published in the paper, will be disclosed to any police officer without the permission of the editor.

No journalists will testify, or disclose the name of a source, without the permission of the editor.

## **c) CODE OF CONDUCT FOR DEALING WITH ISSUES OF RACE, RELIGION AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCE**

### Introduction

The guidelines that follow address aspects of how we practice journalism – our treatment of the subjects of news stories and columns, our responsibilities to our society and our responsibility for the effect of what we publish. It is important that we acknowledge that, while South Africa enjoys a democratic government, its past still lives with us, especially as far as race and racism are concerned.

We have to acknowledge, too, that South Africa is a multiracial and multicultural society, and we have to portray different practices and beliefs in a fair and honest manner in our reporting, gathering, editing and presentation of information.

Staff will:

- Act independently when reporting issues of race but will take note of sensitivities regarding race, or other issues, in their work;
- Report on these issues where there is a demonstrable public interest and when race is the central issue of the story. Racial identifications should be used only when they are important to readers' understanding of what has happened and why it has happened;
- Not unjustifiably offend others in reporting or commenting on sensitive issues relating to race, religion or cultural differences;
- Not use language or pictures that are offensive, reinforce stereotypes or fuel prejudice or xenophobia;
- Actively seek diversity in sources, which should represent the entire community;
- Be sensitive to cultural differences and values and will actively seek to ensure that reporting takes these considerations into account
- Not, in crime reporting, make mention of the race or religion of the victim or the alleged perpetrator unless that information is meaningful and in the public interest;
- Uphold the newspaper's principles of fairness, especially when dealing with issues of race; and
- In dealing with the public, be sensitive to cultural differences and not conduct themselves in any way that may unnecessarily offend.

#### RACE CHECKLIST FOR REPORTERS AND EDITORS

- What is the public interest in this report?
- Has this report been treated differently because of race? If so, why? Is this justified?
- Is the report – even if factually correct – likely to fuel xenophobia or prejudice? If so, is this justified? Is there any way around this?
- Is the report likely to offend people? If so, why? Is this justified?
- What about the language used in the report? Does it unnecessarily reinforce stereotypes?
- What about the voices in the story? Have we actively sought out diverse opinion from ordinary people and the experts alike?

- Are there quotes in the story or column that are racist or possibly offensive? Are these comments balanced by others? Are we justified in using these comments?
- Is the report sensitive to possible cultural differences or values? How do we know? Should anything be changed to be sensitive to these differences?
- In crime reporting, have we mentioned the race of the perpetrators and victims? If so, is it information that is meaningful and in the public interest?
- Has any pressure been brought to bear in reporting this story? Has the issue of race been mentioned? If so, what and why? Do any of these arguments have any bearing on the reporting of the story?
- Have we been fair in the report to all parties?

## **d) THE SOUTH AFRICAN PRESS CODE**

Preamble

WHEREAS:

Section 16 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa enshrines the right to freedom of expression as follows:

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes:

- (a) Freedom of the press and other media;
- (b) Freedom to receive or impart information or ideas;
- (c) Freedom of artistic creativity; and
- (d) Academic freedom and freedom of scientific research.

(2) The right in subsection (1) does not extend to

- (a) Propaganda for war;
- (b) Incitement of imminent violence; or
- (c) Advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm.

The basic principle to be upheld is that the freedom of the press is indivisible from and subject to the same rights and duties as that of the individual and rests on the public's fundamental right to be informed and freely to receive and to disseminate opinions; and

The primary purpose of gathering and distributing news and opinion is to serve society by informing citizens and enabling them to make informed judgments on the issues of the time; and

The freedom of the press allows for an independent scrutiny to bear on the forces that shape society.

NOW THEREFORE:

The Press Council of South Africa accepts the following Code which will guide the South African Press Ombudsman and the South African Press Appeals Panel to reach decisions on complaints from the public after publication of the relevant material.

Furthermore, the Press Council of South Africa is hereby constituted as a self-regulatory mechanism to provide impartial, expeditious and cost-effective arbitration to settle complaints based on and arising from this Code.

Definition

For purposes of this Code, "child pornography" shall mean: "Any image or any description of a person, real or simulated, who is or who is depicted or described as being, under the age of 18 years, engaged in sexual conduct; participating in or assisting another person to participate in sexual conduct; or showing or describing the body or parts of the body of the person in a manner or circumstances which, in context, amounts to sexual exploitation, or in a manner capable of being used for purposes of sexual exploitation."

1. Reporting of News

1.1 The press shall be obliged to report news truthfully, accurately and fairly.

1.2 News shall be presented in context and in a balanced manner, without any intentional or negligent departure from the facts whether by:

1.2.1 Distortion, exaggeration or misrepresentation;

1.2.2 Material omissions; or

1.2.3 Summarisation.

1.3 Only what may reasonably be true, having regard to the sources of the news, may be presented as fact, and such facts shall be published fairly with due regard to context and importance. Where a report is not based on facts or is founded on opinions, allegation, rumour or supposition, it shall be presented in such manner as to indicate this clearly.

1.4 Where there is reason to doubt the accuracy of a report and it is practicable to verify the accuracy thereof, it shall be verified. Where it has not been practicable to verify the accuracy of a report, this shall be mentioned in such report.

1.5 A publication should usually seek the views of the subject of serious critical reportage in advance of publication; provided that this need not be done where the publication has reasonable grounds for believing that by doing so it would be prevented from publishing the report or where evidence might be destroyed or witnesses intimidated.

1.6 A publication should make amends for publishing information or comment that is found to be inaccurate by printing, promptly and with appropriate prominence, a retraction, correction or explanation.

1.7 Reports, photographs or sketches relative to matters involving indecency or obscenity shall be presented with due sensitivity towards the prevailing moral climate.

1.7.1 A visual presentation of sexual conduct may not be published, unless a legitimate public interest dictates otherwise.

1.7.2 Child pornography shall not be published.

1.8 The identity of rape victims and victims of sexual violence shall not be published without the consent of the victim.

1.9 News obtained by dishonest or unfair means, or the publication of which would involve a breach of confidence, should not be published unless a legitimate public interest dictates otherwise.

1.10 In both news and comment the press shall exercise exceptional care and consideration in matters involving the private lives and concerns of individuals, bearing in mind that any right to privacy may be overridden only by a legitimate public interest.

## 2. Discrimination and Hate Speech

2.1 The press should avoid discriminatory or denigratory references to people's race, colour, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or preference, physical or mental disability or illness, or age.

2.2 The press should not refer to a person's race, colour, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or preference, physical or mental illness in a prejudicial or pejorative context except where it is strictly relevant to the matter reported or adds significantly to readers' understanding of that matter.

2.3 The press has the right and indeed the duty to report and comment on all matters of legitimate public interest. This right and duty must, however, be balanced against the obligation not to publish material which amounts to hate speech.

### 3. Advocacy

A publication is justified in strongly advocating its own views on controversial topics provided that it treats its readers fairly by:

- 3.1 Making fact and opinion clearly distinguishable;
- 3.2 Not misrepresenting or suppressing relevant facts;
- 3.4 Not distorting the facts in text or headlines.

### 4. Comment

4.1 The press shall be entitled to comment upon or criticise any actions or events of public importance provided such comments or criticisms are fairly and honestly made.

4.2 Comment by the press shall be presented in such a manner that it appears clearly that it is comment, and shall be made on facts truly stated or fairly indicated and referred to.

4.3 Comment by the press shall be an honest expression of opinion, without malice or dishonest motives, and shall take fair account of all available facts which are material to the matter commented upon.

### 5. Headlines, Posters, Pictures and Captions

5.1 Headlines and captions to pictures shall give a reasonable reflection of the contents of the report or picture in question.

5.2 Posters shall not mislead the public and shall give a reasonable reflection of the contents of the reports in question.

5.3 Pictures shall not misrepresent or mislead nor be manipulated to do so.

### 6. Confidential Sources

The press has an obligation to protect confidential sources of information.

### 7. Payment for Articles

No payment shall be made for feature articles to persons engaged in crime or other notorious misbehaviour, or to convicted persons or their associates, including family, friends, neighbours and colleagues, except where the material concerned ought to be published in the public interest and the payment is necessary for this to be done.

### 8. Violence

Due care and responsibility shall be exercised by the press with regard to the presentation of brutality, violence and atrocities.

## **e) AVUSA POLICY ON BLOGGING AND OTHER FORMS OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION**

AVUSA exists in a competitive environment. As a result of this and also taking into account the fact that employees are privy to sensitive information, confidentiality must be protected.

There have been a number of incidents recently in which information about the company has been distributed unofficially through blogs, e-mail and published articles and these have been damaging to the company's reputation and to staff relations.

---

### DEFINITION OF A BLOG

A **blog** (an abridgment of the term **web log**) is a website, usually maintained by an individual, with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse chronological order. "Blog" can also be used as a verb, meaning *to maintain or add content to a blog* ---from Wikipedia

---

-----

It has therefore become necessary to draw your attention to the guidelines pertinent to electronic forms of communication. The intention is not to curb your right to freedom of expression but to ensure that the interests of you, your colleagues, and the company are protected.

With the rising popularity of blogs, new avenues have been created for personal expression. While this is an exciting development it has also created a need for caution, made greater by the web's unlimited reach and its sometimes negative impact on the rights to privacy.

So follow these guidelines if you intend communicating electronically about the company:

1. Know and follow the Company's code of conduct and ethics, especially with regard to the use of company equipment for private use (eg uploading contents to private blogs)
2. Do not bring the company's name into disrepute. If in doubt check with your manager.
3. Do not publish content in the name of the company unless the General Manager: Marketing (or someone in a similar position in your division) has approved it.
4. As a contracted employee or member of staff you may not make use of a competitor's publishing platform. We have our own.
5. Staff/contract worker-produced blogs that appear on AVUSA web sites are subject to the same standards of fairness, taste and legal propriety that apply to news reports in our publications and to the company code of conduct, the company's internet policy (it's on the Intranet) and to the terms of your employment contract.
6. If you elect to start your own blog, not on any AVUSA platforms, make it clear that it does not have the endorsement of AVUSA or any of its units or publications.
7. If you publish a personal web page, blog, or article on a site or in a publication outside of the company's control (and outside work hours), you have a duty to ensure that the content does not directly conflict with your

professional capacity at the company.

8. Given the ease of web searching, even a private journal is likely to become associated in the audience's mind with the company's reputation. Be mindful of this and of your own privacy.

9. Respect your audience. Do not defame or humiliate other people and do not use racial slurs or personal insults.

10. Respect the company's confidentiality and proprietary information. Blogs and Web pages may incorporate reflections on your field of expertise (ie journalism, music or book publishing etc), but they should not divulge private or confidential information obtained through inside access to our business units or our company.

11. Visitors or informants who visit our news or other departments (or our buildings) have a right to be protected. They should not be identified or mentioned in any way or on any forum (this includes instant messaging and Twitter -- a social networking and microblogging service). Even an innocent mention may harm our ability to gather news or conduct our business.

12. Ensure that your blogging activity does not interfere with your work commitments. Your private web page or blog should be free of advertising or sponsorship support from individuals or organizations whose coverage you are likely to provide, prepare or supervise during working hours.

#### **Implications of Policy Violation**

**Violation of any of the above provisions will leave the company with no option other than to institute disciplinary proceedings, which can result in disciplinary action being taken.**

(With acknowledgement to the New York Times policy on blogging and communication)

## **f) UNDERTAKING**

I have read and understood the attached policies and commit myself to abiding by them.

SIGNATURE:

NAME:

PLACE:

DATE:

Please hand a signed copy of this undertaking to the managing editor.