

Cutting the *Cape Times* sees Zille at odds on talk show

By Jan-Jan Joubert

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The decision not to renew Western Cape government subscriptions to the *Cape Times* saw Premier Helen Zille embroiled in a Twitter spat with radio show host Redi Tlhabi.



This week it emerged that Zille had written to all Western Cape departments stating that due to its declining quality, subscriptions to the *Cape Times* would not be renewed.

In her weekly newsletter, Zille questioned the newspaper's ethics, saying a story it had printed about foetal alcohol syndrome was largely plagiarised. When she approached the newspaper for details of a "baby Thomas" mentioned in the article, in a bid to help the child, the newspaper had declined, saying it was protecting its sources.

The decision by the DA- controlled province "which has been at loggerheads with *The Cape Times* for a long time," has been expected. It was rumoured to be imminent since the beginning of the year.

Tlhabi yesterday interviewed Zille on air about the decision.

Zille argued that the decision was based purely on the declining quality of the newspaper which, she claimed, made repeated errors of fact and was accused of plagiarism. Tlhabi argued that the decision was comparable to the ANC calling for a boycott of *City Press* after it published the controversial painting *The Spear*.

But with Zille having to cut the interview short, the debate resumed on the social network.

In a series of tweets, Tlhabi said it was "problematic for politicians to be arbiters of what is 'good or bad' journalism" and that cost-cutting should involve all subscriptions.

Zille, meanwhile, tweeted a picture of a Treasury circular which calls for subscriptions for newspapers for employees to be discontinued. She questioned why people were not up in arms about that.

"This has nothing to do with *Cape Times* 'views'. They have disagreed with us for years. It is about facts and ethics," Zille wrote.

Source: Herald via I-Net Bridge