

MPASA condemns Media24's magazine circulation irregularities

The Magazine Publishers Association of South Africa (MPASA) has strongly condemned the Media24 circulation irregularities uncovered last month and emphasised the need to be open, transparent, clear and truthful with regard to the reporting of circulation figures. In addition it expressed concern that Media24's internal audit processes were not enough to stop the fraud happening in the first place.

The MPASA said in a statement today, Thursday, 11 October 2007, that non-compliance by any member of the ABC's rules and regulations or of MPASA's code of conduct is strongly condemned.

The statement was issued following a board meeting of MPASA yesterday, Wednesday 10 October, during which the recent irregularities reported by the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) regarding some of Media24's magazine titles were discussed. Media24 Magazines CEO Patricia Scholtemeyer was reconfirmed as MPASA chairperson at this meeting.

Circulation irregularities

MPASA recognises that, following its circulation irregularities, Media24 initiated a full forensic audit and has taken significant internal action. The MPASA said in its statement that it was, however, extremely concerned that Media24 does not have better internal audit and control practices in place to ensure that these irregularities should not occur in the first instance, and hopes that these are now in place to ensure that this will not occur again.

In the strongest possible terms, MPASA will reiterate to Media24 the company's responsibilities both to MPASA and to the magazine industry. MPASA has also restated the conditions now imposed by the ABC on the suspended titles.

Having been suspended by the ABC, the following titles have also been deregistered from MPASA until further notice and have been withdrawn from the forthcoming PICA awards. The suspended titles are: *InStyle*, *True Love*, *True Love Babe*, *True Love Bride*, *FairLady*, *Lééf*, *Sarie*, *Men's Health*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Shape*, *KickOff*, and *The Wisden Cricketer*.

As the full audit into the irregularities is an ongoing matter, the MPASA board has expressed its total support for the ABC while it completes its full audit of all Media24 magazine titles and those of its associate magazine companies. The board recognises the important work that has been completed to date.

When the ABC has finalised its audit, the MPASA board will reconvene to discuss the results of the complete audit. It will address what further action regarding Media24 is appropriate.

Patricia Scholtemeyer

In the interim, MPASA has confirmed that Scholtemeyer remains the chairperson of MPASA. Owing to a conflict of interest in terms of Scholtemeyer's roles as the chairperson of MPASA and CEO of Media24 Magazine Division, in relation to these matters, the deputy chairperson of MPASA, Julia Raphaely, has been mandated by the board to chair matters relating to the ABC at any further board meetings regarding the irregularities, and to act as the board-appointed spokesperson for MPASA in issues relating to the ABC.

- MPASA represents the magazine industry as a fully representative body; among its objectives is the promotion of a code of conduct for the publishing of magazines in South Africa.

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