

Emergency injunction to stop the Queen...

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The press is not a big fan of injunctions. Except when it suits them that is. And today, it suits them. This morning, representatives of the press are off to the High Court to seek an injunction to stop the sealing of the cross party Royal Charter on press regulation, which was due to take place today. How the press is to be regulated has been a major matter of raging debate since Lord Justice Leveson laid down his recommendations following a lengthy enquiry into the standards and practices of the press after the phone hacking affair. The press has effectively regulated itself for years in the guise of the now discredited Press Complaints Commission – which means that the press has really been ineffectively regulated for years. As Lord Justice Leveson put it, it has been marking its own homework and what was needed was an independent regulator. But having been able to mark its own homework, the press is not keen on the possibility of having an independent marker looking over its work. So when the three major political parties proposed a Royal Charter to set the framework for future regulation, representatives of the media proposed their own counter Royal Charter. The greatest difference between the two charters appears to be the manner in which the rival regulatory bodies could be amended in due course, with the press arguing that the cross party version would allow for undue government interference. Perhaps not surprisingly, theirs was rejected by the Privy Council as insufficiently independent. The cross party charter was approved however, and is due to be sealed today. The press, is not impressed. In a last ditch attempt to prevent such regulation, a number of international press bodies have written to the Queen begging her not to seal the charter. Industry bodies representing the press have issued judicial review proceedings on the decision to throw out their charter. As part of those JR proceedings, they are seeking an emergency interim injunction to prevent the cross party agreed Royal Charter from going ahead. **Rupert Cowper-Coles** of the Media & Reputation Management team however, says that the press' expressed concern about the cross party Royal Charter is misleading, given its own proposed Charter was far more exposed to the whims of political interference. 'While the Cross-Party Royal Charter was protected from amendment without a two-thirds majority vote from Parliament, the Press Charter could be amended by a simple decision of the Privy Council, itself a highly political government body. The Press's complaint is more about excluding democratic interference, than government interference'. As always, your Media & Reputation Management team will continue to keep you updated with developments.

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