

Sanef's media credibility and ethics inquiry looks to review editorial systems, practices

Since its launch in June, the South African National Editors' Forum's (Sanef) Inquiry into Media Credibility and Ethics has received submissions from journalists and members of the public. The inquiry is led by a panel of commissioners headed by retired judge Kathleen Satchwell, including panellists Nikiwe Bikitsha and Rich Mkhondo.



Image credit: Elijah O'Donnell on Unsplash.

Sanef launched the inquiry after the *Sunday Times* made several apologies over mistakes involving stories such as the so-called rogue unit and the Cato Manor death squad stories. Additionally, security and prison services company Bosasa made allegations – at the Zondo Commission – that they had paid journalists to cover the company in a positive light.

While Sanef welcomed the apologies made by the *Sunday Times*, it felt that this was just the first step in rebuilding and regaining the public trust. It stated that it saw this as a moment for the newspaper – and all media houses – to seriously introspect and review editorial systems and practices to enhance media ethics and credibility.



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Danette Breitenbach 13 Aug 2019



Sanef believes the inquiry is taking place against a broader backdrop of state capture in South Africa, with the media industry not being immune from being drawn into manipulative practices and collusions.

“ STATEMENT OF THE THABO MBEKI FOUNDATION ON SANEF'S INQUIRY INTO MEDIA ETHICS.

pic.twitter.com/GN7UvoUAE5— Thabo Mbeki Foundation (@TMFoundation_) June 27, 2019 ”

The [terms of reference](#) for the inquiry were crafted to include:

- An investigation into ethical breaches on the part of the media industry in South Africa including obstacles to accountable and credible media practice in a democratic environment
- For the panel to consider the occasion, nature, identity, reasons and impetus of such breaches as well as solutions to the current problems confronting professional and ethical journalist practice

- For the panelists to investigate the content and implementation of various editorial codes in South Africa and internationally in contributing to professional and ethical journalistic practice
- For the panel to consult with media companies and owners, political parties, government (at all levels), civil society, editors and journalists and members of the public

Sanef is encouraging all interested organisations and individuals to express their views through written submissions to the panel at panel@mediainquiry.co.za. The panellists will analyse the submissions and, if they feel it is necessary, will call on members of the public and organisations to make further written and/or oral submissions.

The final deadline for written submissions is 30 November 2019.

The panel's recommendations will be presented to a media industry conference for discussion in June 2020 and an industry-wide action plan will be adopted.

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