

Mr Sbu Ndebele
Chair
Sanef

23 November 2023

Dear Mr Ndebele

RE: Request for inquiry into allegations against Sunday World

On 3 August 2023 GroundUp News published an article: *Exposed: The Sunday World's lucrative partnership with the Lottery*. It is available online at <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/exposed-the-sunday-worlds-lucrative-partnership-with-lottery/>

The article describes how Sunday World received disproportionately high advertising revenue in 2020/21 from the National Lotteries Commission (NLC). It also describes how coinciding with this Sunday World ran a series of articles giving the NLC and its cronies a platform to counter reports of corruption, including those by GroundUp.

The article contains details of the amounts received and links to the Sunday World articles in question. Three serious allegations of breach of media ethics arise from this:

- For no clear reason Sunday World received a massively disproportionate amount of advertising from a state institution, the NLC.
- Sunday World ran articles that were puff pieces for the NLC and defamed those exposing lottery corruption. That the NLC was extremely corrupt at the time is no longer in doubt; the new NLC board and management has admitted as much.
- That the timing of the advertising payments and the articles in questions suggests that there was at minimum an implied quid pro quo: advertising money to run a disinformation campaign.

The article uses publicly available sources and the facts appear robust. No material errors in the article have come to light to date. At minimum there is a prima facie case here that media ethics have been violated.

In light of the findings and recommendations of the SANEF inquiry into media ethics, it is imperative that SANEF hold an inquiry into these allegations. Do they have merit? If they do, then who are the individuals responsible? What remedial actions, if any, should be taken?

If SANEF turns a blind eye to these serious allegations, it will be accused of not taking seriously media ethics, ignoring the recommendations of its own inquiry and sheltering the corrupt.

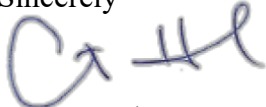
This inquiry needs to be chaired by people external to SANEF. The reason for this is that one of the people implicated in the article is a former editor of Sunday World and current MANCOM member of SANEF, Makhudu Sefara. It is unlikely that SANEF, with the close friendships inside the organisation, would be able to conduct an internal inquiry with sufficient credibility.

It would also be prudent for Mr Sefara to recuse himself from any discussion about this inquiry.

The inquiry should invite staff and board members of Sunday World who have knowledge of events relevant to this period to testify. It should also invite GroundUp's reporters and anyone else with knowledge of these events to testify or provide further evidence. (I have been alerted to the fact that GroundUp has since come across additional material.)

I have also been told that SANEF is considering putting this matter to arbitration. But arbitration suggests a dispute between two parties, which is not the case here. More appropriate would be an independent inquiry into the allegations.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Anton Harber', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Anton Harber