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COMMITTEE

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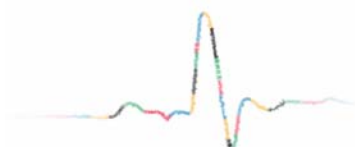
Lausanne, 6 April 2009

**International Olympic Committee Submission  
to the Australian Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and  
the Arts for its inquiry into the reporting of sports news and the  
emergence of digital media**

Chairman McEwen, Deputy Chairman Birmingham and members of the Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts.

The following submission is not presented as a directive to the Senate Standing Committee, nor is the submission meant as an exhaustive thesis on the Committee's Terms of Reference. It is supplied as a matter of information to assist the Senate Standing Committee to better understand the International Olympic Committee's position on a number of the points raised within the Committee's **inquiry into the reporting of sports news and the emergence of digital media**, a subject the International Olympic Committee believes is of great importance and has some deal of experience in.

**It should be noted that this submission is focused on the written and photographic press' reporting of the Olympic Games, as distinct from the television broadcasting of the Olympic Games.**



Taking the pulse: Virtual Olympic Congress [www.2009congress.olympic.org](http://www.2009congress.olympic.org)



## **1. Editorial Independence of the Press in Covering Sporting Events**

The free and independent coverage of the Olympic Games and related activities by the media is enshrined within numerous International Olympic Committee “IOC” documents and agreements. It is a fundamental principle of the Olympic Movement. It is the IOC position that the freedom of the press is not negotiable.

**“The IOC takes all necessary steps in order to ensure the fullest coverage by the different media and the widest possible audience in the world for the Olympic Games.”**

*Olympic Charter Rule 49*

**“Nothing contained within these guidelines is intended as limiting either the freedom of the media to provide an independent news and pictorial coverage of the Olympic Games and related events or the editorial independence of the material photographed and published by the media on their websites.”**

*IOC Internet Guidelines for the Written Press and other Non-Rights Holding Media, Beijing 2008 and Vancouver 2010*

**“The provision of press facilities and services is unconditional and the freedom of the accredited press is absolute, within the provisions of the Olympic Charter and the Host City Contract.”**

*IOC Technical Manual on Media*

**“Olympic News Service (ONS) news will be presented without bias or favour and will be independent of all external influence.”**

*IOC Technical Manual on Media*



## 2. Sports Events Are Matters of Public Interest

Tracking of one billion television news items broadcasted over 160 countries and five continents by Influence Communications for NewsXchange showed that the Beijing Olympic Games reached the number four spot in global news rating terms worldwide in 2008, with 28.3 millions of minutes of air time, or 53.8 years. **As a global news story, the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games followed only the American presidential election, the war in Iraq and the financial, mortgage and credit crisis.**

What this research also illustrated was that the **media attention was not just focused on the event itself** – in this case the Olympic Games. China's media prominence was up by 20 per cent in 2008 compared to 2007 and up 51 per cent compared to 2000. In August 2008, the month of the Olympic Games, the media coverage of China was two times higher than any previously recorded month, and dropped over 82 per cent when the Olympics was finished. Other significant China-related news stories received 8 to 15 times more media attention in March-April 2008 than in September-October 2008.

**It should be noted that the widespread and global news and sports reporting of the Olympic Games across multiple news platforms coexisted with rights holding broadcasters reporting record television and online viewership audiences<sup>1</sup>.**

These figures also illustrate that **the public's inherent interest in sporting events is considerably more far reaching than just that of the event itself. Major sporting events are news events of significant public interest and create a news story of domestic and global significance for the media.**

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<sup>1</sup> The broadcast of the Beijing 2008 Olympics Games draw the largest ever global TV audience. Host nation China led the viewing with 94% of Chinese viewers tuning in to the Olympics TV coverage, In the U.S., the Beijing Olympics ranked as the most-viewed TV event ever, with a total audience of 211 million and an average daily audience of 27 million people. More than two billion people — almost one-third of the world's population — watched the Opening Ceremony on Friday, August 8, Source: Nielson



### 3. New(s) Frontiers – Digital Media and the Internet

The Internet is an important medium for the communication and promotion of sport and the Olympic Movement. The IOC embraces this medium as a platform for disseminating coverage of the Olympic Games and understands that media organisations have integrated this medium in their business and publish Olympic-themed content on their websites to target the online audience and to better serve fans<sup>2</sup>.

The dissemination of moving images and play-by-play audio commentary over the Internet are covered by broadcast licences. Unless a media organisation has been granted the right by the IOC to broadcast such material over the Internet, no sound or moving images of any Olympic events may be disseminated over the Internet, whether on a live or delayed basis, regardless of source, unless authorised by the IOC. On the other hand, in cases where broadcast rights-holders have been granted the right by the IOC to broadcast moving images and play-by-play audio commentary over the Internet, the broadcast of such material on the Internet must not be accessible to persons outside the broadcast territory for which the respective broadcast rights-holders have been granted rights by the IOC - i.e. such broadcast must be geoblocked.

Media organisations that have not purchased broadcast rights from the IOC may not disseminate moving images or play-by-play audio coverage of the Olympic Games over the Internet, beyond that which is permitted under the IOC's News Access Rules<sup>3 4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Refer attached: Annex 1 (IOC Internet Guidelines for the Written Press and other Non-Rights Holding Media, Vancouver 2010)

<sup>3</sup> For each edition of the Olympic Games the IOC produces News Access Rules. These News Access Rules clearly outline the rules of the type and quantity of news coverage non-rights holding broadcast organisations can run for news purposes on terrestrial television and radio, as well as venue access rules and restrictions within the Host City. These rules are designed to protect the exclusivity of the broadcast right holding partners, while offering non-rights holding broadcasters fair news access to broadcast news highlights of the Olympic Games. Refer attached. Annex 2 (News Access Rules Applicable for the Australian Territory, Beijing 2008); Annex 3 (IOC Television News Access Rules, Beijing 2008); Annex 4 (IOC Radio News Access Rules, Beijing 2008)

<sup>4</sup> Piracy of video content on the Internet is possibly the biggest challenge currently being faced regarding Digital Media, an issue which can seriously harm the exclusive rights of broadcast partners, but this is a separate issue to that news access, fair dealings or written and photographic press coverage.



Notwithstanding the above, bona fide **news organisations may broadcast via the Internet all or portions of press conferences that take place in the Main Press Centre at the Olympic Games, without any territorial restrictions**, provided there is a delay of at least thirty (30) minutes from the conclusion of the press conference.

Exceptions to the IOC News Access Rules may be granted by the broadcast rights-holders in specific territories, subject to the prior written approval of the IOC.

One such exception was that of Australia for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, where the IOC and the Seven Network, the Rights Holding Broadcast Partner in Australia, in cooperation with Yahoo!7, SBS, Macquarie Radio and Telstra, introduced supplementary News Access Rules which **addressed the broadcast, communication or other like transmission of Olympic Material on the Internet, within the Australian Territory so as to permit limited broadcasts by bona fide news organisations** (which included newspaper's Internet sites) during the period of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. It was reported that these rules were the first online news access rules created for any sporting event in any territory. These rules were similar in principle to those for terrestrial television<sup>5</sup>.

To ensure that the implementation of this initiative within Australia did not breach the exclusivity of Rights Holding Broadcasters in other territories, broadcast news material could **only be accessible to viewers within the Australian Territory, and as such any broadcast of a news bulletin containing Olympic Material on the Internet had to have territorial integrity “geoblocked”** so that access was restricted to persons in that territory only.

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<sup>5</sup> Refer attached: Annex 5 (Supplementary News Access Rules for the broadcast of Olympic Material on the Internet within the Australian Territory applicable to the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games)



Similar online rules were also implemented in New Zealand for New Zealand media organisations.

**One of the most notable shifts in Olympic Games press coverage experienced from Beijing was that of the readership on the Internet.**

Established US sites like NBC Olympics, Yahoo! Sports, ESPN, SI.com, the New York Times, Fox Sports etc all enjoyed significant traffic increases in August 2008 over previous months – some up 30 per cent and more – attributed to their Olympic coverage.

According to Nielson, Sports Illustrated's (SI.com) August traffic for its Olympic sports coverage hit an all-time record month with 9.33 million unique visitors (UVs) and 118 million page views. SI.com started with a healthy 2 million page views for the Opening Ceremony picture gallery – but five days later they registered 9.359 million page views, just for the Phelps/Cavic touch sequence. The photo galleries alone from SI.com's Beijing 2008 Olympics section generated 56 million page views, almost half of SI.com's total Olympic pages views.

Additionally, the IOC makes available, working in close collaboration with the international news agencies, **Games time information which can be used for publication on the Internet for normal journalistic/editorial use only.** This data includes competitors (athletes, officials, teams), competition and events schedules, background information, facts and figures, results, start lists, team line ups, results, medals tallies etc

**There is clear evidence to suggest that this increased usage of the Internet as a platform by which the public read and view Olympic Games coverage may have had a detrimental effect on printed newspaper circulation, however as previously covered, for the Beijing Olympic Games, it coexisted with increased television viewership.**



#### **4. The IOC position on Photographers and Photography**

The IOC position on still photographers and photography is that: **"still photographers are news gatherers and their photographs are to be considered and treated as news"**.

The IOC places no restrictions on how and when the accredited photographers' images are used, released or published by the media, for editorial purposes.

Accredited photographers and news agencies retain copyright of the images they take at the Olympic Games, with the IOC having no usage or copyright claim to such images.

The IOC actively promotes the use of field of play and in-venue cabling to photo positions for the express purpose of assisting news agencies and accredited photographers in distributing the images they take of the Olympic Games to as wide an audience as possible as quickly as possible.

Accredited photographers are required to sign an undertaking which stipulates that the photographs are to be used in news services for still photographic editorial purposes only, and that advertising or commercial use is forbidden unless prior written IOC consent is acquired.

Still photographic pictures can be published for editorial purposes on the Internet, with no limit placed on the number or timeliness of images published, provided such pictures are not reproduced in a sequential manner, so as to simulate, in any way, moving images.

#### **5. Accreditation**

The accreditation necessary to cover the Olympic Games is granted free of charge by the IOC to media representatives. These include accreditation categories for the host broadcast operation, rights holding broadcasters, written and photographic press and non rights holding broadcast organisations.



The IOC does not require the media to sign accreditation contracts. National Olympic Committees within each territory are responsible for the allocation of press accreditations, based on a quota supplied by the IOC, to the domestic written and photographic press in their territory. The IOC deals directly with the allocation of press accreditations for the international news agencies as well as the allocation of ENR accreditations to non rights holding broadcast organisations. The IOC requires non rights holding broadcast organisations to sign an Undertaking that they will abide by and respect the IOC's News Access Rules, which is strongly enforced by the IOC.

The Beijing 2008 Olympic Games accredited 24,562 media representing 159 countries, plus an additional 3,654 media at the Beijing non accredited media centre, making it the largest gathering of media for any event in history.

### **Summation**

Had the IOC accepted anything less than the position of a free and independent reporting environment for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, it would have been considered unconscionable to the international media, sporting organisations and public at large. The move to greater openness in Beijing<sup>6</sup> led to much positive worldwide reaction, notably from Tom Curley, President and Chief Executive Officer, The Associated Press, who went as far as to say: "The Chinese movement on press freedom is a more significant event than the election of Obama. The long-lasting implications for a different world are extraordinary and may turn out to be the Olympic movement's greatest achievement."

The IOC fully endorses and encourages a free and independent reporting environment for the media at sports events.

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<sup>6</sup> Twelve months prior to the Olympic Games, China, at its own initiative, introduced less restrictive media rules, opening up news reporting activities in the country for the international media in an unprecedented way. These rules had a sunset clause whereby the rules would revert to the previous rules following the Olympic Games. In October 2008 China made an unexpected but welcome announcement they would continue with these more open 'Olympic' media rules.





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Both Mr. Gosper and Mr. Edgar would be available to attend the Committee's inquiry if requested, and would welcome the opportunity to participate.

Encl.

- Annex 1 (IOC Internet Guidelines for the Written Press and other Non-Rights Holding Media, Vancouver 2010)
- Annex 2 (News Access Rules Applicable for the Australian Territory, Beijing 2008)
- Annex 3 (IOC Television News Access Rules, Beijing 2008)
- Annex 4 (IOC Radio News Access Rules, Beijing 2008)
- Annex 5 (Supplementary News Access Rules for the broadcast of Olympic Material on the Internet within the Australian Territory applicable to the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games)