

Think points on the recent Loeries article: A message from The Loeries to the industry

Issued by [Sibusiso Sitole](#) on behalf of the Loeries board

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Recently there has been a lot of discussion about a certain article that criticised the 2022 Loerie Awards. This discussion has seen an escalation that has now resulted in a special meeting that will be held with the ACA and its members. The aim would be to discuss the implications of the article and its impact on The Loeries and the industry at large.



Sibusiso Sitole

As the Loeries, we champion the right to free speech and fair practices. It is also our aim to try to move our industry and society forward through the very work we reward. When embarking on the judging process, each Loeries juror is called on to advance work that breaks down barriers. We would like to invite the industry to join us in a short thought experiment that explores whether the article in question served to advance our industry and to break down barriers, or did it push a false narrative? Let's explore some think points so that we can allow the industry to have a discerning point of view regarding the contents of the article and its implications.

Think point 1: Should free speech not come with the responsibility to be truthful?

Free speech is an inalienable part of our society – something we all have a duty to support. Free speech, though, does not include defamation and should come with the responsibility to ensure that what is being communicated is truthful. Unfortunately, the article in question contained falsehoods.

The article falsely propagates the idea that the Loeries is a profit-seeking organisation (*“But when the Loeries becomes a money-making endeavour first, regardless of how noble the motivation for the money is, its relevance is diminished.”*). Readers of the article will see how this point is further emphasised at various points in the piece. The reality, though, is far removed from such statements.

The Loeries is made up of a board of volunteers from the industry. The industry members are not remunerated in any way for their service, and therefore have no financial benefit from their roles. This board's duty is to ensure that the Loeries remains a powerful tool to highlight great work in our industry and to move the industry-forward. The Loeries is a non-profit company that aims to ensure that, should a surplus exist, this then goes towards development initiatives such as the Loeries Creative Future Scholarship, The Loeries Youth Committee, The Loeries Student Portfolio Bootcamp and a myriad of other

initiatives designed to create active transformation.

In 2020, The Loeries invited all entries with zero charges. This was a decision undertaken by the board, despite awards shows around the world cancelling their events due to a lack of revenue. The Loeries absorbed these losses, with no hope of recovering them, because The Loeries exists to serve the industry and this is what the industry needed at the time.

When comments are made that do not align with reality, should this behaviour not be questioned as, ultimately, it disrespects the structures and reputation of the industry at large?

Think point 2: Should board members of industry bodies not follow the code of conduct of those bodies?

As highlighted in the article, the Loeries board is made up of representatives from industry organisations and sectors (*"It's worth explaining that a lot of the decisions about the event are taken by a board and committee of volunteers from across the industry. The members of these bodies typically represent other organisations like the ACA or the IAB, and it is a very collaborative way of putting on an industry event."*)

These structures ensure that the Loeries acts based on the guidance of the industry, and this also governs the feedback that is shared with the Loeries. There is a direct line of communication to share concerns and to ensure that such concerns can be addressed in the correct environment.

Board directors have a fiduciary responsibility to always act in the best interest of the bodies within which they serve. When bypassing such a process, board members risk amplifying false statements that bring not only the body they are criticising into disrepute but also the body within which they serve as a board member.

The key question that we should ask is, should board members of industry bodies not first utilise the office that they are so privileged to hold, to air their views, before embarking on a path that negatively prejudices the industry?

Think point 3: Why should proven and sound judging processes be called into question?

It is concerning that the article falsely insinuated that the Loeries judging process was tainted, even in the current year (*"What comes directly after chasing a particular region for money is an effort to make it worth their while. And that can so easily taint the juries, the categories and all judgement calls, of which there are many, during such an event."*).

The Loeries exercises sound governance in its judging process. This is further reinforced by international endorsement and accreditation by WARC as well as the fact that The Loeries receives the respect of brands, agencies and production companies from around the world.

Judges need to be experienced in the judging process and the Loeries board and committee works with the Creative Circle to find the most qualified judges to judge the work. In addition, the Loeries brings in international jury presidents to oversee the process, resulting in governance that is internationally lauded.

With these factors in mind, is it responsible for any senior industry leader to publicly call into question the sound governance of the judging process, when that process is rigorous and follows a model adopted by other highly respected global awards?

Think point 4: Should industry leaders be subtly advocating to hurt industry bodies?

The article clearly highlights that *"the Loeries is a costly endeavour and the effort to find sponsors and build a strong revenue stream to put on what is, at its core, a niche event for a fairly small industry, is enormous."* The author demonstrates an understanding of the challenges of running the Loerie Awards in a difficult economic climate, yet his indication at the end of his article was for sponsors to reduce funding of the Loeries (*"Any potential sponsor who went to the show last week will be busily scratching zeroes off next year's cheque as we speak."*).

The industry has had a difficult time during the Covid-19 pandemic and has only just started its recovery process. It must be considered that the Loeries will recover when the industry recovers. This is when agencies can more freely enter The Loeries and purchase tickets at the level seen in 2019 and the preceding years. This will then ensure that the awards experience is on-par with the past.

The author has sat on the Loeries committee and was privy to confidential discussions during the pandemic. The author witnessed the Loeries' decision to make entries free in 2020 in order to support our industry, yet he still pursued a reckless direction in his statement.

It must be asked, should industry leaders make recommendations that have the potential to negatively impact an industry body, despite having confidential knowledge of the challenges experienced by these bodies?

A final thought

The Loeries experienced challenges this year, as it continues a road to recovering its full strength. These challenges would have been visible in the production of the Loerie Awards Show which was one of seventeen events held during Loeries Creative Week. It would have been beneficial to the industry if the author had shared a view that encapsulated the entire week, regardless of what his opinion may have been, however this was not delivered in the article which focussed on one event.

We would like to invite the industry to re-read the initial article but this time with one question in mind – was the author exercising a responsibility to share truthful information or did they create further strain through false and damaging statements, shared under the guise of free speech?

Finally, The Loeries is a body that belongs to the industry. It is designed to recognise, reward, foster and inspire creativity. For an industry born from the power of ideas, perhaps, we need a new narrative – one that doesn't reverse progress, but rather uplifts us all.



Dear Loeries, we had a fantastic time, but...

Jarred Cinman 14 Oct 2022



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- More info: [Loeries Creative Week](#), [Bizcommunity search](#), [Google](#), [Twitter](#)

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