

RADIO SELF-REGULATION BEGINS

New codes of practice developed by the commercial radio industry took effect from 17 May.

The codes were developed by the Federation of Australian Radio Broadcasters (FARB) after a consultation process which included commercial radio broadcasters, the music industry, the public and the ABA. They will be the basis for self-regulation by the commercial radio industry.

The codes - covering news and current affairs, advertising, material unsuitable for broadcast, Australian music and complaints handling - replace ABA standards on the same issues (except for the new complaints process which was not previously covered by an ABA standard - see below).

'The new Act ushered in an era of greater responsibility by the broadcasting industry for program content regulation. FARB's development of codes has been commendable and the ABA now expects industry will take the running on these issues,' said Mr Brian Johns, ABA Chairman.

He said while the ABA will monitor how the codes operate, 'Their successful

implementation rests with the radio industry.'

FARB is developing explanatory guidelines on the codes for use by industry and is undertaking workshops for broadcasters on the new codes and complaints processes.

Under the new codes, if people wish to complain about programs they must first talk to the broadcaster. 'Any listener or commentator who's concerned about what they hear on radio, should now call the station direct,' said Mr Johns.

If a response to a complaint is not received within 60 days, or if the reply is unsatisfactory, the ABA can be asked to investigate.

If an individual station refuses to comply with a FARB code, the ABA may make the code a condition of a station's licence. Non-compliance with a licence condition could result in court proceedings against a licensee for breaching the Act.

If there was convincing evidence of a code failing across the industry, the ABA could determine a standard after seeking public comment.

Copies of the codes are available from FARB by calling (02) 906 5944.



ABA CONSIDERS TELEVISION CODE OF PRACTICE

The ABA is assessing a code of practice developed by the commercial television industry.

Under the *Broadcasting Act 1992*, commercial and community broadcasters are required to develop codes relating to programming matters, which will replace most ABA broadcasting standards. The exceptions are those standards relating to Australian content on television and children's television which will be retained.

The Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations (FACTS) has presented the code (which covers a range of subjects) and a detailed submission to the ABA.

The code covers news and current affairs programs; advertising content and placement; program classification; programs unsuitable for broadcast; and a new complaints handling process. Subject to a positive assessment, FACTS anticipates the code could be implemented by the television industry in early July.

The ABA is assessing the codes against three criteria for registration and must register them if:

- they provide appropriate community safeguards;
- they are endorsed by a majority of service providers in that section of the industry; and
- members of the public have been given adequate opportunity to comment.

A copy of FACTS' submission in support of its code may be viewed at any ABA office.

FACTS CODES OF PRACTICE

FACTS first released its draft codes of practice for public comment in August 1992. Advertisements were run in both the press and on television inviting comment from the public on the draft codes. FACTS sent out 1475 copies of the draft code in this first round of comment and received 287 responses from community

continued on p. 11

ABC CODE ON DISCRIMINATORY BROADCASTS

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) has notified the ABA that its code of practice now includes a section covering discriminatory broadcasts.

'The issue of discriminatory broadcasts is an important one which we have taken up with broadcasters,' said Mr Brian Johns, ABA Chairman. 'The ABA is keen to see it made explicit in all codes of practice.'

The changes to the code require the ABC to avoid the portrayal of people in a way likely to encourage denigration or discrimination on the basis of race, nationality, sex, age, physical or mental disability, occupational status, sexual preference, or religious, cultural or political belief.

The amended code came into force on 17 March 1993 and also covers portrayal of violence and sex; the use of language; children's, religious and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs; the portrayal of women and gender stereotyping; news and current affairs; promotions for programs; program classification and complaints handling.

Under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*, primary responsibility for ensuring programs reflect community standards has been shifted to broadcasters themselves, with all sectors of the industry being required to develop codes of practice.

Copies of the code are available from the ABC.

