



Investigations

4HOT Cairns: offensive song lyrics

Complaint

The ABA received a complaint about a song titled 'Chocolate Salty Ball', broadcast by 4HOT on 7 February 1999. The complainant claimed that the song contained unacceptable language and that the station had not responded to the complaint.

Relevant code

Clause 1.2 of the Commercial Radio Codes of Practice provides:

A licensee shall not broadcast language which would offend to a substantial degree the contemporary standards of decency held by the audience of the station.

Clause 5.2(b) of the code provides:

A licensee shall make appropriate arrangements to ensure that:

- (b) complaints will be conscientiously considered, investigated if necessary, and responded to as soon as practicable.

Decision

'Chocolate Salty Balls' by 'the Chef' is described as a 'novelty song'. It originated from the animation series 'South Park', broadcast by SBS. The

song's lyrics contain a double meaning: they can be understood as a cooking recipe or can be taken to have a stronger adult theme. However, the ABA found that the song did not contain any language which would offend to a substantial degree the contemporary standards of decency held by the audience of the station.

The ABA found that the licensee, Greater Cairns Radio Ltd, breached clause 5.2 (b) of the code as the complaint was not conscientiously considered or responded to as soon as practicable.

Action taken

Greater Cairns Radio Ltd advised the ABA that a breakdown with internal communications had resulted in the complaint being overlooked. The licensee also advised that new procedures had been put in place; it had contacted the complainant apologising for the manner in which the complaint had been handled; and it offered to meet with the complainant to discuss the matter.

The ABA is satisfied with the new procedures and the response to the complainant and decided to take no further action.

TVQ 10: unsuitable material for G classification

Complaint

Following a complaint the ABA commenced an investigation into an episode of the series 'The Bold and the Beautiful', broadcast by TVQ 10 on 27 January 1999. The complainant alleged that a scene in this episode, set in a hospital and involving a young woman about to have an abortion, was not suitable for a program classified G.

Relevant code

Clause 2.10 of the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice states that:

Material classified G must not contain any matter likely to be unsuitable for children to watch without the supervision of a parent.

Decision

The ABA decided that the scene was unsuitable for children to watch without the supervision of a parent and that Network Ten (Brisbane) Pty Limited, licensee of TVQ 10, had therefore breached clause 2.10 of the code. The ABA opinion was that this scene, despite being dis-

creet and sensitively edited, could raise a number of questions in the minds of young viewers that most parents or guardians would wish to discuss, and therefore PG would have been the most appropriate classification. The PG classification indicates to parents or guardians that, due to the nature of material within a particular program, they may wish to be present if young viewers are watching.

Action taken

In response to the ABA's decision Network Ten wrote to the ABA:

this particular story element has been finished for a considerable length of time and is unlikely to recur. Network Ten has incorporated the ABA's finding in this matter into the principles it applies in classifying programs for broadcast.

Consequently, we will ensure that future programs broadcast comply with the ABA's interpretation of clause 2.10.

The ABA was satisfied with this response and decided not to take further action at this stage.

