



## ATN 7 Sydney

### Complaint handling

#### **Complaint**

In March 2000, the ABA received a complaint about a segment of Seven Nightly News broadcast by ATN 7 on 24 December 1999. The complainant alleged that the statements made in the segment by her daughter were inaccurate. The complainant also alleged that her complaint to the station was not handled properly.

#### **Relevant code of practice**

##### **News and current affairs programs**

4.3 In broadcasting news and current affairs programs, licensees:

4.3.1. must present factual material accurately and represent viewpoints fairly, having regard to the circumstances at the time of preparing and broadcasting the program;

...

4.3.5 must not use material relating to a person's personal or private affairs, or which invades an individual's privacy, other than where there is an identifiable public interest reason for the material to be broadcast;

...

4.3.11 must make reasonable efforts to correct significant errors of fact at the earliest opportunity.

##### **Oral complaints and advising callers of the code complaint procedure**

7.6 Licensees will ensure that switchboard staff record the substance of telephoned comments from viewers, and that this is brought to the attention of key staff. When a viewer complains by telephone about material covered by the

code, and wishes to pursue the complaint further, the licensee will advise him or her that a written complaint may be made within 30 days of the particular broadcast, and that the licensee is obliged to respond in writing to that complaint.

##### **Time limits on responses to code complaints**

7.9 Where a code complaint is made about material broadcast by a station within thirty days of its broadcast, the licensee must provide a substantive written response.

7.10 That response must be made as soon as practicable, but in any case no longer than 30 working days after receipt of the complaint.

#### **Decision**

The ABA found that the licensee did not breach clauses 4.3.1, 4.3.8 or 4.3.11 of the code as the statement was a comment made by the daughter and not factual material presented by the licensee. However the ABA found that the licensee breached clause 7.7 of the code by not providing a telephone complainant with the required information and clause 7.10 of the code by not providing a written response within 30 working days of a written complaint.

#### **Action taken**

Channel Seven admitted that complaints handling procedures were not followed in this instance and has apologised to the complainant. Channel Seven has also reminded relevant members of staff of their obligations under the code in relation to telephone complaints.

