



NEN Northern NSW

Adult themes in PG classified program

Complaint

In February 2000, the ABA received a complaint concerning an episode of the program 'JAG', titled 'Nobody's Child', broadcast by commercial television station NEN (Northern NSW) on 21 July 2000.

The complainant alleged that 'Nobody's Child' which focused on the murder of an abused child was not suitable for the PG classification. In addition, the complainant noted that NEN did not reply to their written complaint dated 22 July 1999.

Relevant codes

The Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice provides:

The parental guidance recommended (PG) classification

2.14 Material classified PG may contain careful presentations of adult themes or concepts but must be mild in impact and remain suitable for children to watch with supervision:

2.13.6 *Adult Themes*: The treatment of social and domestic conflict and other themes directed to a more adult audience should be carefully handled and mild in impact.

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 determined that the licensee of NEN (Northern NSW), Prime Television (Northern) Pty Ltd, breached clause 2.13 of the code as the episode contained adult themes that were not mild in impact.

The ABA also determined that the licensee had breached clauses 7.9 and 7.10 of the code by failing to respond to the complaint.

Action taken

Prime stated that both it and the Seven Network held the view that the episode did not comply with the PG classification as it contained adult themes that were not mild in impact. They also considered that this had been a 'one-off instance of an error of judgement'.

Prime stated that neither the Seven Network nor Prime would schedule this episode of 'Jag' in PG time again. In addition, Prime stated that it has been assured that the Seven Network will take into account the ABA's view on this episode in future classification decisions.

With regard to complaint handling, Prime stated that the breach occurred because the staff did not comply with company procedures in relation to the registration of complaints. Prime advised that it has reviewed and amended these procedures. Responsibility for all complaints handling has been placed with the station manager concerned. In addition, Prime has also taken appropriate action in relation to the employee concerned with registering this complaint.

The ABA notes that these are the first breaches of this nature by Prime. The ABA is satisfied with the action taken by Prime as a result of this investigation.

