



4RO Rockhampton

Vilification on the basis of race

Complaint

In May 2000 the ABA received an unresolved complaint regarding comments made by 4RO Rockhampton breakfast program announcer Olivia Scott on the morning of 7 April 2000. The complainant alleged that these comments, which took the form of an 'Australian Apology to the Aborigines', were racist and emphasised negative stereotypes of indigenous Australians.

Relevant code

The Commercial Radio Codes of Practice state that:

1.3 A licensee must not broadcast a program which:

(e) is likely to incite or perpetuate hatred against or vilify any person or group on the basis of age, ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, sexual preference, religion or physical or mental disability.

Decision

The ABA determined that in broadcasting the so-called 'Australian Apology to the Aborigines' on 7 April 2000 the licensee of 4RO, Rockhampton Broadcasting Company Pty Ltd, had breached clause 1.3(e) of the Commercial Radio Codes of Practice in that it had broadcast material likely to vilify a group on the basis of race.

Action taken

4RO advised the ABA that following the broadcast of 7 April 2000 it had taken the following action:

1. Ms Scott was immediately suspended from all on-air activity. She was re-instated, subject to her broadcasting a personal apology on 8 May 2000.

2. the Managing Director of RG Capital Radio Pty Ltd, the parent company of 4RO, broadcast apologies at various times on 13 and 14 April.
3. the Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission and the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commission were contacted by 4RO with a request that any complaints be addressed as soon as possible.
4. an ongoing training program was implemented for all on-air staff (including Ms Scott). This program includes the circulation of on-air guidelines and formal 'test questions'.
5. at the instigation of 4RO, a meeting was held on 2 May 2000 between representatives from 4RO and representatives of the central Queensland indigenous community. The meeting agreed that:
 - Ms Scott should be reinstated to on-air activity subject to her broadcasting an apology;
 - all 4RO on-air staff had satisfied 4RO's requirements for compliance training; and
 - follow-up work would be carried out in relation to 4RO's promotion of indigenous community events, training, employment and education.
6. RG Capital Radio issued a press release outlining the issues surrounding the meeting of 2 May 2000 and the initiatives/outcomes agreed upon at that meeting.

Rockhampton Broadcasting Company also provided the ABA with a copy of a letter from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and a copy of letter to a local newspaper from the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commission; both letters expressed satisfaction with the way 4RO had handled the situation.

The ABA is satisfied with the above steps taken by the Rockhampton Broadcasting Company to remedy the breach and prevent similar breaches occurring in the future. Consequently the ABA will not be taking any further action at this stage. 