

Your Say

Complaint handling by commercial television stations

April – June 2002

Commercial television stations reported 144 written complaints relating to matters covered by the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice in the second quarter of 2002. This was 6.5 per cent less than the number of complaints reported in the previous quarter. In particular, complaints were significantly down in the areas of classification and of commercial placement.

There was a significant increase in complaints about sex/nudity and bias/inaccuracy and a slight increase in complaints about discrimination and suicide. Most of the complaints concerning bias and inaccuracy related to a current affairs report on the crisis in Israel/Palestine. Some viewers expressed concerns that the report lacked balance concerning the Israeli perspective on the issues associated with the crisis. Other bias and inaccuracy complaints were concerning a report on sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. The complaints were not upheld. The com-

plaints about sex and nudity related to sexual references in programs that some viewers believed were not suitable for the classification of the program.

In two instances a station agreed that a complaint identified a breach of a code provision. These instances involved:

- a complaint regarding the placement of a promo for the movie *Sleeping with the Enemy* shown during the movie *George of the Jungle*. The station agreed that the promotion was unsuitable for the timeslot. The promotion had been broadcast in the timeslot in error and the station undertook to ensure that greater care would be taken in future
- a complaint regarding the placement of a promotion for the program *Charmed*. In light of the complaint, the station reviewed the promotion and agreed on balance that the promotion exceeded the classification, and advised the viewer of the steps taken to prevent a recurrence.

In each instance, the station's response

The Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice requires each commercial television broadcaster to report to Commercial Television Australia*, within 15 working days of the end of each quarter, the number and substance of written complaints alleging specific breaches of the code. FACTS provides a consolidated report to the ABA.

* Previously Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations

to the viewer complaint outlined the remedial measure the station proposed to take in response to the acknowledged breach of the code.

In the previous quarter, there were five complaints upheld by the stations concerned.

There were also small numbers of complaints (that were not upheld) about:

- the appropriateness of the content of a *60Minutes* report on Elle McPherson
- violence and cruelty towards animals in video clips shown on *Australia's Funniest Home Videos*
- inappropriate material for classifications of programs such as *Big Brother*, *LooneyTunes* and *Becker* and
- the programs *AllSaints*, *SecretLifeofUs* and *Charmed*.

Complaints made to commercial television stations about programs: April - June 2002

	Sex/ nudity	Language	Violence	Suicide	Drug use	Classification	Bias/inaccuracy	Privacy	Discrimination	Comm. content	Comm. placement	Comm. general	Closed caption	Complaint handling	Total	% All complaints
Children	2	1				1									4	2.8
Comedy	7		9	1		3									20	13.8
Current Affairs	3	4				1	47		3						58	40.3
Documentary	4					1									5	3.5
Drama Series	2	2	1		2	2									9	6.2
Information																
Movies	1					1									2	1.4
Music Video	1														1	0.7
News		1				3	3								7	4.9
Promo	8	1	4			2			1		1				17	11.8
Quiz																
Shopping Guide																
Sport	1		2						2						5	3.5
Unspecified	6	1				1			2						10	6.9
Variety		1				3	1		1						6	4.2
Total	35	11	16	1	2	18	51	0	5	4	1	0	0	0	144	100.0
%																
All complaints	24.3	7.6	11.1	0.7	1.4	12.5	35.4	0.0	3.5	2.8	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	

Drama Series includes Serials

Source: Commercial Television Australia* Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice: Complaints summary June quarter 2002

* formerly Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations

