



## ATN 7 Sydney

### Present factual material accurately, represent viewpoints fairly

The ABA has found that Channel Seven Sydney Pty Ltd, the licensee of commercial television service ATN Sydney, breached the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice 1999, by failing to present factual material accurately and not representing viewpoints fairly.

#### The complaint

On 3 June 2004, the ABA received a written complaint from Centrelink regarding a segment of the *Today Tonight* program broadcast by the licensee on 3 March 2004. The complainant alleged that the licensee failed to present factual material accurately, failed to represent viewpoints fairly, and failed to correct significant errors of fact.

The program segment reported on a former Centrelink employee who now runs a business assisting Centrelink customers with overpayment debts attributed to Centrelink.

#### Decision

The ABA determined that the licensee:

- breached clause 4.3.1 of the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice 1999 (the code) in that it did not present factual material accurately and in that it did not represent viewpoints fairly
- did not breach clause 4.3.11 of the code which requires the correction of significant errors of fact.

#### Action taken

The ABA notes that in response to the breach findings, the licensee has undertaken to provide a copy of the decision to key personnel involved in news and current affairs, along with an explanation of the decision and directions to ensure that future programs are consistent with the ABA's findings in this matter.

The ABA considers this action addresses the compliance issues raised by the investigation and will continue to monitor the licensee's performance in this regard, particularly in relation to clause 4.3.1 of the code (accuracy of factual material and fair representation of viewpoints). ☞

## STQ Regional Queensland

### Failure to present a news item fairly and impartially

The ABA has found that Channel Seven Queensland Pty Ltd, the licensee of commercial television service STQ Regional Queensland, breached the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice by failing to present news fairly and impartially.

#### The complaint

On 6 September 2004 the ABA received a complaint concerning an item shown on the Cairns bulletin of *Seven Local News*.

According to the complainant the news report was biased and the journalist had made no effort to corroborate the contents of the news item.

The news story, broadcast by STQ in Cairns at 6 pm on 14 July 2004, consisted of an interview with the manager of the Weipa shopping centre, who talked about what he considered to be the impact that the Alcohol Management Plans in local Aboriginal communities were having on Weipa and the shopping centre. The

television reporter conducting the interview was John McKenzie, who also has his own radio program on the commercial radio service 4EL Cairns.

#### Commercial Television Code of Practice

4.4 In broadcasting news programs (including news flashes) licensees:

- 4.4.1 must present news fairly and impartially

#### Assessment

The news item consisted of a report that alcohol bans in Aboriginal communities had led to violence, break-ins and vandalism in Weipa and raised potential health issues. Support for this view was provided by an interview with the

#### Investigation reports : breach findings

To view the full report on these investigations, go to the ABA web site:

[www.aba.gov.au/newspubs/radio\\_TV/investigations/broadcast\\_operations/television.shtml](http://www.aba.gov.au/newspubs/radio_TV/investigations/broadcast_operations/television.shtml)

[www.aba.gov.au/newspubs/radio\\_TV/investigations/broadcast\\_operations/radio.shtml](http://www.aba.gov.au/newspubs/radio_TV/investigations/broadcast_operations/radio.shtml)

where the reports are arranged by licensee.