



Investigations

ATN 7 Sydney

Broadcasting promotion for M program during sports coverage

The ABA has found that Channel Seven (Sydney) Pty Ltd, the licensee of commercial television service ATN Sydney, and Channel Seven (Adelaide) Pty Ltd the licensee of commercial television service SAS Adelaide, breached the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice 2004, by broadcasting a program promotion classified M during sporting coverage.

The complaints

In February and March 2005 the ABA received four complaints regarding the broadcast of a promotion for the M classified program *Desperate Housewives* on ATN and SAS.

The promotion was shown throughout the Seven network and was broadcast during the men's final of the Australian Open Tennis tournament after 8.30 pm on Sunday 30 January 2005. The depiction of concern was one in which a female character was implied to have committed suicide. The promotion was preceded by a visual and audio warning that the promotion was classified M.

The period from 8.30 pm is generally an M classification zone, however the

commercial television code provides that, during certain programs, including live sporting events, program promotions must comply with the PG classification requirements. This is in recognition of the fact that, during such broadcasts, children are likely to comprise a higher percentage of the viewing audience than would generally be the case at this time. Additional safeguards are therefore needed to ensure material is suitable for younger audiences. The relevant code provisions are clauses 3.11 and 3.12.

Decision


Seven Network Ltd had acknowledged that the broadcast of M classified material was in breach of the code and had apologised to complainants. The complainants had, however, come to the ABA to further express concern about the suitability of the promotion material, particularly the treatment of suicide themes, for broadcast during a program in which large numbers of children were likely to be viewing.

Action taken

The ABA is aware that suicide is a

matter of considerable concern in the Australian community, and believes that particular care is necessary in dealing with this subject matter. This is especially the case at times when children are likely to be viewing.

The ABA therefore asked Seven Network Ltd to take further action to ensure that clause 3.11 is understood by network staff. This action included giving an undertaking to the ABA that Seven Network Ltd would provide the investigation report along with an explanation of the ABA's findings to staff and implement information sessions across the network to discuss provisions of the code relating to the placement of promotions, particularly with regard to restrictions in G and PG programs. The ABA requested Seven Network Ltd undertake this action within six months and report back to the ABA on its compliance.

Seven Network Ltd has accepted the ABA's request. It has also advised the ABA that it took action soon after the promotion was broadcast and before the ABA's investigation, and conducted training with promotions staff in scheduling requirements, particularly those in clause 3.11. 

Investigation reports into matters relating to broadcast operations are on the ABA website:

www.aba.gov.au/newspubs/radio_TV/investigations.shtml