

The ACMA registers a new commercial radio industry code of practice

For the first time, commercial radio broadcasters will be required to accept complaints electronically through new codes of practice registered by the ACMA.

'The move to online commercial radio complaints is a major enhancement and responds to community demands for a relevant and streamlined complaints process,' said Chris Chapman, Chairman of the ACMA.

From 1 July, a progressive rollout of electronic complaints-handling will be commenced by commercial broadcasters serving more than 65 per cent of the listening audience.

'The ACMA understands the challenges that the radio broadcasting industry—in particular smaller licenses with limited communications infrastructure—face in introducing electronic complaints. However, this is an important consumer safeguard that needs to be addressed over time by industry,' said Mr Chapman.

Codes of practice registered by the ACMA cover a range of matters concerning commercial radio broadcasters, including:

- > material that should not be broadcast
- > requirements for accuracy in news and current affairs
- > privacy protections
- > the rules for advertising
- > responsive complaints.

'The codes have been thoroughly reviewed to ensure that important community safeguards are maintained,' Mr Chapman said.

In enhancements to the codes, anti-discrimination clauses have been aligned with those in television codes and with state and territory legislation to enable them to be applied more consistently. The audience test for standards of decency provisions has been simplified, and the accuracy and privacy protections in the presentation of current affairs programs have been clarified and extended to include provision for a correction.

Commercial Radio Australia (CRA) has consulted on proposals to exempt digital-only radio services from the Australian music requirements contained in Code 4. The ACMA will consider these proposals along with any issues raised in the consultation process once CRA has completed its processes. The ACMA has also recently asked CRA to consider amendments to its codes to take account of the outcomes to the ACMA's recent investigation into live hosted radio.

The codes came into operation on 19 February 2010. They were developed by CRA, the industry group representing commercial radio broadcasters. They replace previous codes which have been operating since 2004. 📻

The new Commercial Codes of Practice and Guidelines are available on the Commercial Radio Australia website at www.commercialradio.com.au.

