

## Media Release

18 July 2018

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### BSA releases 2018 Survey on Offensive Language in Broadcasting

Research released by the Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA) today highlights that the New Zealand public considers culturally insensitive and sexist or 'gendered' language to be increasingly unacceptable in certain broadcasting contexts.

The BSA's *Language That May Offend in Broadcasting* research surveyed 1,514 members of the New Zealand public about how acceptable they find the use of offensive language on television or radio, including swear words, blasphemies and other potentially derogatory or offensive language. Thirty-one words/phrases were tested in 11 different broadcasting contexts ("scenarios").

Compared with the last survey in 2013, the survey had an increased focus on gendered offensive language and language that may be offensive due to the cultural or ethnic context, including words in Te Reo Māori or Pasifika languages.

The key findings of the survey include:

- Traditional strong swear words continue to be considered the most unacceptable regardless of the context.
- Racial/cultural insults included in the 2018 survey ranked in the 12 most offensive words, suggesting the public are becoming more concerned about the use of derogatory language directed at a person's race or culture, or sexual orientation.
- When asked to identify other offensive words, 1 in 5 respondents (20% of those who answered the question) pointed to words they consider to be racist or offensive from a cultural/ethnic context. Respondents said they find language which describes other races in a derogatory way and derogatory references to a person's sexual orientation, unacceptable.
- The context and audience expectations of the programme are important and affect whether the audience will find strong language acceptable. Offensive language is generally considered more acceptable in fictional, comedic or scripted contexts, particularly after 8.30pm. Respondents found offensive language less acceptable in factual/reality/spontaneous contexts, e.g. when used by a radio host on a breakfast programme, in sports commentary, or in reality TV.

For broadcasters, this means that audience advisories warning about potentially offensive language and the time of broadcast are important, as this allows audiences to make informed choices about whether they or children ought to listen to potentially offensive language.

Belinda Moffat, Chief Executive of the BSA, said:

“This research provides a useful and insightful snapshot of current community attitudes to offensive language in New Zealand. The research findings give broadcasters a clear indication of the type of language that is considered unacceptable by the New Zealand public. We hope the research will also be a useful tool for organisations seeking to uphold NZ values and develop more inclusive and harmonious workplace cultures.”

The research was undertaken by Nielsen for the BSA. The BSA consulted with Te Taura Whiri i Te Reo Māori (Māori Language Commission), Human Rights Commission and Ministry for Women in preparing the survey.

The full report is available on the BSA's website.

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**For more information contact 021 623 794 or 04 382 9508.**

#### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

The Broadcasting Standards Authority's research report, *Language That May Offend In Broadcasting*, is available on our website [here](#).

#### **ABOUT THE BROADCASTING STANDARDS AUTHORITY**

The BSA is an independent Crown entity that oversees the broadcasting standards regime in New Zealand. The BSA determines complaints that broadcasts have breached standards, undertakes research and oversees the development of broadcasting standards in consultation with broadcasters.

The Authority members are Peter Radich (Chair), Te Raumawhitu Kupenga, Paula Rose and Wendy Palmer.

**For more information see our website: [www.bsa.govt.nz](http://www.bsa.govt.nz)**