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Campbell Live investigation breached broadcasting standards

The Broadcasting Standards Authority has upheld a complaint about *Campbell Live's* investigation of a woman behind TradeMe advertisements which sought to rehome beagles allegedly bred for medical testing.

The subject of the investigation was Margaret Harkema, a former director of the Valley Animal Research Centre (VARC), who featured in five separate broadcasts in late 2011.

The authority upheld some of her complaints that the programmes were unfair, misleading and breached her privacy.

'There was a high level of public interest in the investigation, which the broadcaster was legitimately entitled to cover,' BSA chief executive, Karen Scott-Howman said.

'But in this case the broadcaster went too far in some areas.'

The authority said it was inevitable Ms Harkema would have attracted criticism for her involvement with an animal testing facility.

'The complainant was involved in animal testing on dogs and other animals. She did have a position of responsibility in the company which undertook the commercial business of animal testing.'

However, overall the allegations against her were overblown, breaching standards of fairness and accuracy.

'[*Campbell Live*] stated as matters of fact things that were not factually correct. It drew inferences that were not able to be drawn and generally... hyped up the items to a point beyond where they ought to have been.'

Ms Harkema was not adequately informed of some of the allegations, and was not given a reasonable opportunity to respond to them, the authority said. Where she had provided comment, her response was not fairly presented in the programmes.

The privacy breach related to a hidden camera 'sting' showing Ms Harkema delivering beagles to a prospective buyer. The authority said there was insufficient public interest in the particular footage captured to justify the use of covert filming.

The BSA ordered the broadcaster to pay \$12,000 towards Ms Harkema's legal costs and \$2,000 compensation to her for the breach of privacy.

Ends

The full report is available at www.bsa.govt.nz

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