

## Media Release

25 October 2016

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### ***Seven Sharp* item on outgoing New Plymouth mayor not in breach of broadcasting standards**

Three complaints alleging that a *Seven Sharp* item about outgoing New Plymouth mayor Andrew Judd breached broadcasting standards have not been upheld by the Broadcasting Standards Authority.

The item discussed why Mr Judd was not seeking re-election. Mr Judd said that he suffered abuse and became ‘deeply unpopular’ due to his campaign to increase Māori representation on the New Plymouth District Council.

During the item, the reporter discussed the result of a referendum for the establishment of a Māori ward on the Council. The Authority did not uphold two complaints that several of the reporter’s comments, including that ‘83 per cent of New Plymouth voters voted “no” to any Māori at the Council table’, were inaccurate.

The Authority found that the statements alleged to be inaccurate were made as part of a lengthy explanation by the reporter about the proposed Māori ward and the referendum. Viewers would have understood that he was referring to whether a Māori ward should be established on the Council, not to the wider issue of representation.

‘While the reporter’s statements were careless and loose, we are satisfied there was sufficiently precise and accurate commentary surrounding these statements to mitigate any lapses... in the context of a profile piece about Mr Judd for *Seven Sharp*, the reporter’s shorthand explanation did not reach the threshold for breaching the accuracy standard’, the Authority said.

A third complaint related primarily to *Seven Sharp* presenter Mike Hosking’s comments: ‘Sad to say – I’d never personally attack [Mr Judd], obviously – but he’s completely out of touch with middle New Zealand. There’s nothing wrong with Māori representation on Councils because any Māori who wants to stand for a Council is more than welcome to do so’.

The Authority found these comments did not breach broadcasting standards because the right to freedom of expression allows individuals to express their opinion, even if it is unpopular or incorrect. The Authority said “discussion and debate about the various perspectives on these issues is a valued aspect of

freedom of expression and in the public interest”.

The Authority did however express the view that presenters of a popular primetime television current affairs programme such as *Seven Sharp* are in an influential position. The presenters’ comments on the Judd item “were dismissive of a valid issue in New Zealand which deserves meaningful discussion”, it said.

ENDS

**For more information contact Nicole Hickman on 027 313 0179.**

#### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

The full decision is available at <http://bsa.govt.nz/decisions/latest>.

The programme was broadcast on 5 May 2016. The decision was made under the new Free-to-Air Television Code of Broadcasting Practice. The new Codebook has been in force since 1 April 2016 and is available at <http://bsa.govt.nz/standards/overview>.

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

The Broadcasting Standards Authority is an independent body that oversees the broadcasting standards regime in New Zealand. We do this by determining complaints that broadcasts have breached standards, by doing research and also by providing information about broadcasting standards.

The Authority members who determined all three complaints were Leigh Pearson, Te Raumawhitu Kupenga and Paula Rose. Peter Radich (Chair) determined two of the three complaints.

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