

Media Release

27 July 2017

Caller's offensive joke not okay, but radio item did not breach broadcasting standards

The Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA) has not upheld a complaint about a joke submitted by a caller during a 'corny joke' segment on *Jay-Jay, Dom & Randell on The Edge*.

The joke given by the caller was: "What's the hardest part about cooking a vegetable? Trying to fit the wheelchair in the pot."

Before the caller delivered the punchline, the hosts debated whether it was appropriate to let the caller complete the full joke on air. After deciding to allow the caller to give the punchline, the hosts reacted with distaste, saying "No! That's a terrible joke!" and "That's not a joke!"

The Authority noted its role in this case was to weigh the value of the programme, and the importance of freedom of expression, against the harm that might be caused by the broadcast. The Authority acknowledged the complainant's legitimate concerns about the segment.

"We accept that the joke subject to complaint reflected a type of humour that is no longer appropriate or acceptable in our society, and in our view, it was distasteful and offensive. We therefore do not in any way condone the joke submitted by the caller," the Authority said.

However, taking into account the context of the broadcast as a whole, including the hosts' reaction, the Authority found that the segment did not reach the high threshold necessary to find a breach of the good taste and decency and discrimination and denigration standards.

In making its decision the Authority said "the important right to freedom of expression means we will sometimes be exposed to content that offends or distresses. Our task in this case is to determine whether such material crosses the line set in broadcasting standards".

The Authority concluded that "[The] broadcast sparked discussion about what we, as a society, will accept as humour at the expense of others. The offensive statement was made by a third party caller and we consider that the broadcaster, through the hosts, clearly reacted and signalled that this joke was not legitimate humour and was in poor taste".

In reaching its decision, which it acknowledged was challenging, the Authority said "the hosts allowed for a discussion to take place around what we consider to be offensive in New Zealand society. Instead of ignoring the issue, or suppressing the content and moving on to the next caller, the hosts confronted what they considered to be offensive content and signalled its unacceptability to the caller and to listeners."

ENDS

For more information contact Catie Murray on 021 623 794.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The segment was broadcast at 9.05am on 20 March 2017 on The Edge.

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

The decision was made under the Good Taste and Decency and Discrimination and Denigration standards of the Radio Code of Broadcasting Practice. The Code 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 are Peter Radich (Chair), Te Raumawhitu Kupenga and Paula Rose.

For more information see our website: www.bsa.govt.nz.