

Media Release

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BSA recognises diverse New Zealand culture in latest decision

The Broadcasting Standards Authority has upheld aspects of a complaint about four broadcasts by Radio Virsa, a small Sikh radio station based in Auckland.

The broadcast programmes were in Punjabi and contained host and talkback commentary about a wide range of issues and people in the local Sikh community.

The Authority found that three of the broadcasts contained divisive and derogatory language, treated named individuals in the Sikh community (including the complainant) unfairly and in one instance, breached an individual's privacy. The Authority found that the comments made about individuals were degrading and offensive, and devalued the reputation of some individuals in breach of the good taste and decency, and fairness standards.

In reaching its decision, the Authority noted that, while some broadcasts may be directed to a specific ethnic community, when determining complaints about whether broadcasting standards have been breached it needed to look to the diverse New Zealand community as a whole:

“When we consider a complaint of this nature, we are conscious that we must apply New Zealand standards, and the expectations and values of the New Zealand community. We also recognise that our New Zealand community comprises a wide range of cultures, ethnicities and beliefs. New Zealand values these different cultures. However, these different views and cultures also need to co-exist compatibly together.”

The Authority recognised that the particular expectations of the target audience, here a sector of the New Zealand Sikh community, was an important cultural contextual factor for the Authority to consider. The Authority acknowledged these expectations may differ from the expectations of a wider, and potentially non-religious, audience and are relevant to the assessment of whether the broadcast went beyond audience expectations.

However, in this case, the Authority concluded that aspects of the broadcasts were unacceptable in New Zealand society and caused harm to both individuals and to the intended audience.

In response to the findings, Radio Virsa has offered an apology to those impacted and the BSA has ordered that a broadcast statement reflecting the BSA's decision be made. In addition, BSA has signalled its commitment to work with Radio Virsa to assist it to better understand the New Zealand broadcasting context, and to provide guidance to Radio Virsa staff on the application of broadcasting standards in New Zealand.

ENDS

For more information contact Catie Murray on 021 623 794.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The programmes were broadcast in Punjabi on 19 June 2016, 2 October 2016 and 9 November 2016 on 107FM.

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

The decision was made under all eleven 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 Crown entity that oversees the broadcasting standards regime in New Zealand. We determine complaints that broadcasts have breached standards, undertake research and also provide 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.