

Media Release

19 April 2018

ACT Party leader's comments about assisted dying did not breach broadcasting standards

The Broadcasting Standards Authority has not upheld a complaint that comments made by ACT Party MP David Seymour on *Morning Report*, about the legality of assisted dying internationally, were inaccurate and misleading.

The *Morning Report* item discussed the introduction of Mr Seymour's End of Life Choice Bill 2017 to Parliament. The broadcast featured excerpts from speeches made during the first reading of the Bill, comments from RNZ's political commentator and an interview with Mr Seymour.

During this interview Mr Seymour said assisted dying "is becoming normal around the world" and he referred to a number of international jurisdictions as having legalised some form of assisted dying.

The Authority found Mr Seymour's comment was a statement of political analysis, advocacy and opinion, rather than a statement of fact, meaning the accuracy standard did not apply.

The Authority also found that, "[A]s the MP who introduced the Bill, listeners would reasonably expect Mr Seymour to be advocating for the Bill and his reasons behind it so we do not think they would have been misled in this respect."

In reaching its decision, the Authority recognised the high value and public interest in protecting the right to freedom of political expression and enabling public discourse around controversial and relevant issues such as assisted dying.

"Given the importance of political speech and of enabling political discourse, we will generally only interfere to limit the exercise of that speech when we consider that the harm [caused by a broadcast] is great. The focus of this item was Mr Seymour's introduction to Parliament of the End of Life Choice Bill 2017, concerning the topic of assisted dying, which is both topical and controversial, and in the public interest to discuss," it said.

ENDS

For more information contact Catie Murray on 021 623 794.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The item was broadcast on 14 December 2017 on RNZ National. The full decision is available at <http://bsa.govt.nz/decisions/latest>. The decision was made under the Radio Television Code of Broadcasting Practice which is available at <http://bsa.govt.nz/standards/overview>.

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