

Media Release

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Complaints to the BSA increase by 54% in the last 12 months

A 54% increase in complaints and 65% increase in enquiries to the BSA in the last year indicate that New Zealanders are engaged with broadcast content and value broadcasting standards highly.

In its 2018 Annual Report published today, the BSA records that it received 174 complaints, 1,303 enquiries and issued 103 decisions in the last financial year. Only 14 decisions upheld complaints that television or radio programmes breached broadcasting standards, indicating that overall broadcasters are meeting their obligations under the standards.

BSA Chief Executive Belinda Moffat, says “this past year the Authority received a large number of complaints, reflecting that New Zealanders are engaged in an ongoing conversation about freedom of expression in New Zealand, and that they expect broadcasters to maintain high standards. Many of the complaints considered by the Authority in the last year raised complex issues which highlight the need for broadcasters to carefully balance the right to freedom of expression and the avoidance of harm to individuals or the community.”

Most complaints to the BSA related to news and current affairs programmes, raising issues under the fairness, accuracy and balance standards. Only a small number of these complaints were upheld, indicating that generally broadcasters are working within the standards expected of them. It also highlights that the threshold justifying the BSA’s intervention in the exercise of the right to freedom of expression is high. Good Taste and Decency and Children’s Interests were the first and fourth most complained about standards.

In addition to its complaints work, which included dealing with complaints about election programmes in the 2017 General Election, the BSA provided education and guidance on the standards to broadcasters through workshops. It also issued research on Language That May Offend in Broadcasting and The Use of Social Media Content in Broadcasting.

Incoming Chair, Judge Bill Hastings, says “the BSA is operating in a dynamic media environment, where broadcast content continues to provide a substantial amount of entertainment, news and information to New Zealanders. Broadcasting standards offer an ethical compass for broadcasters and gives the public confidence that the exercise of the right to freedom of expression, whilst valued highly in New Zealand, is not unlimited. The 2018 Annual Report released by the BSA today highlights the BSA’s high quality work and impact over the last financial year, which I look forward to continuing as incoming Chair. ”

Highlights from the year include:

- 174 complaints received
- 103 decisions issued, addressing 148 complaints
- 14 decisions issued upholding complaints
- 6 decisions issued regarding 2017 election programmes (not upheld)
- 1,303 enquiries addressed
- 18 workshops with broadcasters, production companies and the public
- Language That May Offend in Broadcasting research released
- Use of Social Media Content in Broadcasting research released, along with a guidance note for broadcasters on using third party content in broadcasts
- Most complained about programme genre: News & Current Affairs (69 complaints determined)
- Most complained about standard: Good taste and Decency (73 complaints determined)

ENDS

For more information contact Catie Murray on 021 623 794.

FURTHER INFORMATION

You can read the full Annual Report at <https://bsa.govt.nz/publications/our-statutory-reports>.

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 Judge Bill Hastings (Chair), Paula Rose, Wendy Palmer and Susie Staley. Peter Radich and Te Raumawhitu Kupenga completed their terms in October 2018.

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