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Broadcasting Standards Authority reports a drop in complaints

The Broadcasting Standards Authority has released its annual report, which shows that it received fewer complaints than last year.

The BSA received 195 complaints and issued 162 decisions. This compared to a record high last year of 236 decisions, a number of which related to single broadcasts. Upheld decisions and orders also reduced.

BSA Chief Executive Susan Freeman-Greene says while it's pleasing that complaints have reduced, it's too early to say if this is a trend.

"We believe that if the system is working well, complaints will drop over time. The implication of this is that broadcasters breach codes less often, the public are better able to identify breaches and the broadcasters' own complaints processes are more effective, prompting fewer referral to us.

"The reduction in upheld decisions and orders could relate to the BSA's more robust analysis of freedom of expression. It is a crucial part of our regulation system to balance the right to freedom of expression and the responsibility to avoid harm. To justify upholding a complaint we must be satisfied that the potential harm is such that the importance of free speech is outweighed," Susan Freeman-Greene says.

As well as putting greater focus on freedom of expression, the BSA has made the reports on findings simpler and more accessible. It has restructured the administration and financial services and strengthened relationships with broadcasters including establishing a Working Group to discuss common issues and further improve the complaints process.

Susan Freeman-Greene says the BSA continues to work towards reducing unjustified complaints and increasing broadcaster compliance.

The annual report is available at www.bsa.govt.nz

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