

5 August 2013

## **Cruise FM Waikato ordered to apologise on air following complaints**

The Broadcasting Standards Authority has ordered Cruise FM Waikato to broadcast a statement on air including an apology for unfairly treating members of the South Waikato District Council (SWDC) and a rival radio station, Classic Hits and its staff. It has also been ordered to pay the Crown \$2,500 in costs.

In two broadcasts late last year, the host and owner Johnny Dryden and another councillor were critical of members of the SWDC and Classic Hits. The BSA found that while the broad issues discussed were of public interest in examining the actions of elected representatives, they went beyond what could be considered acceptable, and had the potential to be very damaging to the individuals' reputations.

“Mr Dryden made comments that were not related to their public or professional duties but were personally abusive and insulting.”

The terms Mr Dryden used to refer to the individuals were rude, crude and insulting.

The BSA said the comments had an underlying tone of contempt and that Mr Dryden used his position to personally criticise SWDC members under the guise of public interest and in the context of a discussion about political matters.

The BSA also considered a complaint from the Deputy Mayor that a brief news item about her on Cruise FM was inaccurate. The BSA said listeners would have recognised the item for what it was – not news but innuendo and spin from a station not respecting its responsibilities as a broadcaster.

While the item didn't breach standards of accuracy, the BSA said there would be a strong argument for upholding a complaint of balance and fairness as the item was not impartial, it cast aspersions on her character and she was given no right of reply.

Other complaints of good taste and decency, law and order, and discrimination and denigration were not upheld.

Cruise FM has been ordered to broadcast a statement written by the Authority summarising its decision and apologising for the unfair treatment, within one month.

The full report is available at [www.bsa.govt.nz](http://www.bsa.govt.nz)

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