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***Home and Away* storyline breaches broadcasting standards**

A complaint against an episode of the Australian soap opera *Home and Away* has been upheld by the Broadcasting Standards Authority.

The episode which was classified G and broadcast at 5.30pm on TV3 in April this year, involved the date rape of a teenage girl. The complainant said that themes of rape and HIV were inappropriate in a G-rated programme and breached the standard of responsible programming.

The BSA upheld the complaint saying that the storyline went beyond what was acceptable in a G-rated programme broadcast at 5.30pm.

“By its very nature, the concept of rape, and specifically the combination of sex and violence, is highly disturbing, likely to cause alarm and distress for viewers of all ages and therefore unsuitable for children and inconsistent with the G classification.”

The BSA also noted that the violence standard states that programmes in which rape and sexual violence is a theme should be treated with care and should be preceded by a warning.

“No warning preceded this episode of *Home and Away* so had the violence standard been raised in this case, that would also have been breached in our view.”

“We are not making a finding that the episode should not have been broadcast at all. The episode could have screened without breaching standards if it had been correctly classified and adhered to the time-bands in the Code.”

The BSA decided not to impose a penalty on the broadcaster. It took into account that TV3 accepted that the decision draws a clear line in terms of the type of themes and content that is acceptable for broadcast in G-rated programmes. Also, *Home and Away* has since moved channels and is now broadcast by TVNZ.

“In our view, rather than imposing a penalty, it is more useful to engage in constructive dialogue about what is expected. We are satisfied that publication of this decision will provide guidance for TV3 and other broadcasters about the Authority’s expectations of G-rated programmes broadcast during children’s viewing times.”

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

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