

4 March 2013

BSA finds TVNZ breached fairness and accuracy standards

TV One News has been found in breach of broadcasting standards for wrongly identifying an Auckland bar as having been targeted by fraud and for not making reasonable efforts to check that the item was accurate.

The item in April last year reported that four men had been accused of an eftpos skimming scam and named the Brooklyn Bar as an apparent ‘victim’ of the scam. The item included a brief interview with a customer who said he and fellow partygoers “had [their bank accounts] cleared out” at the bar.

The owner of the bar Hemi Whyte said that the item was inaccurate and unfair because the bar was in fact not targeted or involved in the scam but nevertheless was labelled ‘unsafe’ which was detrimental to its reputation.

The Broadcasting Standards Authority upheld the complaint saying that while it was clear in the item that the bar was a ‘victim’, the item was wrong to single out the bar, it created the impression that the business had insufficient security measures to protect customers which was misleading and unfair, and the complainant was not provided with a fair and reasonable opportunity to comment and correct the information.

“If Mr Whyte had been given a reasonable opportunity to comment, he would have informed One News that his business had not been targeted at all. Where an intended broadcast is likely to cause harm to a person’s business reputation and consequently their financial interests, that person should be given a fair and reasonable opportunity to mitigate the harm by providing comment on the claims that are to be made against them.”

The reporter who visited the bar left her name and telephone number for Mr Whyte to make contact but this was at 5pm, only one hour before the broadcast, and Mr Whyte was out at the time. The BSA did not believe that these steps amounted to reasonable efforts to ensure that the item was accurate and did not mislead, as required by the accuracy standard.

The BSA did not make any order as it considered publication of the decision would adequately remedy the breach.

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

For more information contact: Heather Church 021 78 29 23