

CONTENT COMMITTEE

Meeting date: 29 June 2021

Agenda Number 5c.

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Save Our Voices

Background

- As part of the ACMA's ongoing interest in the impartiality of broadcast news, we wrote to regional broadcasters requesting information about news reports on the *Save Our Voices* Campaign. A timeline of the correspondence is below:
- On 30 October 2020 we wrote to WIN requesting information about how a news report featuring the campaign complied with the impartiality provisions of the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice 2015 (the **Code**). These are:
 - 3.4.1 In broadcasting a news Program, a Licensee must:
 - a) present news fairly and impartially;
 - b) clearly distinguish the reporting of factual material from commentary and analysis.
 - 3.4.2 Nothing in this Section 3 requires a Licensee to allocate equal time to different points of view, or to include every aspect of a person's viewpoint, nor does it preclude a critical examination of or comment on a controversial issue as part of a fair report on a matter of public interest.
- On 13 November WIN responded by referring to the public interest and importance of the campaign.
- After consultation with CCM, we agreed to write to WIN to seek further information as well as Prime and Southern Cross Austereo (**SCA**). We also wrote to Free TV to flag the matter.
- On 11 May 2021 we wrote to WIN, Prime, SCA and Free TV.
- On 13 May Free TV responded to say it would discuss the matter with its regional members. See **Attachment A**.
- On 17 May 2021 WIN responded to say the reports complied with the Code because they referred to 'whole of industry' and WIN 'has provided everyone from all sides of politics and walks of life, with the opportunity to express their views on an industry in crisis'. See **Attachment B**.
- On 28 May 2021 Prime responded to say the report was broadcast 'in good faith' on a matter of public interest. See **Attachment C**.
- Our letter to SCA was for information only because we found no SCA reports about the campaign.

For discussion at CCM

- The responses from WIN and Prime did not directly engage with how the reports would meet the requirement in the Code to present news fairly and impartially; and clearly distinguish the reporting of factual material from commentary and analysis.

- Impartiality in news is an ongoing area of interest for the Authority.
- In 2019 the ACMA commenced work on the [news project](#) which is examining whether current regulatory arrangements are working effectively to safeguard the integrity of broadcast news and current affairs, including in relation to impartiality. While the ACMA has currently deferred consideration of these matters due to industry pressures relating to COVID-19, we have consistently indicated that we intend to recommence the broadcast news project at an appropriate time. This may occur as part of the broader work that is currently being undertaken by the Content, Policy and Platforms Section on broadcasting codes.

Attachments

- A** Free TV correspondence
- B** WIN correspondence
- C** Prime correspondence