

Executive Council of Australian Jewry

The Representative
Organisation of
Australian Jewry



הוועד הפועל של
יהודי אוסטרליה

306 Hawthorn Road
South Caulfield Vic 3162
Australia
Tel (03) 9272 5579
Fax (03) 9272 5540
E-mail: info@ecaj.org.au

MEDIA RELEASE
11 October 2006

SBS's Codes of Practice have improved, but more is needed

Grahame Leonard, the President of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, the peak body of the Australian Jewish community, cautiously welcomed the issuance by SBS of its final "Codes of Practice". Expressing concern that SBS had "missed the opportunity to adopt a robust, transparent and fair complaints handling system", Leonard described the new Codes as "no better than a mixed bag".

Compared to the second exposure draft issued a little over a month ago, the ECAJ has acknowledged improvements in the final codes. In particular SBS has removed the prospect of broadcasting untruthful propaganda which had appeared in draft Code 1.6. SBS also has removed the code permitting it to broadcast "a documentary that gives greater weight to the claims of one side than another", apparently accepting the ECAJ objection (among others) that this was a licence for accepting allegations as fact under the value-free rubric that all allegations of fact are "claims" worthy of broadcast.

However SBS has not committed to the prompt correction on air of falsehoods, distortions and omissions, an issue of concern raised by the ECAJ, and other submissions. Most regrettably no improvements in the complaints systems have been adopted. Nor has SBS committed to either completeness of reporting to ensure accuracy in context, and impartiality in captioning and production. Indeed the current 30 day processing of stage one of a complaint can now be extended to 60 days by the Managing Director.

Leonard said: "It is perplexing that SBS continues to resist adopting internal processes that comply with the Australian Standard on Complaints Handling AS 4269-1995. Doing so would strengthen community confidence in SBS".

"As a multicultural broadcaster, SBS should have should have acknowledged that it has an obligation not to 'promote, endorse, or reinforce inaccurate, demeaning or discriminatory stereotypes'". Leonard added: "It is unfortunate that the Codes only preclude *intentional* broadcast of such material. In contrast, there is a firm commitment not to broadcast programs that suggest that the exploitation of women is acceptable."

Further information: David Knoll

Mobile: 0416 209 679

Email: info@ecaj.org.au