The Broadcasting Standards Authority is a Crown Entity which oversees programme standards on TV and radio. We are looking for 6 special members of the public to form our inaugural Community Advisory Panel. The CAP will help the BSA board by providing informed opinion on a range of issues about broadcasting standards which affect the community.

CAP members will be a variety of people from different backgrounds. Media experience is not necessary but a keen interest in what is seen on television and listened to on radio is important. We are especially interested in hearing from people with good links into different communities and with different life experiences - eg regional, Māori, ethnic, youth, seniors, parents, community-based clubs, and professional networks such as teaching or technology. We will provide concise backgrounds on all issues to be discussed - you don't need to be an expert but you will enjoy thinking and debating.

Expenses to attend meetings in Wellington will be paid if required. Up to three meetings a year will be scheduled of around half a day each.

More about the BSA and a Terms of Reference for the CAP can be found on www.bsa.govt.nz.

Goals for the CAP

- to consider issues identified by the BSA as needing community input and to provide considered opinion and advice (these will initially mostly be related to the Broadcasting Codes of Practice and general issues arising from formal complaints but may later develop into wider broadcasting considerations)
- to identify relevant issues relating to broadcasting standards affecting your community which might benefit from CAP consideration
- to provide information and advice on likely attitudes and opinions from various sections of the community about general broadcasting issues

Write to us highlighting your interests, community linkages and how you could add value to the activities of the BSA.

Send to the Chief Executive, BSA, PO Box 9213, Wellington by Friday 10 March 2006, or email it to info@bsa.govt.nz.

Launched of Media Savvy Website – www.mediascape.ac.nz

In this edition of BSA Quarterly, we promote an exciting New Zealand media literacy website; advertise for members of a Community Advisory Panel; note that complaints system guidance for broadcasters is now available on the BSA’s site; and summarise some of the interesting BSA decisions issued in the quarter October to December 2005.

The BSA is proud to be a foundation sponsor of a new media literacy website: www.mediascape.ac.nz.

In 2003, our Statement of Intent noted that the need for clear, accessible information about broadcasting standards for broadcasters and the community had never been more acute. We undertook to investigate a ‘pilot exercise’ in producing relevant media literacy education materials. The BSA wanted, in particular, to focus on information for parents to assist them in monitoring their children’s viewing. A web-based tool was seen as the most likely first step. Now, with the support of the BSA, a site with helpful information for parents about the media, information about broadcasting standards, and much more, has ‘gone live’.

Media literacy has never been more important, says Dr Zanker. “Media today includes television, radio, newspapers, magazines and the internet, all of which have a powerful impact on our lives. People can access more and more media content – it’s digital and on lots of different platforms including mobile phones and ipods. Media literacy, now, is about cultural and political confidence – understanding how the media work, being able to access and evaluate content and be able to answer back, say what you like and don’t like and participate in shaping it.”

The foundation sponsors, the BSA, ASA and Families Commission, have supported the project as an innovative way to help inform and empower audiences, parents and students. The agencies believe that, instead of working on different projects with slightly different objectives, such collaboration provides a significantly better and broader-reaching tool.

The researchers stress that the site will constantly evolve. They have ambitious plans for further development, including more media content. "In the future we hope to provide access to a great deal of archive material, be it from radio, television or film," says Dr Zanker. The site will be regularly updated with news and comment on media issues.

Quarterly
The BSA decided that the complainant was clearly identifiable in the item, and it found that a majority of viewers would have assumed that he was the alleged offender.

The BSA considered that wrongly identifying a person as being accused of possessing child pornography was seriously unfair, and it accepted the complainant's submission that the 3 News' mistake had caused him an extreme degree of embarrassment and prejudice.

The BSA ordered CanWest TVWorks Ltd to pay costs to the Crown of $3,000.

Decision ref. 2005-049

Balance

An item on Sunday entitled “The Monster of Berhampore” examined the case of a former senior member, now deceased, of the Presbyterian Support Services who ran the Berhampore Children’s Home in Wellington. Former residents alleged that the man had sexually abused children while they were in his care in the 1960s and 1970s.

The complainant said that the item breached the law and order standard and was unbalanced. The BSA did not uphold the law and order complaint, noting that the intent behind this standard is to prevent broadcasts that encourage viewers to break the law, or otherwise promote, glamorise or condone criminal activity.

With respect to balance, the BSA found that the programme provided substantial evidence of the man’s guilt, but did not actively present the point of view that the man may be innocent. However, the broadcaster had made several attempts to obtain comment from the man’s family and his solicitor; and the BSA noted that these were the most obvious – and perhaps only – sources for an alternative perspective.

In these circumstances, the BSA considered that TVNZ made reasonable efforts to present alternative points of view. In the absence of other available information refuting the man’s guilt, the BSA declined to uphold the balance complaint.

Decision ref. 2005-082