[GB] new code for broadcasters

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Stefaan Verhulst
PCMLP University of Oxford

At the beginning of June the Broadcasting Standards Commission published a revised Code of Guidance on Taste and Decency. Production of a code on standards of taste and decency is a statutory requirement placed upon the Commission by Parliament under sections 107 and 108 of the Broadcasting Act 1996. The first code on standards was published by the former Broadcasting Standards Council in 1989. The Commission has now re-written its code on taste and decency because it believes some current warnings are not straightforward enough. The code points out that programmes can cause particular offence when viewers or listeners are shocked or alarmed without any warning. It also emphasises the continued importance of the Watershed as a well established scheduling marker to distinguish clearly between programmes mainly for family viewing and those intended for adults. It reminds broadcasters that there are significant concerns about the portrayal of violence and sexual conduct, in particular for the young. Sensitive scheduling, especially around the Watershed, is therefore considered to be important. That also applies to bad language, of which the Commission thinks that there is hardly ever any justification for the use of offensive language before the Watershed. The same document also includes the Code on Fairness and Privacy, the second Statute required by sections 107 and 108 of the Broadcasting Act. This code came into effect on 1 January of this year and established two important rules for broadcasters. First, any invasion of privacy must be warranted by an overriding public interest in the disclosure of the information; and secondly the actions of the broadcaster must be proportionate to the matter under investigation. It covers such issues as the use of hidden microphones and "doorstepping". It also establishes the criteria for dealing fairly with contributors. The revised Code on Standards has immediate effect.

Revised Code of Guidance on Taste and Decency.

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