



## QTQ 9 Brisbane

### Invasion of privacy and accuracy and fairness

#### **Complaint**

In April 1999 the ABA received a complaint that alleged that a segment of the current affairs program '60 Minutes', broadcast by QTQ 9 on 27 April 1997, made false allegations about Senator Mal Colston and his family.

The story concerned allegations that Senator Colston had presented three Australian flags to service organisations, representing them as flags signed by the Prime Minister which had been used in a service at Gallipoli on Anzac Day 1990. The flags distributed by the Senator, it was said, were not the Gallipoli flags.

#### **Relevant code of practice**

Section 4 of the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice provides, in part:

4.3 In broadcasting news and current affairs programs, licensees:

4.3.1 must present factual material accurately and represent viewpoints fairly, having regard to the circumstances at the time of preparing and broadcasting the program; ...

#### **Decision**

The ABA determined that the licensee of QTQ 9, Queensland Television Ltd, did not breach clause 4.3.1 of the code in its broadcast of the segment on '60 Minutes' on 27 April 1997 in terms of material which specifically related to the allegations made against Senator Colston about the Gallipoli flags.

However, the ABA determined that the Queensland Television Ltd breached clause 4.3.1 of the code in terms of both accuracy and representing viewpoints fairly by broadcasting the statement that Senator Colston refused to comment on the allegations when no direct contact had been made with him.

#### **Action taken**

In response to the ABA's request for comments Network Nine advised that the relevant staff of '60 Minutes' had been advised that the failure of a person to respond to telephone calls and faxes requesting comment should not be referred to as a 'refusal'.

As this is the first breach of this nature by the licensee, the ABA does not intend to take any further action on this occasion.