



(Incorporating Children's Media Watch)

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24/10/10

The Chief Executive
Broadcasting Standards Authority
PO Box 9213
WELLINGTON

REF: HANDLING OF COMPLAINTS FROM OUR MEMBERS

Dear Sir

We are appalled that the Authority has threatened Donald MacDonald with costs for making what are alleged to be frivolous and vexatious complaints.

Our Executive is of the view that the statutory role of the Authority is to uphold Standards, not to punish the people who complain. We have completely lost confidence in the ability of the Authority to contain continuing offenses against standards on NZ television – most recently in the example of the behaviour of Paul Henry, who has been allowed far too much latitude for far too long, and for many years now in respect of its failure to properly delineate and oversee an effective Watershed to protect this country from gratuitous sex, violence and bad language.

In our opinion, the Authority is far too close to the industry, and divorced from the real concerns of ordinary people. This latest effort, to punish Mr MacDonald, is just another example of the Authority's record, which displays an increasing tendency to side with the broadcaster and to penalise complainants. It does not appear to have occurred to the Authority that people like Mr MacDonald are to be valued and applauded (as some magazines and newspapers have already done) for their public-spiritedness, and willingness to persevere through a complaints process

which the 2004 Government report of Television Violence found to be hopelessly cumbersome and outdated.

It may be true that some of Donald's complaints involve matters of detail, but he is making an important point consistently in doing this, which is that error in the small things is but a symptom of a much wider malaise within the Broadcasting system as a whole, which is dismissive of any obligation to uphold standards as in general.

The open hostility shown by the Authority to complainants like Mr MacDonald is indefensible.

I am on leave and out of the country when the Authority next meets, but wish to have an opportunity to make a verbal submission to the Authority on my return

Yours faithfully,

(John Terris)

National President

MEDIA MATTERS

Copy Hon. Dr Jonathan Coleman, Minister of Broadcasting