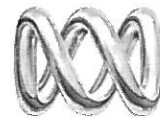


13 February 2013



Australian
Broadcasting
Corporation

Ms Sophie Dunstone
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Senate Environment and Communications References
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Dear Ms Dunstone

Thank you for your letter of 31 January 2013 to Mark Scott regarding correspondence from an ABC audience member. Mr Scott has asked me to respond on his behalf. The ABC appreciates the opportunity to respond on this matter.

Ms Jo-Anne Bloomfield has made a number of complaints regarding the ABC's coverage of the live exports industry. Each of those complaints have been considered by the ABC's complaints-handling unit, Audience and Consumer Affairs. Audience and Consumer Affairs operate independently from the ABC's content making Divisions and applies the ABC's Editorial Principles and Code of Practice.

The ABC believes that Ms Bloomfield's concerns have been addressed through the various responses it has provided to her correspondence. The ABC notes that no complaints regarding the *Four Corners* and *Lateline* episodes in question were upheld.

The ABC's News services are subject to close scrutiny, which we welcome. The ABC's commitment to transparency around its News services was demonstrated by the Corporation's willingness to appear before the Senate Standing Committee on Rural Affairs and Transport Inquiry into Animal Welfare Standards in Australia's Live Export Markets.

For the benefit of the Committee, the following information sets out the sequence of correspondence between Ms Bloomfield and the ABC.

1. *Four Corners, A Bloody Business, received 27 April 2012*

Ms Bloomfield said in her complaint that she was dismayed by the program when it first aired in 2011 as it was blatantly one-sided and misrepresented the cattle export industry. Audience and Consumer Affairs investigated the complaint and responded to Ms Bloomfield, setting out its finding that the complaint was not upheld.

2. *Four Corners, A Bloody Business and Lateline, Another Bloody Business, received 4 and 13 November 2012*

The 4 November complaint is that which forms the basis of Ms Bloomfield's Senate Committee submission. It was referred to Audience and Consumer Affairs. The further correspondence on

13 November 2012 summarised her concerns (lack of accuracy and a failure to provide an opportunity to respond to allegations) and noted that she had not received a reply from *Four Corners*.

Audience and Consumer Affairs responded and noted that her substantive concerns were about 'A Bloody Business' which was broadcast in 2011. Ms Bloomfield was advised that the ABC does not generally investigate complaints received more than six weeks after broadcast. She was informed that complaints received about the program at the time of its broadcast were investigated and the program was found to have been in keeping with the ABC's Code of Practice. She was invited to provide specific concerns in relation to 'Another Bloody Business' if she wanted those concerns investigated.

3. *Four Corners, A Bloody Business and Lateline, Another Bloody Business, received 3 December 2012*

In her 3 December 2012 correspondence, Ms Bloomfield reiterated her original concerns about 'A Bloody Business', saying she was still waiting on a reply from *Four Corners* and elaborated on her concerns about 'Another Bloody Business'.

Ms Bloomfield perceived the latter program to be a sequel and complained that apologies and corrections about the first program should have been presented in it (she was again advised that 'A Bloody Business' had been investigated at the time and not upheld so did not require corrections).

She complained that the latter program was misleading in that it did not mention improvements that had been made in Indonesia, but used some of the footage from the first program. Audience and Consumer Affairs investigated her concerns and no breaches were found. She was also advised that *Four Corners* would not be responding to her earlier concerns as they had been appropriately referred to Audience and Consumer Affairs who responded.

4. *7.30 tweet, received 12 December 2012*

Ms Bloomfield complained about a Tweet from the 7.30 program team which said "watch disturbing vision of mistreated Austn cattle, & read responses from key groups attached at bottom of pg: bit.ly/U28NfW".

The tweet referred to a 7.30 story broadcast on 11 December 2012 'Israeli abattoir abuse questions Australia's live export system'. Ms Bloomfield's complaint was that the report stated that the animals were of unknown origin and yet to be verified, whereas the Tweet described the cattle as Australian.

On 31 January 2013, ABC News responded to Ms Bloomfield agreeing that the tweet should not have been definitive, and should have perhaps made reference to the cattle "allegedly" being Australian. Ms Bloomfield's complaint about the accuracy of the tweet has been brought to the attention of ABC News management.

I hope this information is of use to the Committee. The ABC believes its independent complaints-handling system has dealt with Ms Bloomfield's concerns in an appropriate manner.

Yours sincerely

Michael Millett
Director, Corporate Affairs