

# CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF MELBOURNE

Cardinal Knox Centre  
383 Albert Street  
East Melbourne Vic. 3002  
P.O. Box 146, East Melbourne 8002

Telephone: (03) 9926 5771  
Mobile: 0412 213 692  
Facsimile: (03) 9926 5749  
Email: jofarrell@melbourne.catholic.org.au  
www.melbourne.catholic.org.au

The Secretary,  
Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts,  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House,  
CANBERRA ACT 2600,

Dear Dr Holland

## **Inquiry Into the Effectiveness of the Broadcasting Codes of Practice**

The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne receives phone calls from persons whose religious sensitivities have been offended by television programs.

For instance, many phone calls were received after the first episode of Californication (Channel 10) in 2007. Several calls were received in relation to a Melbourne Storm advertisement which was running in 2007. These callers are often deeply offended and angry.

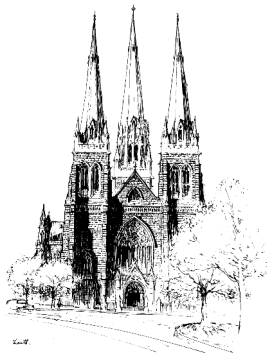
Matters relating to television program content are treated under the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice 2004.

It is important that the Code be strengthened as, at present, a television license holder, whilst noting that the religious sensitivities of some members of the community were offended by, for instance, the first episode of Californication, could reasonably claim in fact that there has been no breach of the Code in its current form.

Whilst sections 1.8.6, 2.1, 2.3, 4.3.10 and 6.16 of the Code treat religious issues they do not address the prospect of offending *religious sensitivities* of members of the community.

The Code addresses issues of cultural sensitivities:

- Section 1.8.5 recognises the need to respect cultural *sensitivities*.
- At Advisory Note –‘The Portrayal of Cultural Diversity’ it recognises the need to respect religious and cultural beliefs and practices of people from non-English or minority racial backgrounds who “should receive no less respect than those of the English speaking majority.”



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The Code should be strengthened so that a licensee shall not broadcast a program or program promotion that offends the religious sensitivities of any or all persons holding particular religious beliefs in the Australian community.

I submit that these proposals for reforms to the Code should also be included in the Australian Broadcasting Authority's standards which regulate programs for children and the Australian content of programs and advertisements and any Codes of advertising authorised by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. I also submit that an Advisory Note be included in the Code to help and encourage reporters and program producers to produce programs which respect the religious sensitivities of persons in the Australian community holding religious beliefs.

Yours Sincerely

Jim O'Farrell  
Chief Information and Communications Officer

2 May 2008