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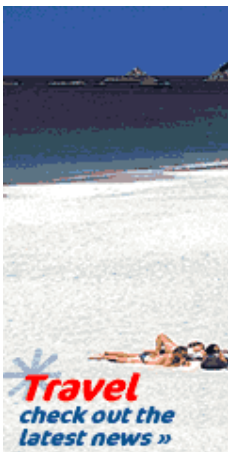
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Radio show denigrated church members



Michael Laws

25.02.05 1.00pm

Two complaints over comments on Radio Pacific about the ultra-conservative Exclusive Brethren church have been upheld by the Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA).

Maurice Clist of Auckland, and Harland Mason of Wanganui along with four others from Auckland, Palmerston North, Feilding and Nelson, complained after Radio Pacific talkback host Michael Laws held a discussion about Exclusive Brethren and religious cults.

One topic was whether sects should be granted dispensation from certain laws.

Mr Laws, who is the mayor of Wanganui, had alleged Exclusive Brethren members were "mad, ignorant, bad neighbours, and probable child abusers who should be bred out of the human race", the complaints said.

Terms used during the show included "nutter sect", "potty", "dangerous little buggers", and "strange and weird beasties".

One caller had said Exclusive Brethren members "even (commit) incest", and that they justified it on the basis of certain passages of the Bible.

The complainants said the broadcast was inaccurate, unbalanced, unfair, degrading, defamatory and discriminatory.

CanWest Radioworks Ltd, broadcasting as Radio Pacific, replied that the talkback programme invited reaction and response from listeners about topics of interest.

"Presenters... commonly raise issues in a provocative manner in order to generate a response from the audience -- the outrageous and the outspoken are common...." the company said.

However, the BSA decided that the broadcast, in July 2004,

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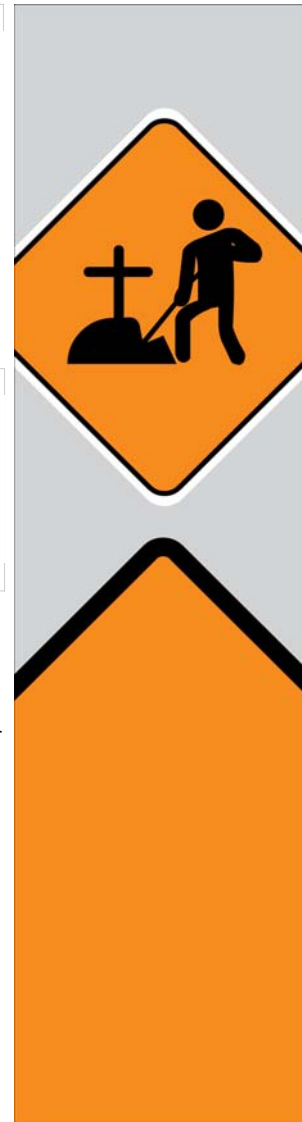
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breached fairness, denigration and discrimination principles.

"The authority has no doubt that the broadcast had the effect of encouraging denigration by blackening the reputation of members of the Exclusive Brethren," it said.

Particularly concerning was a comment that the church was "a quiet Mongrel Mob" and should not breed.

Comment from listeners did not provide any credible rebuttal or response to the host, the BSA said.

Mr Clist was awarded \$2366.74 in costs and expenses and Mr Mason \$1090 in costs, to be paid by CanWest Radioworks.

The BSA ordered the company to broadcast a BSA-approved statement, summarising the decision.

- NZPA

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