

# Advisory Notes to the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice

Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations, Advisory Notes to the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice, Sydney, FACTS, 1994.

FACTS is an industry association which represents all Australian commercial television stations. It is the public voice of the industry on a wide range of issues. FACTS oversees the industry's self-regulation of program content and advertising, under its Code of Practice. The following are "advisory notes" attached to the code, covering guidelines for the portrayal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and of cultural diversity.

## Advisory Notes

### ***The portrayal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples***

These Advisory Notes are to help and encourage reporters and program producers to produce programs which treat the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as an integral and important part of contemporary Australia, and which respect the dignity, traditions, diversity and contemporary achievements of these peoples. They also suggest ways to avoid encouraging or endorsing prejudice, stereotyping or unwarranted generalisation.

1. In reporting or portraying events or situations concerning Indigenous peoples, you should be conscious of your own preconceptions, and be aware of the cultural norms and experiences of these peoples.
2. Balanced portrayal is particularly important when the reports or programs deal with negative aspects of

the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' lives. Descriptions of problems should, where possible, be balanced by details of efforts being made by the people themselves to resolve them, and should provide an opportunity for the person or group concerned to comment on the issue.

3. To avoid misrepresenting Indigenous peoples' circumstances and traditions, reporters should, wherever practicable, consult local Indigenous groups when preparing news and current affairs. Program makers should encourage Indigenous peoples' involvement in all relevant stages of production of programs relating to them.
4. You should respect local social protocols and codes of behaviour, and obtain any necessary permission before entering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
5. You should be careful not to use language which Indigenous peoples find offensive or discriminatory. This includes terms such as Full-blood, Half-caste, Part-Aboriginal, Walkabout and the use of "Aboriginal" except as an adjective (i.e. avoid reference to "an Aboriginal").
6. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander paintings and symbols should not be used in programs without seeking appropriate guidance.
7. Indigenous religious and cultural beliefs should be respected, particularly the widespread prohibition on displaying images of the deceased or naming them during periods of

mourning. When the mourning period cannot readily be ascertained, the use of images of recently deceased Aboriginal persons should be preceded by an appropriate oral warning.

8. In scripting and casting drama and selecting on-air talent, management and producers should be concerned to reflect the place of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in contemporary Australia.

## ***The portrayal of cultural diversity***

These Advisory Notes are to help and encourage reporters and program producers to produce programs which treat all people with equal respect, regardless of their national, ethnic or linguistic background. They also suggest ways to avoid promoting or provoking prejudice, stereotyping or unwarranted generalisation. These notes complement the separate Advisory Notes on the Portrayal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

1. Be sensitive to language and images which people from non-English speaking or minority racial backgrounds may reasonably find offensive or discriminatory. In particular:
  - (a) avoid the unwarranted introduction of race or ethnicity into a story, and particularly the unnecessary use of ethnic-specific labels in reporting on suspected or convicted criminals;
  - (b) avoid references to the ethnic or racial origin of a person or group which imply that only people from English speaking backgrounds are Australian (e.g. do not automatically refer to an Australian of Chinese background as "a Chinese man");
  - (c) generally avoid outdated

representations of how people from non-English speaking backgrounds speak English or behave.

2. When reporting or portraying events involving people with racial backgrounds which differ from your own, you should be conscious of your own preconceptions and be sensitive to the cultural norms and experiences of those people.
3. Any reports on race-related issues should be well researched, and not based solely on the claims of particular groups.
4. The religious and cultural beliefs and practices of people from non-English speaking or minority racial backgrounds should receive no less respect than those of the English speaking majority. Editorial comment in these areas should be factually based, and culturally aware.
5. In scripting and casting drama and selecting on-air talent, management and producers should be concerned to reflect Australia's complex and culturally diverse society.