

SBS CODE OF PRACTICE

MAY 2026



FOREWORD

The ***Special Broadcasting Service Act 1991*** (Cth) sets out the **SBS Charter**, including SBS's principal function to provide multilingual, multicultural and Indigenous broadcasting and digital media services that inform, educate and entertain all Australians. SBS is a diverse national broadcaster. Our breadth of distinctive content intentionally reflects the diversity of contemporary Australia.

The SBS Code of Practice, as approved by the SBS Board in fulfilling its functions, outlines the principles and policies that guide SBS, ensuring the highest standards of editorial independence and integrity apply to our content. This is critical to gaining and preserving the trust of audiences, and to meeting the expectations of Australians at a time when the reliability and role of independent public broadcasting and digital media services is more important than ever.

The SBS Code of Practice is set within a framework of three principles, against which SBS holds itself accountable – Trust, Transparency and Respect. It details SBS's obligations regarding matters such as accuracy for factual content, impartiality and balance in our news and current affairs, scheduling of content, advertising and sponsorship, and complaints handling.

Together with other SBS policies and guidelines, the SBS Code of Practice guides SBS to independently determine what is broadcast or published across its channels and platforms, with the Managing Director, as the Editor-in-Chief and member of the SBS Board, having final editorial responsibility.

SBS takes seriously its responsibility to ensure its policies are fit for purpose and support the high standards expected of us, maintaining SBS's reputation for independence, impartiality and editorial integrity. The SBS Code of Practice has developed over time to reflect community standards, audience needs, changes in the sector, regulatory updates, and any substantial changes to SBS's suite of services. SBS is continuously evolving to serve audiences on their platforms of choice. The Code reflects this, applying standards to all SBS-produced and acquired content, no matter how it is delivered. It covers all our content – from social media platforms and streaming services to traditional television and radio over the air.

SBS's vision is to inspire all Australians to explore, respect and celebrate our diverse world, thereby contributing to social cohesion. With clear benchmarks and principles set out in the SBS Code of Practice, SBS will continue to deliver on its Charter and purpose, with essential services for our diverse communities and high quality, independent, distinctive content relevant to today's Australia.

Jane Palfreyman
Managing Director

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1. INTRODUCTION

The SBS Code of Practice (Code) sets out the principles and policies SBS uses to guide its content to ensure that SBS maintains the highest standards of editorial independence and integrity.

In addition to and distinct from this Code, SBS adheres to a range of other policies and practices relevant to the delivery of its services.

The Code may be amended from time to time to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

In fulfilling its obligations under the [Special Broadcasting Service Act 1991](#) (Cth), which includes the [SBS Charter](#), SBS operates on the principles of **Trust, Transparency and Respect**. These principles define who we are, guide the creation of content across all our platforms, and are the standards by which we hold ourselves accountable. Through these principles, all Australians can be assured that SBS will deliver on its promise to audiences.

Gaining and maintaining the **Trust** of audiences is central to all that we do.

SBS is a source of trustworthy information that embraces a plurality of views supporting and contributing to a diverse and vibrant society.

SBS applies robust editorial standards. Audiences can have confidence that SBS news and current affairs will be accurate, balanced and impartial. SBS presents a wide range of perspectives and information to encourage open and constructive discussion within Australia.

Through its strong editorial standards, SBS provides trusted content that helps counter the spread of misinformation and disinformation.

SBS undertakes to be **Transparent** in the information it provides to audiences, and the way in which it delivers its services.

SBS offers an extensive and diverse range of content, and provides guidance so audiences can choose the content that best fits their needs.

Respect is at the core of SBS. SBS facilitates respectful interactions, encourages the expression of different perspectives, and fosters understanding.

SBS is the home of diversity and inclusion. SBS supports and contributes to a vibrant and cohesive multicultural society by providing multilingual and multicultural radio, television and digital media content and services to meet the needs of Australia's multicultural society and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In doing so, SBS promotes understanding and acceptance of the cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity of all Australians.

SBS acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples identify in diverse and distinct ways. The terms Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, First Nations, and Indigenous are used interchangeably throughout this Code when referring to First Nations peoples of Australia.

In providing these services SBS balances the rights of individuals to privacy with the public interest.

Through the delivery of its content and services, SBS helps new arrivals understand the country they now call home, while helping all Australians to better understand and respect each other and our many cultures, to aid social cohesion.

2. APPLICATION

2.1 SBS Content and Platforms

The Code applies to content that is produced, commissioned, acquired or otherwise obtained by SBS for broadcast or publication on its platforms over which SBS has editorial control (SBS content).

This includes:

- audio and video content, and written material, including television and radio programs, online articles, podcasts, apps and social media content;
- content-related material such as program, channel and network promotions.

SBS platforms include:

- SBS television broadcasting services;
- SBS radio broadcasting services;
- SBS digital media services including on demand, live streaming services and FAST channels on SBS On Demand, SBS Audio services, podcasts, and the SBS website;
- SBS branded and managed accounts and services on third party platforms including social media platforms, content sharing platforms and digital content aggregation platforms.

References to 'SBS' in this Code refer to all SBS platforms unless otherwise indicated.

SBS aims, as far as possible, to apply consistent standards across its platforms. Due to differences in broadcasting and digital media platforms, there may be some variation in the application of certain provisions in this Code.

SBS also operates under a range of related policies, industry standards, regulations and guidelines which do not form part of the Code, including the **SBS Commercial, Funding and External Relationships Guidelines**, and the **SBS Guiding Principles for Use of Artificial Intelligence**.

2.2 Exclusions

The Code does not apply to:

- non-SBS-produced news and current affairs ([see 2.2.1](#));
- corporate information on the SBS website including media releases, policies and guidelines, and annual reports;
- the content of advertisements, sponsorship announcements, and community service announcements (CSAs) which appear on SBS platforms;
- advertising on SBS branded and managed accounts and services on third party platforms;
- third party posts (for example, comments) and the moderation and management of those posts on SBS branded and managed social media accounts and services, which are subject to the **SBS Terms and Conditions**;
- SBS program schedules including the electronic program guide and the **SBS On Demand Guide**.

2.2.1 Non-SBS-produced news and current affairs

SBS broadcasts and publishes substantially unedited news and current affairs content from international sources (including WorldWatch services) across SBS platforms.

SBS will identify the source of this material so that audiences can exercise their own judgement about how issues and information are presented.

Content that is broadcast and published under this provision will be preceded by a disclaimer advising audiences that the SBS Code of Practice does not apply and it may contain distressing content.

In the case of SBS Audio, it may not always be possible for the disclaimer to precede the content. In those instances, the disclaimer will be provided during the program and as part of the program information on the relevant SBS platform.

These international news and current affairs services are provided to cater for the individual language and cultural needs of Australia's diverse multicultural communities. They provide access to regular news services from the places of origin of many of Australia's residents. These services also offer all Australians alternative perspectives on world news events. Much of the material is in a language other than English and is not subtitled. These services are drawn from a variety of overseas sources including government, public and commercial media providers.

2.3 Context

The application of the Code is guided by context. What is unacceptable in one context may be appropriate and acceptable in another.

The Code does not prevent the presentation of factual material, opinion, or material that is humorous, satirical, artistic or dramatic in nature. This includes material that may be offensive or distasteful to particular audiences.

When assessing context, including in relation to the assessment of complaints, SBS will consider a range of factors, including:

- the nature of the content – including its genre, subject matter and editorial purpose;
- the platform or service on which the content is broadcast or published;
- reasonable audience expectations;
- the reasonable sensitivities of the anticipated audience.

3. TRUST

3.1 Editorial Independence and Integrity

SBS is committed to preserving the trust and confidence of all Australians, who rely on SBS's editorial independence and integrity across all its content.

SBS independently determines what is broadcast and published on SBS platforms.

NITV content is primarily produced by, for and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. NITV ensures First Nations knowledges, voices and perspectives are prioritised and portrayed accurately and authentically with an Indigenous lens. Maintaining the trust and respect of the Indigenous community is paramount.

3.2 Accuracy

SBS will not knowingly and materially mislead audiences in the presentation of factual material.

SBS will apply reasonable efforts to ensure that factual material including news and current affairs is gathered and presented with due accuracy, having regard to the circumstances, and facts known, at the time of broadcasting or publishing the content.

The requirement for accuracy does not mean that an exhaustive coverage of all factual material relating to the matters broadcast or published must be presented.

SBS will take reasonable and timely steps to acknowledge and correct significant errors of fact.

3.3 Diversity of Views and Perspectives

SBS is committed to broadcasting and publishing content that reflects a diversity of experiences, beliefs, cultures and languages.

SBS will seek to represent a comprehensive range of views and perspectives, subject to the availability of appropriate material.

SBS will give due weight to the available evidence relating to particular subject matter.

SBS may broadcast and publish content such as documentaries and opinion pieces that present particular points of view or explore specific aspects of issues. Such content is not required to present every viewpoint or all available material relating to a particular issue or to allocate equal time to different viewpoints.

NITV content gives primacy to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, interests, and perspectives. NITV reflects the diversity of First Nations peoples and ensures that a range of Indigenous perspectives are presented.

3.4 Balanced and Impartial News and Current Affairs

SBS independently decides the content of its news and current affairs programs and other published material.

SBS-produced and SBS-commissioned news and current affairs content seeks to provide a balanced and impartial presentation of issues and events, including through the provision of a range of relevant and material viewpoints. News and current affairs content may include opinion and comment.

NITV presents news and current affairs from the perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

SBS will make reasonable efforts to ensure news and current affairs content is gathered and presented with due impartiality and is balanced.

In discharging these obligations, SBS will take into consideration the context of the relevant content, including the circumstances at the time of broadcast or publication, the nature and immediacy of the material being reported, the weight of evidence relating to particular subject matter, the platform and service on which the content is broadcast or published, and the public interest.

SBS's commitment to impartiality and balance requires SBS to present over time and across the schedule a wide range of significant views, not misrepresenting them or unduly favouring one over another.

In relation to news content, for major issues that are contentious, balance should be provided over the period in which the issue is active where practical through the presentation, as far as possible, of principal relevant viewpoints. For other matters, balance should be provided over a reasonable period.

SBS is not required to present all viewpoints on an issue or to allocate equal time to different points of view. SBS-produced and SBS-commissioned news and current affairs content may include critical examination of controversial issues and the presentation of critical and provocative points of view.

SBS avoids sensationalised and exaggerated treatment of news events.

4. TRANSPARENCY

4.1 Harm and Offence

SBS broadcasts and publishes innovative and, at times, challenging material. SBS content can be controversial and provocative and could be considered distasteful or offensive to some.

Material that is likely to cause harm and offence must be justified by context, and adequate protective measures provided as set out in this section 4 of the Code.

4.1.1 Violence, distressing events and other harmful material in news, current affairs and other content that is not classified

The decision to broadcast or publish violent or graphic images or audio and other potentially harmful material (such as offensive language or distressing subject matter), is based on the editorial relevance of the material, including its newsworthiness and whether it is in the public interest, the level of detail, explicitness and graphic nature of the material, together with proper regard for the likely audience and their reasonable sensitivities.

Where appropriate, content containing violent or distressing images or audio or other harmful material will be preceded by timely and appropriate warnings advising that some audience members may find the material distressing.

The timing and content of breaking or live news and other live content, such as current affairs events and sports coverage, can be unpredictable. As far as is practicable, SBS will exercise due care in the selection of audio and images taking into account the likely composition of the audience.

SBS will not sensationalise violent or distressing news events or present them gratuitously.

In covering distressing events, SBS requires content makers to exercise sensitivity, particularly when approaching, interviewing or portraying people who are distressed.

4.1.2 Classification and scheduling of content

SBS will ensure that content is scheduled appropriately, taking into consideration a range of factors including the platform, service, type of content, likely composition of the audience and the content's classification.

Television programs and program promotions broadcast and published on SBS's television broadcasting services and digital platforms including SBS On Demand are assessed by SBS under SBS's classification guidelines in Appendix 1.

News programs (including news updates), current affairs programs and sports programs are not subject to classification under this section. This material is assessed and broadcast and published in line with [section 4.1.1](#) of this Code.

Classification categories

SBS uses the following classification categories:

- General (G)
- Parental Guidance (PG)
- Mature (M)
- Mature Audience (MA15+)

Classification symbols

The classification symbol of the PG, M or MA15+ program being shown will be displayed at the start of a program on SBS television broadcasting services and as part of the program information on SBS digital platforms including SBS On Demand.

Classification advice

Advice on the principal reasons for an M or MA15+ classification decision will be given at the start of the program on SBS television broadcasting services and as part of the program information on SBS digital platforms including SBS On Demand. In exceptional cases, classification advice may be provided prior to the beginning of the program.

SBS may provide other appropriate classification advice for a PG classified program where the program contains material of a strength or intensity that SBS reasonably believes parents or guardians of young children may not expect.

Scheduling program promotions

Program promotions will not exceed the classification of surrounding or adjacent programming matter.

Where the content in which a program promotion is placed is unclassified, program promotions will be scheduled with regard to the time zone on SBS television broadcasting services.

Time zones

SBS will generally broadcast television programs and program promotions on SBS television broadcasting services in accordance with the time zone indicated for each classification category as set out in [Appendix 1](#).

As PG content can be shown at any time, parents or guardians will need to assess the suitability of content when supervising children's viewing.

SBS should have sound reasons for any departure from the time zone for a program classification.

Some programs may be broadcast or received outside their classification time zone including where individuals choose to access the broadcast signal outside of their local area.

Note: SBS digital platforms, including SBS live-streamed channels, are not subject to the classification time zone provisions.

4.1.3 Suicide

Suicide is a legitimate subject for content but one that should be portrayed with a high degree of sensitivity. SBS will take care to avoid describing or showing methods of suicide in great detail. Where methods are described, SBS will have regard to context and editorial relevance.

4.2 Advertising and Sponsorship

SBS may broadcast and publish advertisements and sponsorship announcements on its broadcasting and digital media platforms.

The SBS Board is required to develop guidelines on matters relating to advertising and sponsorship and these are available in the [SBS Commercial, Funding and External Relationships Guidelines](#).

The selection and placement of advertisements and sponsorship announcements on its platforms, including any restrictions, is a matter for SBS.

SBS has adopted the following definition of advertisement:

Matter for which SBS receives consideration in cash or in kind, that draws the attention of the public, or a segment thereof, to a product, service, person, organisation or line of conduct in a manner calculated to promote or recommend, directly or indirectly, that product, service, person, organisation or line of conduct.

SBS has adopted the following definition of sponsorship announcement:

Matter for which SBS receives consideration in cash or in kind that advises audiences of a sponsorship relationship with SBS and actively promotes the product, service, person, organisation or line of conduct of the sponsor in a favourable way.

Advertisements and sponsorship announcements must be readily distinguishable from SBS content.

In relation to SBS television broadcasting services, SBS takes account of the advertising restrictions in the **Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice** (2015) that relate to the classification, timing and placement of advertisements and sponsorship announcements, including in relation to particular product categories.

This Code does not apply to the content of advertisements and sponsorship announcements. Complaints about the content of advertisements and sponsorship announcements are managed through the advertising industry's self-regulatory scheme (**Ad Standards**).

4.2.1 Restrictions on the promotion of odds and commercials relating to betting and gambling in live sports coverage

SBS television and radio broadcasting services

SBS follows the provisions in the:

- Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice that restrict the promotion of odds and commercials relating to betting and gambling which are broadcast during a live sporting event on SBS television broadcasting services (**Appendix 3: Restrictions on Promotion of Odds and Commercials relating to Betting and Gambling which are broadcast during a Live Sporting Event** (30 March 2018)); and
- Commercial Radio Code of Practice that restrict the promotion of gambling and betting odds in live sports coverage on SBS radio broadcasting services (**Section 9 Promotion of gambling and betting odds in live sports coverage** (30 March 2018)).

For the purposes of the application of these provisions to SBS:

- any reference to a 'Licensee' is to be read as a reference to SBS;
- any reference to a 'licence area' is to be read as a reference to an SBS commercial market (see 'Note').

Note: For national markets, or where geographically targeted time-shifted advertising cannot be delivered in the case of live-to-air coverage of a sporting event, the time zone is AEST or AEDT (as applicable).

Some programs may be broadcast or received outside their local time zone including where individuals choose to access the broadcast signal outside of their local area.

SBS digital media services

SBS digital media services are subject to similar rules under the **Broadcasting Services (Online Content Service Provider) Rules 2018**.

4.3 Community Information

SBS makes available a limited amount of free airtime on its television and radio broadcasting services, and space on its digital media platforms and services, for the broadcast and/or publication of community information announcements and community promotional material, known as community service announcements (CSAs).

SBS allocates free airtime for CSAs to Australian charities, community organisations and other relevant entities to promote services or events of a social, cultural, welfare, educational or beneficial nature, or other matter in the public interest.

In the selection of CSAs, SBS will consider a range of factors including:

- its role as a multicultural and Indigenous broadcasting and digital media service to contribute to meeting the communications needs of Australia's multicultural and Indigenous communities;
- the character and the aims and objectives of the entity;
- the financial status of the entity;
- the subject matter of the CSA.

The following matter does not qualify as a CSA:

- Political matter including matter that promotes a political party or a candidate for political office, or matter that advocates for a change in the law.¹
- Social, religious and any other matter that SBS considers to be controversial or potentially divisive to the community.
- Announcements that strongly promote a commercial entity or the interests of an individual, either directly or indirectly.

The placement of CSAs on SBS services is subject to the availability of airtime and digital space and will be determined entirely at SBS's discretion.

CSAs will normally be broadcast or published as separate announcements (for example in advertising breaks). CSAs may be delivered as announcements within content as SBS considers appropriate.

Decisions regarding the selection and placement of CSAs are subject to SBS's editorial independence and integrity. SBS retains the right to require or make edits to any CSA material provided.

CSAs broadcast on SBS television broadcasting services must be classified and placed in line with the provisions relating to advertising in [section 4.2](#).

Complaints about the content of CSAs are managed through the advertising industry's self regulatory scheme ([Ad Standards](#)).

¹ The exception is free airtime that SBS may provide during elections and referendums (see [Elections and Referendums – SBS's Free Airtime Policy](#)).

5. RESPECT

5.1 Prejudice, Racism and Discrimination

SBS seeks to counter attitudes of prejudice against any person or group, including on the grounds of race, colour, ethnicity, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, religion, disability, mental or physical illness, marital or relationship status, parental or occupational status.

SBS will avoid content that clearly condones, tolerates, or encourages prejudice and discrimination, taking into account the context in which the material is presented. This includes avoiding gratuitous emphasis on particular attributes, or the unjustified use of stereotypes. This does not prevent SBS from presenting discussion of issues relating to these matters, including in ways that may be provocative or satirical.

SBS understands that different cultural groups have different perceptions and values. SBS may broadcast or publish content that directly challenges accepted cultural views where it is editorially relevant and justified by the context.

5.2 Self-identification

SBS acknowledges that different groups and individuals have the right to self-identify.

SBS may use an individual's or a group's self-identification.

SBS will take into account context and avoid the unjustified use of derogatory terms used by one cultural group to describe another.

While SBS accepts self-identification where appropriate, this has no implications other than recognition of a person or a group's identity and is not to be taken as recognition by SBS of any historical or political claims.

5.3 Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Content

SBS produces, broadcasts, subtitles and publishes content in languages other than English in delivering its services and serving Australia's diverse language communities.

These services enable social, civic and economic participation in Australian society for people who speak a language other than English, by providing Australian news, information and entertainment in different languages. Content produced for particular language or cultural communities may also be provided in English.

SBS content in a range of languages supports the continuity and development of cultural identity and language, fosters community connection, and enhances understanding across cultures in Australia.

SBS-produced language content facilitates a respectful exchange of opinion on a range of issues. SBS will not promote the views of one group above another. SBS encourages the free expression of a wide range of views and opinion including when such opinions may be considered controversial.

NITV aims to reflect the linguistic diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in its content, subject to the supply of programming.

In all its programming, including news and current affairs, NITV may speak directly to Indigenous audiences using vernacular Aboriginal English, Kriol and other First Nations languages and dialects.

5.4 Indigenous Cultures

SBS recognises the social, cultural and spiritual integrity and continuity of Indigenous societies and knowledge systems and acknowledges the diversity across and within these structures.

SBS aims to promote and facilitate among all Australians an understanding of and respect for Indigenous cultures, knowledges and history.

SBS will be respectful of cultural sensitivities and protocols that relate to Indigenous themes, perspectives and issues in its content.

5.4.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

SBS recognises the integral place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia's history, culture and society and the importance of maintaining and celebrating First Nations cultures, language and traditions.

SBS provides content that aims to address contemporary issues of importance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

SBS strives for maximum involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in all aspects of the production of such content.

In its content, SBS will ensure that proper regard is paid to the sensitivities, cultural traditions and languages of First Nations peoples.

5.4.2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols and culturally appropriate content

Cultural practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be observed in any content produced, broadcast or published that relates to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identity, history, politics or culture.

As home to Australia's dedicated national Indigenous broadcasting and digital media service, SBS places high importance on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols within communities.

SBS respects and acknowledges Indigenous cultural beliefs, traditions, protocols and practices and, where possible, will verify and obtain the appropriate permissions in a respectful manner.

SBS exercises editorial discretion when determining whether to broadcast or publish content that contains terminology that is likely to seriously offend or unnecessarily reflect negatively on Indigenous peoples. SBS will consider the context and circumstances in which the content is to be broadcast or published.

Production protocols

SBS requires content makers to refer to [The Greater Perspective: Protocol and Guidelines for the Production of Film and Television on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities](#) and [The Greater Perspective: Supplementary Guidelines](#) (collectively The Greater Perspective) when making or producing content.

When working with Indigenous peoples, content makers should consult and work closely with relevant First Nations communities to ensure cultural protocols are understood and respected.

Representation of deceased Indigenous persons

SBS respects and acknowledges the cultural authority, bereavement and mourning practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including protocols relating to the representation of deceased persons.

SBS will provide appropriate warnings to Indigenous audiences where such protocols are in place.

Content makers should verify and observe local practices when reporting on, or making content that depicts or represents, recently deceased Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander persons. Content makers should consult with relevant First Nations communities to ensure these cultural protocols are understood and respected.

This includes seeking guidance on whether content warnings should be used and how they should be framed, recognising that protocols are diverse, region-specific, and may vary across communities

However, SBS acknowledges that, because of the diversity and complexity of Indigenous communities, it may not always be possible to comply with relevant protocols and practices and a deceased persons warning may not always be appropriate.

Where appropriate and in line with community advice, images, footage or sound recordings of deceased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons will be preceded by a culturally informed warning, indicating that permission was granted to use such material.

5.5 Privacy

SBS respects the rights of individuals to privacy.

These rights are balanced against SBS's role to report on matters of public interest.

In order to report on matters of public interest, intrusions upon a person's privacy without their consent may be justified in some circumstances.

SBS will exercise special care before broadcasting or publishing material about the personal or private affairs of a child (under 16), particularly where it concerns a sensitive matter.

SBS operates under the presumption that if material is recorded in public or is otherwise publicly available, communication of that material will generally not intrude on a person's privacy.

Note: SBS collects personal information for operational purposes, which is subject to the SBS Privacy Policy.

6. FEEDBACK, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

SBS values all audience feedback, whether complimentary or critical, about its content and platforms.

Audience feedback, comments and complaints are an important way for SBS to engage with audiences and to learn about community needs and opinions on SBS's editorial processes and services.

SBS takes complaints about its content and platforms very seriously.

- Feedback, comments and general (non-Code) complaints about other matters are managed by SBS Audience Relations – [section 6.1](#).
- A complaint that alleges SBS has breached a provision in this SBS Code of Practice will be investigated and managed independently by the SBS Ombudsman (Code complaints) – [section 6.2](#).

SBS does not generally respond to comments and complaints made on its social media platforms.

SBS will not respond to comments, feedback or complaints that are:

- frivolous, vexatious, not made in good faith; or
- offensive or abusive.

6.1 Feedback, Comments and General (Non-Code) Complaints

SBS welcomes feedback from its audiences about its services. Feedback, comments and general (non-Code) complaints about SBS content and platforms can be made by contacting SBS [here](#).

Technical support for an SBS platform or service can be obtained [here](#).

Feedback, comments and general complaints are provided to the relevant team or employee within SBS to determine the appropriate action.

SBS is not required to investigate and respond to feedback, comments and general complaints, however SBS will make reasonable efforts to respond to the concerns raised.

6.2 Code Complaints about Content as Broadcast or Published

A complaint alleging that SBS has breached a provision in the Code will be managed by the SBS Ombudsman and investigated independently. Feedback will not be treated as a Code complaint.

The SBS Ombudsman reports directly to the Managing Director and is independent of all SBS content Divisions.

Complaints received prior to the broadcast or publication of the content are not Code complaints.

SBS is not obliged to investigate complaints from people not resident in Australia, or non-Australian entities. SBS will not investigate anonymous complaints.

SBS will suspend the investigation of any complaint relating to content that is or becomes the subject of related legal proceedings. Resumption of any investigation depends on the nature and outcome of the legal proceedings.

6.2.1 How to make a Code complaint

A Code complaint about SBS content should be directed to the SBS Ombudsman as soon as possible. A Code complaint can be made by contacting the SBS Ombudsman [here](#).

You need to:

- identify yourself by name and provide both your email and postal addresses;
- identify the content that is of concern to you and the date you viewed, heard or read it;
- state the platform on which you heard, read or saw the content, for example the name of the SBS television or radio channel, digital service such as the SBS On Demand program or channel or SBS Audio service, podcast or website;
- explain what aspect of the content you are complaining about; and
- if possible, identify which section or sections of this Code applies to the content.

Complaints relating to privacy may only be made by or on behalf of the person who considers their privacy was intruded upon.

Code complaints in languages other than English

If SBS receives a complaint in a language other than English, SBS will have it translated into English and will rely on that translation.

Time periods for making a Code complaint

Code complaints must be received by SBS within four (4) weeks of the date of the television or radio broadcast, or from the date the content was first made available on an SBS digital media service.

6.2.2 Confidentiality

Generally, complaints and complainants' identities will be kept confidential by SBS and will only be disclosed to relevant SBS staff as required for the purpose of an investigation by the SBS Ombudsman.

SBS respects the confidentiality of Code complainants and will not disclose complaints publicly unless:

- SBS is required by law to do so;
- the complaint has been made public by the complainant; or
- the complaint is a matter of public record.

6.2.3 How SBS deals with Code complaints

Complaints received by the SBS Ombudsman will be assessed to determine whether they meet the criteria of a Code complaint.

Once a complaint has been assessed as a Code complaint, the SBS Ombudsman will send a written reply by email to the complainant:

- acknowledging receipt of the complaint;
- informing the complainant that the SBS Ombudsman will investigate the matter;
- providing an estimated timeframe for the complaint to be responded to; and
- advising the complainant, where applicable, that they may seek an external review through the [Australian Communications and Media Authority \(ACMA\)](#)

In some cases, all or part of a program broadcast or published in a language other than English may need to be translated. This may involve some delay.

Complaints Committee

The SBS Ombudsman or the relevant SBS Division Director may refer a Code complaint to the SBS Complaints Committee for further consideration. The Complaints Committee will review the Code complaint and any recommendations by the SBS Ombudsman and make a determination as to whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint.

The Complaints Committee will decide how to inform itself at its discretion.

SBS Complaints Committee means a committee comprising the Managing Director (Chair), SBS Ombudsman, SBS Content Directors, and Director of Corporate Affairs, or such equivalent positions as exist from time to time.

Replies to Code complaints

The SBS Ombudsman will endeavour to provide a written response by email to the complainant within 30 days of receipt of a complaint, and in any event must do so within 60 days (subject to delays caused by a need for translation).

In exceptional circumstances an extension to the 60-day deadline may be justified. The complainant will be informed of the revised timeline and the reasons for the delay.

The complainant will be advised:

- whether the Code complaint is upheld;
- the reasons for the SBS Ombudsman's decision; and
- where applicable, their right to refer the matter to the ACMA if not satisfied with the SBS Ombudsman's response.

Code complaints that are upheld

If a Code complaint is upheld by the SBS Ombudsman actions taken may include:

- acknowledging that a breach has occurred;
- apologising;
- broadcasting or publishing corrected information; or
- broadcasting or publishing a correction, retraction or apology.

6.2.4 Referral to the ACMA

Complainants:

- who have not received a response within 60 days after making it or, in exceptional circumstances, within the advised time period; or
- who received a response within that period that they consider to be inadequate;

may complain to the ACMA, under section 150 of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth), for complaints relating to SBS television or radio broadcasting services.

The ACMA does not deal with complaints about content on SBS digital media services.

7. GLOSSARY

ACMA means the Australian Communications and Media Authority.

Advertisement means matter for which SBS receives consideration in cash or in kind, that draws the attention of the public, or a segment thereof, to a product, service, person, organisation or line of conduct in a manner calculated to promote or recommend, directly or indirectly, that product, service, person, organisation or line of conduct ([section 4.2](#)).

Ad Standards means the industry body that manages the complaint resolution process of the advertising self-regulation system in Australia ([sections 4.2](#) and [4.3](#))

Broadcasting service has the same meaning as in section 3 of the SBS Act.

Code means the SBS Code of Practice.

Code complaint means a complaint that alleges that SBS has breached the SBS Code of Practice for content that has been broadcast or published by SBS ([section 6.2](#)).

Content means audio, video, visual and textual material.

Content that is not classified includes audio-only content, news programs (including news updates), current affairs programs, sports programs, and audio-visual content on SBS's digital media services that is not a television program or program promotion that is classified under [section 4.1.2](#).

CSA means community information announcements and community promotional material ([section 4.3](#)).

Current affairs means a program containing analysis, commentary, explanation or discussion on social, economic or political issues of current relevance and does not include a documentary.

Digital media service has the same meaning as in section 3A of the SBS Act.

FAST channel means a free ad-supported streaming television channel.

Managing Director has the same meaning as in section 3 of the SBS Act.

NITV means National Indigenous Television.

News means a report of any current, recent or breaking event, situation, issue etc. It includes news programs, news bulletins, news updates and sport, finance and weather news and updates.

Online content means content that is published on SBS digital media services and on third party digital media services including SBS On Demand, the SBS website, SBS apps, SBS podcasts and SBS social media posts.

SBS means the Special Broadcasting Service Corporation operating under the SBS Act, and includes NITV.

SBS Act means the *Special Broadcasting Service Act 1991* (Cth).

SBS Complaints Committee means a committee comprising the Managing Director, SBS Ombudsman, SBS Content Directors, and Director of Corporate Affairs, or such equivalent positions as exist from time to time ([section 6.2.3](#)).

SBS content means content that is produced, commissioned, acquired or otherwise obtained by SBS for broadcast or publication on SBS platforms over which SBS has editorial control ([section 2.1](#)).

SBS Content Directors means Chief Marketing and Commercial Officer, Director of Audio and Language Content, Director First Nations, Director of News and Current Affairs, and Director of Television, or such equivalent positions as exist from time to time ([section 6.2.3](#)).

SBS Division Director means any of the following: Chief Marketing and Commercial Officer, Director of Audio and Language Content, Director of Corporate Affairs, Director First Nations, Director of News and Current Affairs, Director of Television, or such equivalent positions as exist from time to time (**section 6.2.3**).

SBS platforms includes SBS television and radio broadcasting services, SBS digital media services and SBS accounts and services on third party platforms (**section 2.1**).

Sponsorship announcement means matter for which SBS receives consideration in cash or in kind that advises audiences of a sponsorship relationship with SBS and actively promotes the product, service, person, organisation or line of conduct of the sponsor in a favourable way (**section 4.2**).

Sports programs means:

- for the purposes of **section 4.2 Advertising and Sponsorship** in relation to the timing and placement of advertisements and sponsorship announcements, has the same meaning as 'Sports Program' in the **Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice** (2015) (section 8 Interpretation).
- for the purposes of **section 4.1.2 Classification and scheduling of content**, means:
 - coverage of a sporting event (whether live, replay or highlights);
 - sporting commentary, analysis, interviews and news;
 - presentations, awards and ceremonies associated with sport;and does not include sports documentaries or films, or comedy or light entertainment and variety programs with a sports theme or association.

WorldWatch means the range of international news and current affairs bulletins broadcast or published by SBS under the WorldWatch banner (**section 2.2.1**).

APPENDIX 1

SBS Classification Guidelines

These guidelines are adapted from the Guidelines for the Classification of Films and Computer Games made under the *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995* (Cth).

The guiding principle in the application of the following classifications is context. What is inappropriate and unacceptable in one context may be appropriate and acceptable in another. Factors to consider include: the artistic or educational merit of the production, the purpose of a sequence, the tone, the camera work, the intensity and relevance of the material, the treatment, and the intended audience.

SBS believes that the integrity of programs is best retained if programs are broadcast unaltered. SBS will schedule programs or, if necessary, modify them in accordance with the SBS classification categories to ensure that they are suitable for broadcast, or for broadcast at particular times.

SBS's classification guidelines give special attention to culture, violence, sex and nudity, and use of language.

Culture

In fulfilling its role as a multilingual and multicultural media service, SBS reflects a diversity of cultures including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

SBS classifies programs based on SBS's knowledge of the cultural context of each program. SBS will interpret the relevant classification elements so as not to impede the presentation of relevant cultural information to audiences or limit its ability to reflect diverse cultural values.

Violence

SBS acknowledges that violence is a regrettable part of everyday life that must be dealt with responsibly. SBS recognises that for some people, particularly children, the portrayal of physical and psychological violence has a unique potential to distress and disturb.

In assessing program content involving violence, consideration is given to a range of factors including:

- degree of explicitness;
- propensity to alarm, distress or shock;
- significance in relation to the message; and
- social importance.

The presentation of violence in drama requires careful consideration. Violence has always been a powerful ingredient in the dramatic tradition and SBS accepts that there are occasions when authors and directors use violence to make a substantial point about society.

Sex and nudity

In assessing program content involving sex and nudity, consideration is given to a number of factors including:

- the responsibility with which visuals and subject matter are treated, particularly the treatment of non-consensual sexual activities and any sexual activity involving minors;
- the degree of explicitness; and
- the impact that visuals have in the context of a program as a whole.

Language

SBS will take into account the use of coarse language and prevailing community standards when classifying programs.

Classification Categories

G – GENERAL

G programs may be shown at any time.

G programs, which include programs designed for pre-school and school-age children, are suitable for children to watch on their own. Some G programs may be more appropriate for older children.

The G classification does not necessarily indicate that the program is one that children will enjoy. Some G programs contain themes or storylines that are not of interest to children.

Whether or not the program is intended for children, the treatment of themes and other classifiable elements will be careful and discreet.

More detailed treatments of classifiable elements in artistic, cultural or educational contexts may be permitted if the treatment is discreet, justified by context, and very mild in impact.

Themes: The treatment of themes should be very discreet, justified by context and very mild in impact. The presentation of dangerous, imitable behaviour is not permitted except in those circumstances where it is justified by context. Any depiction of such behaviour must not encourage dangerous imitation. Supernatural or very mild horror themes may be included.

Violence: Violence including sexual violence may be implied very discreetly, but should:

- have a light tone;
- have a very low sense of threat or menace; and
- not be gratuitous.

Sex: Sexual activity should:

- be suggested in very discreet visual or verbal references; and
- not be gratuitous.

Language: Coarse language should:

- be very mild; and
- not be gratuitous.

Drug use: The depiction of the use of drugs should be handled with care. Drug use should be implied only very discreetly, and be justified by context.

Nudity: Nudity outside of a sexual context should not be detailed, or gratuitous.

Nudity in a sexual context may be permitted if the treatment is very discreet, justified by context, and very mild in impact.

PG – PARENTAL GUIDANCE

Parental/guardian guidance recommended for people under 15 years.

PG programs may be shown any time.

PG programs may contain adult themes and concepts that, when viewed by those under 15 years, may require the guidance of an adult.

The PG classification signals to parents or guardians that material in this category contains depictions or references that could be confusing or upsetting to children without adult guidance.

Parents or guardians may choose to monitor the material for children in their care. Some may choose to watch the material with children in their care. Others might find it sufficient to be accessible during or after the viewing to discuss the content.

The PG classification does not indicate necessarily that the program is one that children will enjoy. Some PG programs contain themes or storylines that are not of interest to children.

Themes: The treatment of themes should be discreet and mild in impact. Supernatural or mild horror themes may be included.

Violence: Violence may be implied discreetly or stylised and should:

- be mild in impact; and
- not be shown in detail.

Sex: Sexual activity may be suggested, but should:

- be discreet; and
- not be gratuitous.

Verbal references to sexual activity should be discreet.

Language: Coarse language should be mild.

Drug use: Discreet verbal references and mild visuals of drug use may be included. More detailed descriptions should be no more than mild in impact.

Nudity: Nudity in a sexual context may be suggested, but should:

- be discreet; and
- not be gratuitous.

Nudity outside of a sexual context should not be detailed or gratuitous.

M – MATURE

Not recommended for people under 15 years.

SBS, SBS Viceland, SBS World Movies, SBS WorldWatch

M programs may be shown between:

- 10.00am and 3.00pm; and
- 7.30pm and 6.00am.

NITV and SBS Food

M programs may be shown between:

- 10.00am and 3.00pm on weekdays that are school days; and
- 7.30pm and 6.00am on any day of the week.

Programs classified M contain material that is considered to be potentially harmful or disturbing to those under 15 years. Depictions and references to classifiable elements may contain detail.

While most themes may be dealt with, the degree of explicitness and intensity of treatment will determine what can be accommodated in the M category – the less explicit or less intense material will be included in the M classification and the more explicit or more intense material, especially violent material, will be included in the MA15+ classification.

Themes: Most themes can be dealt with, but the treatment should be discreet, and should be no more than moderate in impact.

Violence: Generally, depictions of violence should:

- not contain a lot of detail; and
- not be prolonged.

In realistic treatments, depictions of violence that contain a lot of detail should:

- not have a strong impact; and
- not be gratuitous.

In stylised treatments, depictions of violence may contain more detail if this does not increase the impact.

Verbal and visual references to sexual violence may only be included if they are:

- discreet; and
- justified strongly by the narrative or documentary context.

Sex: Sexual activity may be implied.

Verbal and textual references to sexual activity may be more detailed than visual depictions if this does not increase the impact.

Language: Coarse language may be used but the impact should be no more than moderate.

Drug use: Drug use may be shown but the impact should be no more than moderate.

Nudity: Nudity outside of a sexual context may be shown but depictions that contain any detail should not be gratuitous.

Nudity in a sexual context should not contain a lot of detail or be prolonged.

MA15+ – MATURE AUDIENCE

Not suitable for people under 15 years.

MA15+ programs may be shown between 8.30pm and 5.00am on any day of the week.

MA15+ programs, because of the matter they contain or because of the way classifiable elements are treated, are not suitable for people aged under 15 years.

Material classified MA15+ deals with issues or contains depictions that require a more mature perspective. This is because the impact of individual elements or a combination of elements is considered likely to be harmful or disturbing to viewers under 15 years of age.

While most themes may be dealt with and can be accommodated in the MA15+ category – the more explicit or more intense material, violent material especially, will be included in the MA15+ classification and the less explicit or less intense material will be included in the M classification.

Themes: The treatment of themes with a high degree of intensity should not be gratuitous.

Violence: Generally, depictions of violence should not have a high impact.

In realistic treatments, detailed depictions of violence with a strong impact should:

- not be prolonged; and
- not be gratuitous.

Depictions of violence in stylised treatments may be more detailed if this does not increase the impact.

Depictions of sexual violence are permitted only if they are not prolonged, gratuitous or exploitative.

Sex: Sexual activity may be implied.

If this does not increase the impact, verbal, textual and audio references may be more detailed than visual depictions.

Language: Coarse language may be used.

Drug use: Drug use may be shown. More detailed depictions should not have a high degree of impact.

Nudity: Nudity should be justified by context. Depictions of nudity in a sexual context that contain detail should not be exploitative.



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