

**For information on
20 April 2007**

Sexual Minorities Forum

**Issues relating to the Code of Practice on Programme Standards
issued by Broadcasting Authority**

Purpose

This paper seeks to brief members on the captioned issues raised by a member at the sixth meeting of the Sexual Minorities Forum on 1 December 2006.

2. The requirement for broadcasters to provide sufficient and reliable information about the nature and content of the programmes broadcast, whether in form of advisories, cautionary announcements or classification labeling, serves the purpose of enabling the viewers to make an informed choice in their viewing, and protect their children from being exposed to material which may be considered unsuitable to them. Similar requirements are also found in many overseas countries because they are considered as good regulatory practices well supported by the viewers.

3. Under paragraph 8, Chapter 8 of the Generic Code of Practice on Television Programme Standards (TV Programme Code) (**Appendix**) issued by the Broadcasting Authority (BA), the Domestic Free Television Programme Service licensees are required to provide an aural and visual statement at the start of a programme, which is classified as Parental Guidance Recommended (“PG”) or Mature (“M”), describing the principal elements contributed to the classification and indicating their intensity and/or frequency. The objective is to provide information to viewers so that they make informed choices about what to watch and whether their children should be allowed to watch the programmes.

4. Paragraph 11 of the same chapter (**Appendix**) requires that any programme of the Domestic Pay Television Programme Services containing material which is unsuitable for children or is likely to disturb some audience should carry an advisory or cautionary announcement together with a descriptive statement should be shown at the start of or immediately before the programme. The wording of the descriptive statement should be clear, factual and contain the necessary information to alert viewers of materials which may disturb or offend them.

5. Disturbing or offensive contents and contents unsuitable for children usually refer to sex, nudity, violence, horror, dangerous acts, etc. Homosexuality is not specifically mentioned in the TV Programme Code, nor does the TV Programme Code stipulate the wording of the advisory announcements. It is the responsibility of the licensees to provide suitable advisory announcements and description of the programmes to alert views of what they may expect to see, and facilitate their choice of programmes for viewing.

Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority
April 2007

**Generic Code of Practice on Television Programme Standards
(Extracts)**

Chapter 8 Information for Viewers

(...)

DOMESTIC FREE TELEVISION PROGRAMME SERVICES

8. In addition to the programme classification advice, an aural and visual statement must be given at the start of the programme describing the principal elements which have contributed to the classification and indicating their intensity and/or frequency (e.g. “strong violence”, “frequent coarse language”, etc.). The information should be clearly worded so that viewers can make informed choices about what to watch and whether their children should be allowed to watch. The statement should be in a readily legible typeface and should remain visible for at least five seconds. The licensee should make reasonable efforts to include the information in the licensee’s programme guide, whether in printed or in electronic form, and the programme schedule it sends out for publication.

(...)

DOMESTIC PAY TELEVISION PROGRAMME SERVICES

11. Any programme containing material which is unsuitable for children or is likely to disturb some audience should carry an advisory or cautionary announcement together with a descriptive statement of problematic content. The announcement and descriptive statement should be shown at the start of or immediately before the programme. The wording of a descriptive statement should be clear, factual and contain the necessary information to alert viewers of material which may disturb or offend them.