



26 May 2023

To : Experience Manager
NZME Radio Limited
Private Bag 92198
Auckland

Kia ora,

Re: Official Complaint

The leadership of the African Community in Aotearoa would like to make an official complaint in respect of comments made on **Newstalk ZB** by **Mike Hosking** on the **17th and 23rd May** editions of the **Mike Hosking Breakfast** show (the breakfast show). We believe the comments made by Mr Hosking are in breach of standards 1, 4 and 6 of the Code of Broadcasting Standards in New Zealand. We explain further below:

On the 17 May edition of the breakfast show at approximately 8:13.24 am, Mr. Hosking made the comment **'no, no, no, don't find some sub-Saharan African country that's useless then comparing us to them'** in an exchange with Labour Party MP and Cabinet Minister Megan Woods. Another MP, Mark Mitchell, who was an in-studio guest, could be heard laughing after this statement was made. The context of the discussion was the latest report on literacy and numeracy rates in New Zealand.

Within less than a week on 23 May, Mr Hosking again on the same platform made the following comments in an exchange with Prime Minister Chris Hipkins on the apparent rise in ram raids: **"No, no, I'm not interested in anywhere else in the world. I'm not interested in some sub-Saharan African country you can quote"**.

We find these comments offensive, demeaning and denigrating to tangata tiriti of African descent. Within the wider context of the discussions in which they were made, we believe the comments are an unfair and inaccurate portrayal of the level of numeracy and literacy of people from Africa, as well as the level of ram raid incidents in African countries – an inaccuracy that is all too stereotypical of Africans in the media.

This was not a one-off incident, and they are increasingly becoming a pattern of behaviour that the African Community in New Zealand find very concerning and believe should be nipped in the bud.

We are therefore calling on NZME to call Mr Hosking to order for breaching the professional ethics and standards set by the New Zealand Broadcasting Standards Authority.



Breach of Broadcast Standards

Background

“**Sub-Saharan Africa**” is a controversial term used by some to refer to Africans with a darker skin tone and the countries they come from. It is a pejorative term that seeks to make distinctions among Africans and African countries based on skin colour. The term is widely considered racist by leading African scholars and think tanks, and there have been numerous campaigns for the term to be dropped from our vocabulary.

Not only did Mr Hosking use the disparaging term on the 17 May edition of the breakfast show, but he also made his feelings towards the countries and people associated with that term clear when he described them as “useless”.

We find it even more perplexing that Mr Hosking would use the term when the subject and course of the discussion did not warrant the use of the term or call for any sort of comparison or comparative analyses between New Zealand and “sub-Saharan African countries” in respect of their perceived levels of numeracy and literacy.

The inference to sub-Saharan Africa did not add any weight to the discussions and was, therefore, superfluous.

Any doubts as to whether the passing of these comments could be explained away as being a one-off clumsy or innocent mistake were quickly eroded when Mr. Hosking again resorted to the offensive reference on 23 May during his discussions with the Prime Minister. The inference in that discussion was clear – the Prime Minister should not compare Aotearoa to “sub-Saharan African countries” in his quest to paint a better picture of the rising incidents of ram raids in New Zealand.

Similarly, the discussion with the PM did not warrant any comparison or reference to ram raid incidents in Africa.

Breach of Standard 4

Standard 4 of the BSA Code states that ***“Broadcast content should not encourage discrimination against, or denigration of, any section of the community on account of sex, sexual orientation, race, age, disability, occupational status or as a consequence of legitimate expression of religion, culture or political belief.”***

The guidelines accompanying the section defines ‘Denigration’ as *“devaluing the reputation of a particular section of the community.”*

It also says that *“broadcast content which has the effect of reinforcing or embedding negative stereotypes may also be considered.”*

The African community in New Zealand strongly condemns Mr. Hosking’s comments which we consider racist, denigrating and discriminatory.



We believe the comments were clearly intended to, and did, devalue the reputation of Africans in Aotearoa in the eyes of the average listener by suggesting they were illiterate, and that there was also high illiteracy in their countries of origin.

They also suggest a higher propensity for ram raid crimes among Africans and African countries - which feeds into the often-negative narrative about Africans portrayed in the media. These comments, made by such a high-profile media personality we believe, reinforces these negative stereotypes in the eyes of the public.

Breach of Standard 1

We also believe that Mr Hosking's comments are in breach of **standard 1** of the BSA Code which states in part that ***"broadcast content should not seriously violate community standards of taste and decency or disproportionately offend or disturb the audience..."***

As previously indicated, the term "Sub-Saharan Africa" is a racist terminology that is offensive to Africans and people of African descent. The description of the countries of the people the term is supposed to represent as "useless" was also disturbing, in bad taste, and offensive to our sensibilities as Africans, people of African descent or people with an African heritage.

The inaccurate inference that African from a particular region have low literacy and numeracy levels as well as high ram raid crimes is disproportionately offensive to the African community in Aotearoa.

Newstalk ZB is widely regarded as one of the leading sources of news and current affairs in New Zealand. It has a huge audience of different demographics who listen to and are duly influenced by live and recorded broadcasts.

The breakfast show was broadcast at primetime and was listened to by wide and large audience – including many African parents dropping tamariki off at school and having to explain to them why they are being belittled and portrayed in a negative light on New Zealand airwaves.

Breach of Standard 6

Lastly, we consider that the comments made by Mr. Hosking were in breach of **standard 6** of the BSA Codes which states in part that ***"broadcasters should make reasonable efforts to ensure ... current affairs and factual content is accurate in relation to all material points of fact and does not materially mislead the audience (give a wrong idea or impression of the facts)."***

The guidelines accompanying the section states among other things that ***"broadcasters should still make reasonable efforts to ensure analysis, comment or opinion is not materially misleading with respect to any facts referred to or upon which the analysis, comment or opinion is based."***



We consider that the comments by Mr Hosking's comments were inaccurate in the wider context of the discussions around the levels of numeracy and literacy, as well as the incidences on ram raid burglaries. They created a misleading perception about low levels of literacy and numeracy, and a high incidence of ram raid crimes among people from "sub-Saharan Africa".

Mr Hosking also made no reasonable effort to ensure that his comments and opinions on the subject were not materially misleading to his audience in respect of the facts. This is particularly disturbing given the already negative perception and portrayal of Africans in the media.

As previously stated, the use of the disturbing terminology by Mr. Hosking in discussions that did not warrant his specific choice of words have become alarming, and we wonder what other disturbing choice of phraseology might be uncovered in an extensive audit of previous podcasts.

We are also disappointed that on both occasions, none of his guests (Megan Woods, Mark Mitchell and PM Chris Hipkins) found it prudent to speak against the use of the offensive term or correct the misleading impression created about the African Community. Aotearoa New Zealand is called home by intergenerational diverse people and the media, and our politicians have a vital role to play in addressing discrimination and racism.

We are calling on NZME as a responsible broadcaster to do right by the African community by acquiescing to our demands below.

Outcomes being sought

4.1. As a responsible broadcaster, we therefore are requesting the following:

1. An unqualified apology from Mr. Mike Hosking.
2. A disciplinary action to be taken against Mr. Hosking - which should include mandatory training in media ethics and anti-racist behaviour.
3. An unqualified apology from Mark Mitchell. Even though Mr. Mitchell was an invited guest, they were still speaking on a platform provided to them by NZME.
4. An unqualified apology by NZME.
5. An editing of the two podcasts in question to include an acknowledgement of the comments made by Mr. Hosking and the offence it has caused to the African community, as well as a disclaimer from NZME unreservedly condemning the comments.
6. In the interest of equity, fairness and as part of the broadcaster's social responsibility, for NZME/Newstalk ZB to invest significant airtime in discussing the good and positive work emanating from the African community. In essence, giving the African community a platform to talk about, and showcase the good that has and is happening in Africa.



Thank you for your time as we anticipate a full investigation of this complaint, accompanied by proper remedial action within the 20-day timeframe set by the BSA for responding to complaints.

You may return all written correspondence via email to the email address provided below.

Ngā mihi,

Kosam Nyamdela

President - African Communities Council Wellington

Email: president@africancommunity.org.nz