

CONTENT CODE FOR RADIO SERVICES

PREAMBLE

1. The Info-communications Media Development Authority ("the IMDA") is empowered to issue, and from time to time, review codes of practice relating to the standards of programmes and advertisements. Radio programmes, especially local productions, can exert a significant influence on the community. This Content Code for Radio Services ("the Code") seeks to ensure that programmes on such services offered by service providers licensed under the Broadcasting Act (Cap. 28) are not against public interest or order, or national harmony, or offend good taste and decency. The IMDA is also empowered under the Broadcasting Act (Cap. 28) to impose sanctions, including the imposition of financial penalties, on any service provider who contravenes the Code.

2. The Code outlines the general standards to be observed by licensed service providers offering programmes (including music and songs) on Free-to-air Radio ("FTA Radio") Services and Radio Data System ("RDS") Services. For RDS services, this will include radio text carried on the service.

3. The provisions set out in this Code must be applied in spirit and read in conjunction with other relevant legislation, regulations, codes and/or licence conditions. The IMDA may require service providers to withdraw programmes that do not comply with this Code.

4. The Code deals in general principles and does not seek to address each and every possible case or scenario that could arise. Service providers may face cases or scenarios which are not specifically referred to or directly addressed in this Code. Examples included in the Code are not exhaustive. However, the principles and provisions in the following sections should make clear what the Code is designed to achieve and help service providers make the necessary judgements.

PART 1: PRESENTATION, SCHEDULING AND CONSUMER ADVICE

1.1 Service providers should provide, at appropriate intervals, consumer advice for programmes containing potentially disturbing or distressing content so as to enable listeners to make an informed choice.

1.2 Service providers should exercise particular care when putting 'live' calls on air especially where topics involved are sensitive ones, and comments made may be derogatory or offensive.

- 1.3 Service providers should exercise due caution when accepting on-air calls seeking advice on emotional issues, and other matters requiring professional assistance.
- 1.4 Service providers should exercise care and sensitivity when scheduling programmes containing or relating to mature themes and content that are more suitable for adult listeners. Such programmes should be scheduled in timeslots during which there are less likely to be younger listeners.
- 1.5 Any content disallowed or prohibited under the applicable laws, regulations, codes and/or licence conditions in Singapore must not be broadcast.

PART 2: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

National and Public Interest

- 2.1 Programmes must:
 - (a) comply with the prevailing laws of Singapore;
 - (b) not undermine national interest, national security, public interest, public security or public order;
 - (c) not be detrimental to Singapore's relationship with other countries;
 - (d) not contain extremist or anarchic messages, such as advocating or promoting the use of violence;
 - (e) not present information or events in such a manner likely to mislead or cause alarm to the public; and
 - (f) not contain propagandist and ideological messages on behalf of any foreign country, group or organisation.
- 2.2 Service providers must ensure that due impartiality is observed in programmes dealing with matters of public policy or controversial issues of public importance in Singapore. Due impartiality requires programme producers to deal even-handedly when opposing points of view are presented in a programme. On matters of public importance, balance should be sought through the presentation, as far as possible, of principal viewpoints. Programmes should not be slanted by the exclusion of facts or by misleading emphasis. Every reasonable effort must be made to ensure that the factual content of programmes is accurate.

Racial and Religious Harmony

- 2.3 For the purposes of this Code, race includes dialect groups and ethnic groups.

- 2.4 Service providers should bear in mind Singapore's multi-racial and multi-religious context. They should exercise due caution and discretion when featuring the activities, beliefs, practices, or views of any racial or religious group. In featuring any religious belief or view, service providers should ensure these do not disparage or cast other religious faiths in poor light.
- 2.5 Programmes must:
- (a) be kept secular and not be of a proselytic nature;
 - (b) present references to race and religion accurately and in a dignified and sensitive manner;
 - (c) not denigrate or be likely to offend the sensitivities of any racial or religious group; and
 - (d) not incite or be likely to incite racial and/or religious intolerance or misunderstanding.
- 2.6 Racial and religious stereotyping should be avoided.

Social Norms and Values

- 2.7 Service providers should bear in mind the importance of the family as the basic unit of society. The institution of marriage should be respected.
- 2.8 Programmes containing content on lifestyles such as homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, transsexualism, transvestism, paedophilia and incest should be treated with utmost caution. Their treatment should not in any way promote, justify or encourage such lifestyles. Explicit dialogue or information concerning the above topics should not be broadcast.
- 2.9 Programmes should not:
- (a) make references to any class or group of persons as being innately or inherently inferior; and
 - (b) encourage or in any way lead to discrimination against any section of the community on account of race, religion, gender, age, occupational status or disability.
- 2.10 Harmful behaviours such as smoking, alcoholism and self-harm should not be presented as glamorous or desirable.
- 2.11 Service providers should exercise sensitivity regarding humour that may offend good taste and decency, e.g. jokes based on negative stereotyping or caricatures in relation to race, religion, gender, age or disability, which can cause hurt or humiliation.

PART 3: SEX-RELATED CONTENT

- 3.1 The inclusion of sex-related content in programmes should be justified by context and presented with discretion. Sexually suggestive or lewd dialogue and innuendoes should not be broadcast. Unnatural sex acts should not be featured.
- 3.2 Programmes on sex education should be mindful of the target audience. They should not be presented in a sensational or exploitative manner, nor should they encourage or promote sexual permissiveness or promiscuity.

PART 4: VIOLENCE, CRIME, ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND GAMBLING

- 4.1 Service providers should be mindful of the potential cumulative effect of programmes normalising violence, crime, anti-social behaviour and gambling.

Violent and Anti-Social Behaviour

- 4.2 Service providers should not treat programmes on crime and violence in a cynical, frivolous or callous manner. They should exercise discretion and not:
 - (a) Describe graphic or gratuitous violence;
 - (b) Normalise the use of violence as a solution to resolve problems;
 - (c) Describe violent gangster behaviour (e.g. self-mutilation rites);
 - (d) Emphasise violent techniques or acts (e.g. methods of torture, gang fights, combat techniques);
 - (e) Encourage aggressive and sadistic attitudes towards infliction of pain and violence; and
 - (f) Carry explicit and prolonged sexual violence or erotic description of sexual assault or coercion.

- 4.3 Programmes should not:

- (a) Glorify gangs and secret societies; and
- (b) Glamorise or present in a favourable light hooliganism, vandalism, juvenile delinquency and other anti-social behaviour.

Crime

- 4.4 For programmes dealing with criminal activities, service providers should exercise discretion and, where appropriate, seek advice from the police,

before information is given about law-breaking, or methods to counter law enforcement or other security measures.

- 4.5 Service providers must not broadcast any information from any source which could endanger lives or prejudice the success of attempts to deal with any crime or emergency.

Gambling

- 4.6 No programme should encourage, promote or in any way offer instruction on gambling even with regard to legitimate forms of gambling.
- 4.7 The broadcast of all forms of gambling tips is strictly prohibited.

PART 5: NEWS AND OTHER FACTUAL PROGRAMMES

- 5.1 Significant errors in factual programmes such as news, current affairs and documentary programmes should be corrected and broadcast at the earliest opportunity.
- 5.2 The Government or its agencies are to be granted, as soon as practicable, a right of reply or an opportunity to respond to correct mistakes, wrongful reporting or misrepresentations. For private individuals or groups, an opportunity to respond should be considered based on the merits of each case. The IMDA may direct a service provider to give an aggrieved party the opportunity to respond over an appropriate medium.
- 5.3 In addition, presentation of news must observe the following guidelines:
- (a) News reports and bulletins should always be presented with due accuracy and impartiality, and without the interjection of personal views by presenters.
 - (b) News reports and bulletins should be clearly distinguished from other programmes.
 - (c) Morbid, sensational, or alarming details not essential to factual reporting should be excluded.
 - (d) Particular care must be taken when reporting on sexual crimes. Reports must not carry information which could lead to the identification of such victims.
 - (e) News reports must be sensitive to the use of materials or information relating to a person's personal or private affairs. The broadcast of such materials or information is acceptable only if there is an identifiable public interest for doing so.
 - (f) Content that may seriously distress or offend should only be broadcasted when there is an identifiable public interest for doing

so. Such content should be suitably edited and carry consumer advice to alert viewers. Sensitivity must be exercised in broadcasting interviews with bereaved relatives or survivors and witnesses of traumatic incidents.

(g) Sexual or other sensational material should not be exploited as news items without justification.

5.4 Any simulation of a radio news bulletin or news flash should be clearly distinguishable from an actual news bulletin.

5.5 Opinion should be clearly distinguished from fact in all factual programmes. Personal view programmes in which an individual is given the opportunity to put forward his or her own views, without necessarily referring to opposing views, are subject to the following guidelines:

(a) The programme must be clearly identified as one which contains personal opinions or views, both in advance announcements and at the start of the programme.

(b) Acknowledged or undisputed facts must be respected, and service providers have an obligation to do what they can to ensure that the opinions expressed, however partial, do not rest upon false or inaccurate facts.

5.6 Dramatised “reconstructions” in programmes that seek to reconstruct actual events should not distort key facts. Such dramatised reconstructions should also be identified clearly to the listener.

PART 6: HORROR, SUPERNATURAL, FORTUNE TELLING AND OTHER BELIEFS

6.1 Programmes exploring the occult, supernatural and psychic practices should be treated with caution.

6.2 Programmes based on or dealing with fortune-telling, fengshui, palm-reading, numerology, mind-reading, tarot-reading, astrology, new age healing and the like should not give the impression that these practices are exact sciences.

6.3 Belief in superstition and the worship of the occult should not be promoted.

PART 7: CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMES

7.1 For the purpose of this section, “children” refers to persons below the age of 14 years.

7.2 Children’s programmes should generally be wholesome and designed to impart a broader knowledge of the world around them, and to promote

good social and moral values, and respect for law and order.

- 7.3 Children's programmes should not be presented in a manner which may be disturbing or distressing to children or which may in any way adversely affect their general well-being.

PART 8: LANGUAGE

- 8.1 Programmes should maintain high standards of language and speech in the four official languages of Singapore.
- 8.2 Standard English, which is grammatically correct, should be used for locally produced programmes such as news, info-educational programmes and children's programmes. Local English, which is also grammatically correct but pronounced with a Singaporean accent and which may include local terms and expressions, can be used for programmes like music shows, talk shows, call-ins, dramas, and comedies. In interviews where the interviewee speaks only Singlish¹, Singlish can be allowed. The interviewer himself, however, should not use Singlish.
- 8.3 All content on Chinese services must be in Mandarin, except for the allowances as set out in Clause 8.4 or where it is specifically approved by the Authority. Dialect may also be allowed provided the context justifies usage and is sparingly used.
- 8.4 For all Chinese services, allowances for dialect content are as follows:
- (a) Operatic performances;
 - (b) News, current affairs and info-educational programmes, where older people or foreigners respond to interviews in dialect. Voice-overs should be provided for these interviews; and
 - (c) Dialect terms where the Mandarin equivalents may not be easily understood or commonly used, such as 'ang ku kueh and 'kopi gao'.
- 8.5 Sub-standard Mandarin (characterised by poor syntax or use of vocabulary, poorly pronounced Mandarin) should not be used for locally-produced Chinese programmes such as news, info-educational programmes and children's programmes.
- 8.6 Dialect in English programmes may be allowed provided the context justifies usage and is sparingly used, or specifically approved by the Authority. Allowances in Clauses 8.4 also apply.
- 8.7 All locally produced Malay programmes, particularly news, current affairs and information programmes should be in Bahasa Melayu Baku (standard pronunciation of Malay). However, broadcasters may exercise a suitable

¹ Singlish refers to ungrammatical local English, and includes dialect terms and sentence structures based on dialect.

level of Malay language flexibility for music programmes, dramas and comedies.

- 8.8 Standard Tamil, which refers to accurate grammar use, pronunciation and intonation, should be used for locally produced Tamil programmes such as news, current affairs and info-educational programmes. Flexibility can be accorded in instances where the interviewee is not fluent in Tamil. The interviewer, however, should still use standard Tamil. Conversational Tamil, which refers to the use of local terms and expressions in Tamil, may be used in entertainment programmes like music programmes, dramas and comedies.
- 8.9 Obscene or offensive jokes, words, songs and dialogue should not be broadcast.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODE

This Code shall come into effect on 24 February 2020 and replaces the Free-to-air Radio Programme Code that took effect on 23 February 2004. The IMDA may from time to time revise or update the Code to maintain accuracy.

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