

25 February 2010

Hello.

I don't have access to the internet.

I understand that Chris Chapman wanted to get an impression from listeners on whether they feel that radio presenters are correctly identifying the things that they're advertising or mentioning on radio.

I think the rules are being completely flouted by commercial radio. It does annoy me that they don't say that 'I've been sponsored by this company', or that 'I'm being paid or given gifts by this company to do this'. That really does concern me. The thing that irks me is when experts or guests come to promote a company and therefore you don't get a valid, unbiased, opinion. They come on, then the whole thing is about how wonderful a product is, they've got guests on, etcetera, the guests pooh pooh all the other brands, and then a couple of weeks later you see adverts on their program for that particular brand. It can be a delayed effect. It's hard to explain.

What they do is they come on and talk about something, for example washing machines, but in the context of when you're renovating your house, what the best machines are. They'll have a guest that comes on and names the brands, [REDACTED] - [REDACTED] are the best, and they only allow calls to come on that criticise other brands. Then a couple of weeks later there were ads for [REDACTED]. I don't think it's a coincidence at all. Then the same company that was on there - they didn't declare that they were spruiking that product or setting it up for a later advertising deal that came on.

Another example today on [REDACTED] - [REDACTED] - the presenter prompted a guest to talk about the wonderful chairs that they've got - how restful they were. But there's no declaration that they've been paid, got the chairs at a discount or that they've been given the chairs by this company. The guest says that they haven't been paid, but why would they be mentioning the product constantly, every single week? The guest may not get anything from it at all, and may declare 'I have no interest', but it may be the radio station that's getting the money. It's a fundamental logic. Why would they constantly mention something unless they're getting some benefit? Another example is when the host asks the guest about her back and she mentions she [REDACTED] - she spruiks that in response to the host asking her about her back. There's no declaration that she's been paid, maybe she hasn't, but she's spruiking it and the question is whether the radio station has been paid.

This is not so bad, if they come onto the program so they can spruik their product. It's not so much I'm against [REDACTED], but I'm against the fact that it's not recognised. She spruiks her [REDACTED] on her program. You must understand I'm not against [REDACTED] at all. I think she's a lovely person - I just resent the fact she does that, and I resent the fact she spruiks [REDACTED] and doesn't identify, but is spruiking it. But I don't know if she gets paid or not.

The other example is the [REDACTED] one. On the program on the Saturday they get the suppliers or interested parties coming in, to spruik their position or their items, and there's no identification of whether they're being paid by these companies to do it or not. They just come in and so-called experts - they're declared they're from a certain company - but they don't say there's an interested position from those parties. And all the advice that they give is related back to their product. And that's quite constant. It always happens.

For example on the gardening show, if you ring in to present a different view against the using of chemicals or things, you don't get on. So if you have an organic view of dealing with the same problem, you don't get on. I've focused on these, because I have some knowledge of these. And I know there's a second way of doing it. They're only addressing the commercial view – it all seems to be based commercially. Not always but sometimes. I guess it's a bias. I know [REDACTED] professes to be organic. This is another example in regards to presenting grubs on your broccoli or your brassicas, she prefers to use the commercial things, yet you can organically put over a tent of netting and it stops the butterflies putting the eggs onto the brassicas and putting the grubs onto her plants. None of that is ever mentioned when people ring up and complain about the grubs eating their brassicas. It's very subtle. They spruik a product that's advantageous to them and not necessarily the best outcome.

Media organisations do not openly reflect who they are being sponsored by, and it's quite often hidden, and, without a critical eye, people will believe it. They hide it, it's not reflected in what they say, they don't say that that's what they're doing. Commercial media do not tell people that they're spruiking a product and they do it in a way that is deceptive and hidden and I don't like it.

They use their power as a radio station to promote products, but they don't make it clear, or say that there are other options. They don't offer a second opinion. If you try and ring in and give a different option that isn't expensive, you won't get on.

There is absolutely a need for regulation. The way to do it is to have them say 'we are sponsored by this company, this person is coming on as a guest but they are sponsoring the show'. So therefore you need to take into consideration that they may have bias. If that was said at the start, the end and during the program, people would know they are speaking from that position.

*Please note that a staff member at the ACMA transcribed this submission, which was given by telephone.

An avid listener of radio,

VIC