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Broadcasting Commission to address a range of media problems

Astrological and Palm Reading Ads

The Broadcasting Commission has received a number of complaints about some of the claims advertised by people offering astrological and palm-reading services.

Executive Director of the Broadcasting Commission, Cordel Green, said that the main concern was that some of the advertisements claimed or implied that they could solve financial, legal, health and other problems. The Broadcasting Commission has therefore written to the General Legal Council, Medical Council of Jamaica and the Financial Services Commission to obtain their opinion on whether these advertisements violate the laws that govern the medical and legal professions and financial services.

“People do have the right to believe in what they want” said Mr Green, “and that includes astrology, palm-reading or other psychic services. But someone who is not a qualified doctor, lawyer or financial advisor should not claim or imply that they are competent in matters of finance, medicine or law, as distinct from spirituality. We are also concerned that some people who may be suffering or desperate as a result of serious medical, legal or financial problems may be led to believe, as a result of these advertisements, that they can get the help that they need from these astrologers, palm-readers and psychics, even though there is no evidence that these spiritual advisors are qualified in those areas.”

Grammatical Errors in Newscasts

In a recent letter to radio and television stations, the Chairman of the Commission, Professor Anthony Clayton, told Chief Executive Officers that the Commission had received a number of complaints about basic grammatical errors in news broadcasts on radio and television.

“The media reflect society, but it also has an important role in elevating it” said Professor Clayton. “Many of the children in this country are not very well educated, which reduces their chances of employment. The newsreader may be one of the few people whose voice they hear regularly, outside their immediate family and peer group, and it is important that they hear well-constructed sentences and clear pronunciation from at least one source.”

The stations are being strongly encouraged by the Commission to take steps to ensure that news broadcasts maintain a high standard for clarity and good grammar. The Commission will monitor the news output of its licensees over the next six months to determine whether there is an improvement in the standard for news presentation, along with apologies (where necessary) for errors in grammar and pronunciation.

Exclusive Content Licences

The Commission is investigating complaints from local television viewers about the quality of carriage of live, high-demand events under exclusive licences. These exclusive licences mean that those programmes cannot be shown on other channels, so the viewer depends entirely on the company that has the exclusive licence. The most recent complaints were that the broadcast of a popular show started late and missed the beginning, was broken at the wrong times, and then rejoined after it had restarted. This was because the company was trying to fit in other commitments, but it caused a marked deterioration in the quality of the live show.

The Commission is considering various responses. One of them is the issuing of new guidelines to govern the quality of carriage of live, high demand events under exclusive licences. The Commission will consult with the broadcasting industry before taking further action.

The Broadcasting Commission

The Broadcasting Commission is the media and content regulator for Jamaica. Our mission is to ensure a successful national transition to a digital economy, using the empowering and liberating potential of technological innovation to encourage new forms of business, social, cultural and media development while protecting the people of Jamaica from potential abuses of communication and influence.

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