

## Complaint made by FMA to the

### Broadcasting Complaints Commission - 16/8/2006

<b>Details of complaint</b>	
Name of Station	Newstalk 106
Programme Title / Advertisement	Life with Orla Barry
Programme date: dd/mm/yr	18/07/2006
Time of broadcast (if applicable)	09.00

<b>Is the complaint an infringement of:</b>	<b>Please select</b>
Impartiality	Impartiality
Law & Order	
Privacy of an individual	
Taste & Decency	
General advertising, teleshopping, sponsorship & commercial promotion codes	
Children's Advertising Code	
Slander	
Published matter in relation to RTÉ publications	

Please complete this section **briefly**, summarising the main points of your complaint (alternatively, you may attach your complaint to this form).

The Newstalk 106 broadcaster, Orla Barry, contrary to section 24 (2) [A] of the Broadcasting Act 2001, clearly indicated her own views in relation to the group she referred to as 'A Choice for Women, Woman's Resource Centre'. These views were expressed by the content as well as the tone of her words.

In particular when introducing a report given by Aisling Riordan, she said:

“You may have heard a little about this or read about it in some of the weekend newspapers: Aisling Riordan’s shocking undercover report on the practices of an Irish Pregnancy Advice Centre. I can tell you it makes for some pretty grim and unpleasant listening at points and for women in particular, I know myself, because I listened to it myself last night. At points I felt a little nauseous, to be honest, listening to some of the details but we will come back to that a little bit later and have a chat about it. You may have read in your weekend newspapers about the practices of a certain advice centre here in Dublin. The group in question goes under the name of A Choice for Women – Woman’s Resource Centre and it advertises its services as one that offers advice on all options in a crisis pregnancy and also offers post-abortion counselling. However, what Newstalk has discovered is that women who visit the centre are instead being subject to manipulation and misinformation. For a four month period Newstalk reporter Aisling Riordan went undercover to expose the centre’s practices and what you will hear next is her story. I should warn you that some listeners may find some of this audio disturbing”.

If the report which followed was so convincing, why did Orla Barry feel the need to tell people how to interpret it before they had been given a chance to hear it? Her interpretation was communicated by the use of such prejudicial terms as “shocking”, “expose”, “manipulation”. These terms were clearly added to prejudice the listener in favour of a particular interpretation of a report which was, itself, presented in a highly prejudicial and ‘directive’ manner. Above all, this was poor journalism and constituted an unashamed attempt to manipulate the listener. Speaking as a Psychologist, the obviously employed technique of a broadcaster affirming in advance the slant of the report that they are introducing was an application of the brainwashing principles of researcher Karl Hovland which were used during World War II. The use of the technique made this programme sound, to the trained ear, like a skit on impartial broadcasting!

A broadcaster by virtue of her role is perceived, more or less, to be an ‘honest broker’. Any view given by the broadcaster carries more weight accordingly. An individual who poses as an honest broker while in reality expressing her own views is in a sense falsely representing herself as a *legitimate* broadcaster. The abuse of power in this way is harmful to the listener and is the reason why the prohibition against the expression of the broadcaster’s own views in section 24 (2) [A] must be upheld.

Relevant part of section 24 (2) [A] of The Broadcasting Act 2001:

Current affairs broadcasts, including matters of public controversy or debate, **must** also be treated in a manner which is fair to all interests concerned.

As with news, the broadcast **must** be presented in an objective and impartial manner, **without any expression of the broadcasters’ own views.** (emphasis added)

## **The Broadcasting Complaints Commission**

Any viewer or listener who is not happy about broadcasting content on an Irish broadcasting service, whether in programme or advertisement form, has a right to complain about it and have their complaint handled by the Broadcasting Complaints Commission.

The Broadcasting Complaints Commission has been given the responsibility by the government to deal with all broadcasting complaints, which means the Commission looks at, considers and decides upon the nature of these complaints.

### **How to make a complaint**

All complaints **must**

- be in writing, preferably by completing this 'Complaint Form'
- be made within 30 days of the broadcast
- relate to a broadcast by an Irish broadcasting service
- come within the relevant broadcasting codes and/or legislation
- include a short detailed summary of what might have caused offence.

*All complaints considered by the Commission are made publicly available, including the name of the complainant.*

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