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# FAITH, RELIGION AND EQUIVALENT SYSTEMS OF BELIEF

## Principle

These rules seek to strike a balance between freedom of speech and the prevention of advertising that could be harmful. BCAP intends them to:

- reduce the social harm that can result from damage to inter-faith relations
- protect the young and allow parents to exercise choice in their children's moral and philosophical education
- protect those who are vulnerable because, for example, of sickness or bereavement
- prevent potentially harmful advertisements from exploiting their audience.

## Definitions

The rules in this section apply to:

- advertisements, about any matter, by or on behalf of bodies that are wholly or mainly concerned with religion, faith or other systems of belief that can reasonably be regarded as equivalent to those that involve recognition of a deity, including belief in the non-existence of deities
- advertisements, by any body, that wholly or mainly concern matters of religion, faith or equivalent systems of belief
- advertisements, by any body, for products or services related to such matters.
- some advertisements subject to this Section are also subject to Section 7: Political and Controversial Matters or Section 16: Charities.

## Rules

15.1 **Radio Central Copy Clearance** – Radio advertisements subject to this section must be centrally cleared.

15.2 Broadcasters must not accept advertisements from or on behalf of bodies:

15.2.1 that practise or advocate illegal behaviour or

15.2.2 whose rites or other forms of collective observance are not normally directly accessible to the general public or

15.2.3 that apply unreasonable pressure on people to join or participate or not to opt out.

15.3 Broadcasters must be satisfied that no representatives will contact respondents without their consent.

15.4 Television advertisements must not promote psychic practices or practices related to the occult, except those permitted by rule 15.5. Radio advertisements may promote psychic and occult practices but must not make efficacy claims. Psychic and occult-related practices include ouija, satanism, casting of spells, palmistry, attempts to contact the dead, divination, clairvoyance, clairaudience, the invocation of spirits or demons and exorcism.

15.5 **Television only** – Subject to rules 15.5.1 and 15.5.2, television advertisements may promote services that the audience is likely to regard merely as entertainment and that offer generalised advice that would obviously be applicable to a large section of the population, for example, typical newspaper horoscopes.

15.5.1 Advertisements may promote a pre-recorded tarot-based prediction service if:

15.5.1.a the service includes no content that respondents might feel to be threatening and

15.5.1.b both the advertisement and the service state clearly that the service is pre-recorded and qualify references to "tarot" to make clear that the predictions are not based on live readings.

15.5.2 Advertisements for personalised and live services that rely on belief in astrology, horoscopes, tarot and derivative practices are acceptable only on channels that are licensed for the purpose of the promotion of such services and are appropriately labelled: both the advertisement and the product or service itself must state that the product or service is for entertainment purposes only.

15.5.3 Advertising permitted under rule 15.5 may not:

- Make claims for efficacy or accuracy;
- Predict negative experiences or specific events;
- Offer life-changing advice directed at individuals – including advice related to health (including pregnancy) or financial situation;
- Appeal particularly to children;
- Encourage excessive use.

15.6 Advertisements must identify the advertiser and its faith, if that is not obvious from the context.

15.7 Television and television text advertisements must not expound doctrines or beliefs, unless they are broadcast on channels whose editorial content is wholly or mainly concerned with matters of religion, faith or equivalent systems of belief ("specialist broadcasters"). Advertisements carried by specialist broadcasters may express the advertiser's opinion on matters of doctrine or belief but must not present it as unqualified fact and must make clear to the audience that it is the advertiser's opinion.
Radio advertisements may expound doctrines or beliefs if they are presented as the advertiser's opinion.

15.8 Advertisements must not exhort audience members to change their beliefs or behaviour.

15.9 Advertisements must not refer to the alleged consequences of faith or lack of faith. They must not present the advertiser's beliefs as the "one" or "true" faith.

15.10 Advertisements must not denigrate the beliefs of others.

15.11 Advertisements must not appeal for funds, except for charitable purposes. If the charitable purpose includes or will be accompanied by recruitment or evangelism, the advertisement must make that clear.
Before broadcasting an advertisement that includes a charitable appeal, broadcasters must seek to be satisfied that the funds raised will be used solely for the benefit of specified groups.
Advertisements must not imply that respondents will receive spiritual benefits in return for a donation to the advertised cause.

15.12 Advertisements must not exploit the hopes or fears of the vulnerable. The elderly, the sick and the bereaved should be regarded as especially vulnerable.

15.13 Advertisements must not claim that faith healing, miracle working or faith-based counselling can treat, cure or alleviate physical or mental health problems; they may, however, make restrained and proportionate claims that such services can benefit emotional or spiritual well-being.

15.14 Advertisements must not appeal particularly to people under 18 and must not be broadcast during or adjacent to programmes that appeal or are likely to appeal particularly to those under 18.

This rule does not apply to advertisements for public events, including services and festivals, that children are likely to participate in or to advertisements for publications or similar merchandise that are designed for children, provided that neither the advertisement nor the advertised product or service is linked to recruitment or fundraising. It does not apply to advertisements on channels or stations whose editorial content is dedicated to matters of religion, faith or equivalent systems of belief.

15.15 Advertisements must not feature children as presenters, unless the advertisement is for an event, such as Christmas carol services or Diwali celebrations, that children are especially likely to take part in.