

Singo furious over Broadcast Regulator's ruling on Alan Jones

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Life on the receiving end!

One could almost feel sorry for highflying, right wing, media types who derive a living from exploiting the lowest aspects of human nature. But there is 'no love lost' around here and I imagine anywhere else. Media moguls are getting a taste of life at the receiving end, perhaps they may think twice before making IRRESPONSIBLE racist, vilifying comments at the expense of those in the least position to defend themselves. The results of negative media hype and racist remarks include foul abuse levelled at you, your wife and kids in public; being spat on for no reason other than your skin colour or religion, and the ugly culmination of all racist behaviour, the race riot (Cronulla, 2005). Are we sorry the purveyors of social division and slur are experiencing frustration at the lack of recourse and remedial action available to them - not on your life?



John 'singo' Singleton

John Singleton, majority shareholder in the Macquarie radio network, hasn't stopped bemoaning the decision of the regulator against flagship 2GB and talkback host/demagogue Alan Jones, since it released its findings.

"Do you think this results in sponsorships, advertising revenue or respect or increased reputation? No, no, no, this'll cost us a tonne of money. People we were in the midst of merger negotiations with, will run [at] a hundred miles an hour."

"There is no punishment ... the punishment is what you're doing now, 2GB and Alan Jones being named as causing the riots." [My poor bank account!] Singleton, an astute ad man, referred to the inevitable decrease in advertising revenue based on the perceived shift in the demographic of Jones' listening audience, ".. value will be diminished because it will be seen as an audience of rednecks", he said. One wonders whether Singleton imagined Jones' audience to be anything other than mindless morons and racists at any time.

The following is an excerpt from Michael Bodey's excellent article in the Australian, April 12, 2007:

"Of all our faults, Alan, (fellow 2GB broadcaster) Ray (Hadley), myself, you can agree or disagree but Jesus, not (accuse us of) intolerance," he said.

Macquarie Radio Network hired advisers Baron Partners in February to assess the network's future ahead of media reforms that have since come into force.

Mr Singleton holds a two-thirds stake in Macquarie, while Jones received 11.25 million options when the company floated in April 2005.

With an exercise price of 22.4c, and Macquarie's share price at \$1.36, Jones is sitting on a paper profit in excess of \$13 million if the publicly listed company were to be acquired or merge.

Mr Singleton said the most frustrating aspect of ACMA's ruling was the lack of recourse given the potential commercial implications.

"I'm told at first glance and second and third there is none, but if there is any we will be taking recourse because the commercial damage to 2GB, which is in the midst of publicly announced acquisition, merger and takeover discussions via Baron Partners, the commercial damage will be demonstrable, provable in the marketplace," he said. "If there is recourse for 2GB as a company, its directors and-or Alan Jones personally, we will be taking them, against either ACMA or their directors."

Macquarie's options against ACMA's findings are limited given it found the licensee breached only a code of practice, not a statute or law.

It can appeal in the Federal Court under the Administrative Decisions Judicial Review Act, but only on matters of process, not the merit of the decision.

This may be a likely course of action given 2GB's statement that ACMA's finding was "seriously flawed and ill-founded". The station continues to protest that complaints to ACMA were made only after Jones's comments were replayed by the ABC and other comments were erroneously attributed to him in The Sydney Morning Herald.

"If there's not (recourse), the question must be asked: What is ACMA doing, how many millions does it cost and what the fuck does it do?" Mr Singleton said.

Mr Singleton argued there should be an inquiry into ACMA "because I thought they were just sitting around bludging off the taxpayer not doing much".

The media authority was bound by its ongoing deliberation not to engage with Jones or Mr Singleton's criticisms.

But an ACMA spokesman said: "ACMA stands by its report and its media release of yesterday (Tuesday) and will now begin a process of discussing sanctions with 2GB."

Clearly, Mr Singleton has been personally affronted by ACMA's decision and subsequent reporting of it.

Rather than being seen to have merely breached commercial radio's code of practice, both Jones and 2GB have been pilloried as the essential causes of the Cronulla race riots in December 2005.

He said ACMA's ruling and its reporting was the most hurtful attack on Jones he had seen, worse than last year's publication of the biography by Chris Masters, Jonestown.

"The personal damage to Alan Jones is unbelievable, unbelievable," Mr Singleton said.

"This has been a lead story all day: 'Alan Jones starts race riots'. You've never known a more peaceable, tolerant human being in your life.

"He's also a very divisive personality, and he's very passionate in his views and very determined. I'm not sure of anything and Alan's sure of everything," he added.

"That's what makes him such a wonderful broadcaster, but nothing he's ever done deserves this.

"Forget what you think of Alan, forget what you think of his political views - I disagree with most of them - forget what you think of his coaching, whatever your personal views are, you cannot trash someone's individual reputation based on five letters from all around Australia, none of whom are from listeners, then ask Alan and 2GB to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to defend these letters, which we did, and then make a finding, to which there is no charge, to which there is no answer, to which there is no appeal as far as I understand at this stage. Fair go, fair go."

"Fair go", ay! Is that what you gave people on the receiving end of Jones' abuse and vilifying remarks? We can appreciate the pain in your hip-pocket nerve and the resulting agony you must be experiencing - how does it feel?

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