

22 March 2019

Complaints Office
3rd Floor Admin Building
RTÉ
Donnybrook
Dublin 4

Dear Sir or Madam

Complaint: AA Roadwatch

I wish to complain about the inclusion of AA Roadwatch in RTÉ radio programmes, on the following grounds:

1. Breach of sponsorship rules

RTÉ Broadcast Sponsorship Guidelines prohibit sponsorship by “any body whose intents are wholly or mainly political in nature”.

The AA was established to campaign against the introduction of speed limits. They have since expanded their operations to include insurance and roadside assistance for drivers, but they retain their core activity of campaigning to influence government policy on transport. RTÉ break their own rules by accepting the AA’s sponsorship of AA Roadwatch.

2. Unfair to other businesses

The existence of AA Roadwatch gives the AA credibility and RTÉ’s imprimatur as an official source of trustworthy information. This provides the AA with branding that is unavailable to competing businesses.

3. Unfair to rival campaigners

The AA campaigns on many transport-related issues. The existence of AA Roadwatch also gives it credibility and RTÉ’s apparent imprimatur as an official source of trustworthy information. This gives the AA an advantage over rival campaigners, who do not benefit from this boost in credibility.

4. Skewing public debate

Supporting car transport is a central aim of the AA. RTÉ’s placing AA Roadwatch in news programmes promotes the view that motorists facing congestion is an urgent national issue, of greater importance than other transport problems.

5. Potential for bias

The content of AA Roadwatch has the potential to support the AA’s campaigning. Regardless of whether this opportunity is used, it is unacceptable for the AA to have the ability to coordinate the content of AA Roadwatch with their campaigning objectives.

Each of grounds 2 to 5 constitute a breach of RTÉ’s duty of impartiality.

Please send all correspondence by email.

Yours sincerely



William Campbell