



ADJUDICATION NO: 30/A/2025

NAME OF PROGRAMME: LITHAPO
DATE AND TIME OF BROADCAST: 31 OCTOBER 2025 AT 18:00
BROADCASTER: SABC2
COMPLAINANT: LYNERS

COMPLAINT

PROGRAMME BROADCAST DURING FAMILY TIME CONTAINED VIOLENCE AND WAS CONSIDERED HARMFUL TO CHILDREN.

APPLICABLE CLAUSES

Free to Air Code:

6. Children

- (1) Broadcasting service licensees must not broadcast material which is harmful or disturbing to children at times when a large number of children are likely to be part of the audience.

7. Watershed period

- (1) Programming on television which contains scenes of explicit violence and/or sexual conduct and/or nudity and/or grossly offensive language intended for adult audiences must not be broadcast before the watershed period.

9. Audience Advisories

- (1) To assist audiences in choosing programmes, television broadcasting

service licensees must provide advisory assistance which, when applicable, must include guidelines as to age, where such broadcasts contain violence, sex, nudity and/or offensive language. The advisory must be visible on the screen for a minimum of 90 seconds at the commencement of the programme and for a minimum of 30 seconds after each advertisement or other break. Where the frequency of the said subject matters, or any one or some of them, is high, a continuous advisory will be necessary, whether it is broadcast before or after the watershed.

ADJUDICATION

- [1] A program was aired on the state broadcaster's SABC2 channel between 18h00 and 18h30. Violence was depicted showing a person being shot with significant blood loss. The complaint is of the view that the programme should have been broadcast later in the evening.

[2] **The complaint reads as follows:**

"On Friday, 31 October 2025 I watched Lithapo, which aired on SABC 2 at 18:00.

During this programme, one female character was wrapped in black plastic. She had been killed by a male character, Nkosana during a previous episode. Another female character, Laiken, was tied to a chair. Both the dead and the living female characters were then torched in the same house by the matriarch, Thandeka.

Afterwards, the character, Nkosana, went to a farm where he pulled out a gun and shot the character, Nolo. The latter bled profusely, because of the gunshot wound.

It was highly upsetting to witness this episode. Before the episode had been aired, no mention was made that this programme is not for sensitive viewers.

The show did not indicate that there should be an age restriction because of the use of violence. I found it difficult to understand why a programme of such a nature would be aired during family-time viewing. As a 45-year-old female, the storyline was still playing in my head days after I had watched it. It caused me emotional distress. What about a 5-year-old boy/ girl child who is watching this programme in waiting to watch the next programme, Deal or no deal? The latter's host, Katlego Maboe, normally greets the family members and allows contestants to greet family members during the show. What impact will such violence have on young minds?

Could Lithapo not be moved to 20:00 or 21:00 the evening rather than when very young viewers watch?

[3] **The Broadcaster responded as follows:**

"Trust you are well.

Thank you for the response concerning the age restriction shown for the programme.

However, I am still displeased that a show of this nature is shown during family time viewing. How is it possible to allow so much violence for children to see? Since that particular episode of Lithapo, I do not watch it anymore since it has traumatized me.

I am also concerned that even though the story is fictional, the effect of the story could warp young minds. It is unacceptable that this programme is allowed to be shown at this time. Again my request, could it not be moved to a later timeslot?"

[4] The Complainant replied as follows:

"BCCSA COMPLAINT: LIZEL LYNERS - SABC 2 - LITHAPO- 31.10.2025 - 18:00

With regard to the above-mentioned complaint, please find our comments as follows:

1. The episode carried an age restriction of **13V** on screen. The referenced scenes were part of the ongoing storyline and represented the final episode, which concluded events developed in preceding episodes. While the scenes involved violence, they were contextual to the narrative and not excessive, prolonged, or sadistic.
2. The death of the female character was portrayed as accidental rather than premeditated, and the subsequent actions were part of a crisis response by the characters.
3. The intention of the broadcast was not to glamorise or promote gender-based violence, but to reflect real-world social issues and stimulate meaningful public conversation.
4. The broadcaster notes the emotional impact on sensitive viewers and reassures that the Commission that the SABC remains committed to minimizing potential harm through accurate classification.
5. SABC will continue ensuring that age restrictions, scheduling practices, and advisories are applied accurately and consistently.

The SABC would like to thank the complainant for raising this important matter with us. We urge them to continue supporting SABC 2."

EVALUATION

[5] I viewed the impugned broadcast and read the submissions by the Complainant and Broadcaster

[6] In determining whether the Broadcaster has breached the Code, I will begin by analysing the level of violence and the potential harm to children. The Complainant is correct in identifying the major elements being the body in the

body bag and character being shot. Notably, I do not share the Complainant's view that the amount of bleeding following the gunshot is "profuse". However, I do believe that the exhibited extent is nonetheless inappropriate for children's viewing. The BCCSA has found in previous instances that gunshots coupled with the visual of a bleeding victim amount to explicit violence. This inference is based on the analysis provided in *Herbst and Du Plessis vs SABC2*¹

[7] Although the broadcaster displayed the age limit advisory on screen for a significant portion of the broadcast in accordance with the Code, the content the scene is still deemed inappropriate. Explicit violence was broadcast during a time when a large number of children were likely to be part of the audience.

[8] The Broadcaster has contravened Clause 6(1) of the Code and is reprimanded for the contravention. It is further urged to heed the guideline in Clause 6(4) that broadcasting service licensees may, with the advance of the watershed period, progressively broadcast more adult material. **The Broadcaster is reprimanded.**



RA CHEMALY
COMMISSIONER: BROADCASTING COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

¹ 04/2015