SWEN90016: Software Processes and Management
Ethical Case Studies

Case Study 1:   AUSTRALIAN COMPUTER SOCIETY CODE OF ETHICS – CASE STUDIES

Tax Software Package

A software development company has just produced a new software package that incorporates the new tax laws and figures taxes for both individuals and small businesses.

The president of the company knows that the program has a number of bugs. He also believes the first firm to put this kind of software on the market is likely to capture the largest market share. The company widely advertises the program. When the company actually ships a CD, it includes a disclaimer of responsibility for errors resulting from the use of the program. The company expects it will receive a number of complaints, queries, and suggestions for modification. The company plans to use these to make changes and eventually issue updated, improved, and debugged versions. The president argues that this is general industry policy and that anyone who buys version 1.0 of a program knows this and will take proper precautions.

Because of bugs, a number of users filed incorrect tax returns and were penalized by the ATO.

Source: http://www.acs.org.au/publication/docs/ACS_CaseStudiesFinal.pdf and Burmeister, O.K, (2000),
Applying the ACS Code of Ethics, Journal of Research & Practice in Information Technology, Vol. 32, No. 2, May

Questions

1. What would you have done?

2. How could the ACS code of ethics have guided you?