



Case Report

1	Case Number	0021/17
2	Advertiser	Reckitt Benckiser (Aust) Pty Ltd
3	Product	House Goods Services
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV - Free to air
5	Date of Determination	08/02/2017
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Age

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement shows a family sitting down for dinner when animated bugs enter the room. The grandmother pulls out a can of fly spray and begins to shake it as the voice over says, 'don't Margaret, not another ruined brunch'. The other family members react with distaste and the voice over states 'no more meringue pies ruined by your manic over-spray' and we see a young girl scream and her mother leaning over to protect the pie. Margaret then pulls out another can. A young boy is shown sweating and whispers 'I've suffered enough'. The voice over then states 'there's a smarter way' and the mother is shown with the automatic spray. The voice over then states the benefits of the products as the bugs leave and the family is seen eating. An unimpressed Margaret is seen knocking the fly spray back into her bag.

THE COMPLAINT

A sample of comments which the complainant/s made regarding this advertisement included the following:

The woman with the fly spray, Margaret, is elderly. Ostensibly in the context of the family in the ad one of the married couple's mothers. I believe the ad preys on an old dodderly woman ethic and is therefore "ageist" that is promulgating stereotypes of the ineffectiveness and uselessness of older people.

The ads show ageism by portraying older Australians as stupid and useless. I am an active 88 year old. I am passionate about ageism and how senior Australians are depicted in the media. We are not old stupid people who exist to be made fun of.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complainant/s regarding this advertisement include the following:

RB have received a complaint that the Mortein automatic indoor pest control TV advertisement is non-compliant with the Code under 2.1 - Discrimination or vilification age. The advertisement is designed to show that there are alternative ways to control pests in your home. it is a family setting in which the Grandmother attempts to use fly spray inappropriately, she is about to spray over food and close to the faces of her family. The members of her family ask her to stop, as they don't want to be sprayed or for their food to be covered by fly spray. An alternative solution is provided by the Mortein low dose automatic spray, that is mounted on the wall, some distance from the family.

The complainant is of the view it is "ageist that is promulgating stereotypes of the ineffectiveness and uselessness of older people".

In fact the ad is designed to depict exaggerated use of fly sprays. The lady is proposing to use 2 sprays at the same time, spraying close to her family and their food. An alternative product is shown placed away from the table that automatically sprays, to demonstrate an easier solution to controlling flies. RB therefore do not agree that this advertising is in breach of the code. We are simply depicting a normal family group including a Grandma and Grandpa, Mum, Dad and Children.

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board ("Board") considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (the "Code").

The Board noted the complainants' concerns that the advertisement depicts an older woman in a stereotypical manner that suggests she is stupid and useless.

The Board reviewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser's response.

The Board considered whether the advertisement complied with Section 2.1 of the Code which requires that 'advertisements shall not portray or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual preference, religion, disability, mental illness or political belief.'

The Board noted that this television advertisement shows a family eating a meal together and when the grandmother attempts to use cans of fly spray the family reacts with horror.

The Board noted the advertiser's response that the advertisement was depicting the exaggerated use of fly sprays in order to promote a less invasive product. The Board noted that the grandmother's use of the fly spray is excessive but considered that this is reflective of how many people would use this product and in the Board's view the focus is on the efficiency and less invasive nature of the automated spray rather than a suggestion that the grandmother is behaving in a manner which is stupid and/or useless. The Board noted that as automated bug sprays are a newer product it is reasonable to imply that older people may not be aware of this alternative and considered that while advertisers should take care on how they portray older people, in the Board's view the focus in the advertisement is on the behaviour and not the age of the woman. The Board noted that in the final scenes of the advertisement the grandmother is shown to be engaging with her family as they continue with their meal and considered that she is not depicted in a manner which is negative or ageist.

The Board considered that the advertisement did not portray or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of age and determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.1 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on other grounds, the Board dismissed the complaints.