



Case Report

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| 1 | Case Number | 0050/17 |
| 2 | Advertiser | The Book of Mormon Musical |
| 3 | Product | Entertainment |
| 4 | Type of Advertisement / media | Print |
| 5 | Date of Determination | 08/02/2017 |
| 6 | DETERMINATION | Dismissed |

ISSUES RAISED

2.5 - Language Inappropriate language

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

A full page advertisement in the Herald Sun dated Tuesday 17 January 2017 with tweets in the top left hand corner from Casey Campbell:

“Oh my f***** G** when is The Book of Mormon coming to Australia?!?”

“WHEN WILL THE F***** BOOK OF MORMON COME TO AUSTRALIA?!
PLEAAASE.” Casey Campbell, @capitarno, Twitter

Further down on the ad The Book of Mormon has replied to Casey: “Performances begin tonight. F***** HAPPY NOW, CASEY?!?”

THE COMPLAINT

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

Indecent language used in advertisement.

The very clear use of implied strong language used in the ad, supposedly masked by the use of asterisks, three times. There is no mistaking the intent of the ad and I was offended to read it. It is a very short and explicit ad on a large, mostly blank page. I have a child reading over my shoulder sometimes as I read the paper, and it would be completely inappropriate for

them to read this.

I believe that this contravenes Section 2.5 of the AANA Code of Ethics, that "strong and obscene language should be avoided".

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

We sought and received editorial approval from the publication and worked with them to amend original tweet to copy that was acceptable to them. Similar ads ran in newspapers in the UK and received minimal complaints however the Advertising Standards Authority did not uphold these complaints. Here is the link to the decision:

https://www.asa.org.uk/Rulings/Adjudications/2015/8/The-UK-Mission-Ltd/SHP_ADJ_303475.aspx#.WHlxAPmLSM8

Also it is our understanding that the Herald Sun uses unedited expletives in editorial, for example the below: <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/lifestyle/fashion/vogue-trends/oscar-embarrassment-academy-judge-lets-slip-how-voting-actually-works/news-story/49ab92de1be5e69475329a37cd4bd85c>

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 uses explicit language which is not appropriate for children to see.

The Board viewed 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 this print advertisement promoting The Book of Mormon Musical features the phrases, "Oh my f***** g**", "When will the f***** Book of Mormon come to Australia", and "F***** happy now".

The Board noted the reference to "Oh my f***** g**" and considered that the most likely interpretation of this phrase is "Oh my fucking god" or "OMFG". The Board noted that the advertised product is a musical about religion and a minority of the Board considered that associating a profanity with God in this context is offensive to those with strong Christian

beliefs.

The majority of the Board however noted that the phrase “OMFG” is commonly used to express shock or surprise at a particular situation and considered that its use in the advertisement is consistent with this colloquial usage. The Board noted it had previously dismissed the use of the acronym “OMFG” when it was used in a Facebook advertisement (0187/13) and considered that consistent with this previous determination the use of a common phrase in a manner designed to express surprise does not discriminate against or vilify a person or section of the community on account of religion.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.1 of the Code.

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.5 of the Code. Section 2.5 of the Code states: “Advertising or Marketing Communications shall only use language which is appropriate in the circumstances (including appropriate for the relevant audience and medium). Strong or obscene language shall be avoided”.

The Board noted the advertisement had been placed in the Herald Sun and considered that, consistent with previous determinations (0107/13, 0101/16, 0577/16), while some children may look through a newspaper in the Board’s view newspapers are not of themselves generally considered to attract a high child readership or to be directed to children.

The Board noted that most of the letters are replaced with asterisks and considered that although most adults would understand what words are being referred to, in the Board’s view it would not be immediately obvious to younger children if they were to see the advertisement.

The Board noted that if you ignore the words containing the asterisks the phrases still make sense and considered that while some members of the community would prefer that references to swear words not be used in advertising, in the Board’s view the use of the asterisks in the advertisement are sufficient to allow for different interpretations of the words and the overall impression is not of strong or obscene language.

The Board considered that the advertisement did not use strong, obscene or inappropriate language and determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.5 of the Code.

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

