



## **CASE REPORT**

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|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. Complaint reference number | 86/04   |
| 2. Advertiser                 | Volkswagon Group Australia Pty Ltd (Polo)           |
| 3. Product                    | Vehicles  |
| 4. Type of advertisement      | TV  |
| 5. Nature of complaint        | Discrimination or vilification Gender - section 2.1 |
| 6. Date of determination      | Tuesday, 11 May 2004                                |
| 7. DETERMINATION              | Dismissed   |

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT**

The advertisement features a woman driving around in her Volkswagen Polo. The musical soundtrack is a song called “Mr Big Stuff.” The woman pulls over to park and looks into her side mirror which has writing on it that says “Objects in mirror may appear bigger than actual size.” She sees the reflection of the bottom half of a male courier on a bike and giggles.

## **THE COMPLAINT**

Comments which the complainant/s made regarding this advertisement included the following:

*“The “in your face” focusing on men’s crotches (and using that device to sell products) is clearly exploitative, tasteless and sexist. The overt emphasis on men’s genital size is also discriminatory.”*  
*“Such advertisements send the message that men are there for the gratification of women and are nothing other than objects of ridicule.”* *“Moreover it’s the hypocrisy that such a commercial can be allowed where if an ad featured a man commenting directly or indirectly on a female’s breast size or some other sexual attribute it would instantly be labelled as discriminatory or demeaning.”*  
*“Perhaps VW thought the ad was humorous but I thought it was vulgar, tasteless and discriminatory towards men.”*

## **THE ADVERTISER’S RESPONSE**

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complaint/s regarding this advertisement included the following:

*“The commercial has been produced to tap into the fun and carefree psyche of young woman aged 20-35 years of age.”* *“We believe that it simply uses a device that is socially known to be a point of commentary within the target audience and play on the humour that not all may be as it appears – ie the lower part of a man’s torso appearing larger than actual size when reflected in the side mirror of a car in which objects often appear larger than they are.”*

## **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 that in the context of prevailing community standards, the majority of people would find this advertisement humorous rather than offensive.

The Board found that the depiction did not contravene the provisions of the Code relating to discrimination (sex)/vilification.

Further finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on any other grounds, the Board

dismissed the complaint.