



CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	4/09
2. Advertiser	Australian Sports Commission
3. Product	Leisure & sport
4. Type of advertisement	Internet
5. Nature of complaint	Discrimination or vilification Nationality – section 2.1
6. Date of determination	Wednesday, 21 January 2009
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This internet advertisement from the Australian Sports Commission features a video clip of a young man wearing a blue hooded jumper. The man has a British accent and talks about the difference between Australian sport and also about Australia's chances of winning medals at the next Olympic Games. The man says Australia will win nothing. Above the screen are the words: "A Brit with a mouth as wide as the Thames". The video clip ends with the words "Let's rip the Brits to bits in London 2012" written on the screen.

THE COMPLAINT

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

I don't mind sledging but this is more likely to incite yet more violence on young British males visiting or working in Australia. It's asking for trouble, there are already enough muggings and beatings on a regular basis on poms, now it's almost authorised by a government body. Do they really want to alienate people who are spending money in this country? Great way to turn tourists off visiting. Very irresponsible advertising.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The Australian Sports Commission comments regarding the complaint:

- We acknowledge the matters that are raised in the email, and hope that some further context to the promotion may help allay concerns.*
- In July 2008 the Commission launched a world first electronic talent identification (eTID) program with the aim of attracting young Australians to 'test their talent' virtually. This is one of the innovative approaches the Commission employs to find young Australian talent, particularly in regional and remote parts of Australia, which enables Australia to stay internationally competitive in a variety of sporting endeavours.*
- As the target market for the eTID program is 12-29 year olds, it needed to be able to attract attention in the mediums of this age cohort. As you will be aware, this young market does not stereotypically read newspapers, watch television news or listen to the radio as much as they receive information through the internet, their phones and interactive social media web sites.*
- The eTID video uses these virtual networks and was intended to leverage off the friendly rivalry that exists in sport between Britain and Australia, as evidenced at the 2008 Beijing Olympic*

Games. In no way was it intended to be offensive, but merely seeking to engage this audience in a humorous way to motivate them to visit the eTID website.

- The campaign has resulted in people having a variety of opinions. However, this is typical of this form of online advertising and the results have been heightened awareness of eTID and a surge of traffic to the online talent identification tool.*
- While we can appreciate a differing view on the advertisement, we hope people understand our underlying strategy in putting it forward to promote this worthwhile program.*

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board (“Board”) considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (the “Code”) in particular whether the advertisement discriminated against or vilified British men or Australian athletes.

The Board noted the advertisement's suggestions that Australian athletes are not high achieving. The Board took account of the advertisement's context, namely sporting rivalry, and noted that there has been an historical, affectionate rivalry between the two countries. The Board considered that the advertisement's suggestion that Australian's are poor performers in the Olympics was a direct reference to the better performance at the 2008 Olympics by the British team and was not vilifying. The Board felt that in this advertisement, suggestions about the performance of Australian Olympians or potential Olympians are made in a manner that is not meant to be hostile or vilifying, but rather is consistent with Australian humour, particularly in the context of sporting rivalry between Australia and the UK.

The Board considered whether the advertisement vilifying British men by depicting a British male 'having a go' at Australian olympic sporting prowess. The Board again considered that the comments were made in a manner that is not meant to be hostile but rather is supposed to encourage young Australian athletes to compete. The Board considered that the depiction of the British male was stereotypical but not offensive or vilifying.

Hence the Board found that the advertisements in question 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 complaint.