



Case Report

1	Case Number	0016/12
2	Advertiser	Mars Food Australia
3	Product	Food and Beverages
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	08/02/2012
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Nationality

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

Scenes of puppets are shown with Mama in the kitchen passing on secret family recipes to 'Sophia'. Mama uses one of the flavour sachets in the recipe book to provide a new and different meal for the family.

THE COMPLAINT

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

Dolmio is an offensive and misleading idea about Italy and Italians.

The idea of passing a message that a white western culture is looking like North Africans with small brains and living in a rural area is simply racist.

In addition the product is awful and doesn't stand a chance to Italian standards about food. If the family was Indian or black this ad wouldn't exist. I can't believe my eyes. It is a disgrace.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to complaint 0016/12, regarding our DOLMIO® TVC. Given the timing of this complaint, we believe this is in relation to our DOLMIO Italian Meal Bases campaign, which is the most recent execution to go to air. As such, our response below relates to this execution. Please advise if more information comes to hand to suggest this is not the advertisement in question.

MARS Food Australia takes its responsibilities as a food producer and marketer very seriously, and to this end, has a rigorous research and testing process in place prior to marketing campaigns going to air. The campaign in question has been airing since 2010, and to date, there have been no further complaints.

In response to your question regarding Section 2 of the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics, we strongly believe that the execution in no way discriminates against or vilifies anyone – on the basis of nationality, or otherwise.

DOLMIO Italian Meal Bases is the latest TVC in a long-running global advertising campaign featuring the DOLMIO family of puppets. The DOLMIO puppets have been on air for more than 10 years in Australia and in other markets across the world, including Europe. The puppets are used to dramatise the fun of families coming together to share the preparation and enjoyment of mealtimes, and have been well-received by audiences across the globe as a light-hearted take on family togetherness.

The DOLMIO ‘Meal Bases’ TVC uses the DOLMIO puppet to bring to life how Italian Meal Bases are a new way to make ‘tricky’ dishes accessible as a week night meal, giving Mums even more ways to entice the family to the dinner table. This execution showcases Mama passing on a secret family recipe to her son’s girlfriend, Sophia, highlighting in a light-hearted way how Mum can easily offer a greater range of tastier weekday Italian meals to her family, using only a few fresh ingredients and 4 simple steps. In no way are the puppet characters depicted to be as ‘ignorant’, as ‘peasants’ or as being ‘without great intelligence’ as the complainant states.

Being an Italian food brand, we believe it is appropriate for us to use Italian characters in our advertisements, particularly given these puppets have acted as spokespeople for the DOLMIO brand in Australia for more than 10 years. These characters are always shown in a light-hearted, family context, and are in no way used to discriminate against or vilify Italian people.

While we understand that the Advertising Standards Bureau does not adjudicate nor comment outside of the AANA Code of Ethics, we would also like to go on the record to refute the complainant’s claim that the product is “fake” and below standard in Italian cooking.

DOLMIO Italian Meal Bases are made with fresh ingredients to create great-tasting, authentic, family favourite Italian meals.

In summary, we are confident the advertisement is in line with community standards and in no way vilifies or discriminates against any section of the community. We believe this is supported by the overwhelmingly positive feedback we have received from Australian viewers over the past decade.

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 is offensive and misleading.

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. Section 2.1 states: "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not portray people 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 the advertisement depicts puppet characters representing Mama and Papa and other members of an Italian "family"

The Board considered that the depiction of puppets portraying an Italian family could be considered offensive to some people. However the Board considered that the puppets used in the advertisement were characters based on brand icons of the Dolmio range used for many years. The Board considered that the depiction of the puppets was affectionate and that there was no derogatory or demeaning treatment of the characters based on their ethnicity.

The Board found that the depiction did not contravene the provisions of the Code relating to the portrayal of people and did not discriminate against or vilify any section of the community, and 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.