



ADVERTISING
STANDARDS
BUREAU

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Case Report

1	Case Number	0002/14
2	Advertiser	Female Choice Plumbing
3	Product	Professional Service
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	15/01/2014
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Gender
- 2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Occupation
- 2.4 - Sex/sexuality/nudity S/S/N - general

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement opens with a generic tradesperson standing next to a dirty van with the top few centimetres of his buttocks visible due to him stooping over. In the next scene a nice new van arrives, a professional plumber gets out, cleanly shaven and looking respectable. Music plays in the background and the text on screen reads, "Female owned & female managed. Top quality tradesmen 24 hours 7 days".

THE COMPLAINT

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

A man wiggly his behind showing crack in butt- offensive to the plumbing trade!

The ad denigrates men as being something dirty and unsavoury, it is blatantly sexist and insulting.

We are not prudish but the advert opens with a male gyrating his partially uncovered posterior in a manner implying that male plumbers are stereotypically of the type portrayed. We found it sexist, stereotypically inaccurate and misrepresentative/misleading of the true position and offensive.

We wonder what would be the reaction had the roles been reversed and a Plumbing Company chose to advertise on the basis of a female acting in an equally sexist manner to promote a plumbing service?

Please spare us all from having to endure such inane material.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

Responses to Female Choice Plumbing TVC complaint (issues raised)

Issue: # 1.

“Male gyrating with his partially uncovered posterior in a manner implying that male plumbers are stereotypically of the type portrayed”

Response:

The casting of a generic tradesperson in the opening eight seconds, who does not regard “professional or pristine presentation as an essential attribute of conducting business” was chosen over say, a character of superior dynamics or portraying a professional marketed alternative. This would be aligned to casting say a mechanic who would be dressed in greasy overalls, face and hands amongst an untidy garage in comparison to a typical franchise or pristine workshop. Our unprofessional tradesperson is seen slow dancing side to side (rather than gyrating) to the inference of music being played within his van and is identified as working in the plumbing industry by the bogus company name “The Plumber” on the side of his dirty van. The top six centimetres of his posterior can be seen due to his stooped nature within the van and also reinforces the carelessness and lack of presentation skills of the character.

Issue # 2.

“We found is sexist, stereotypically inaccurate and misrepresentative/misleading of the true position and offensive”.

Response:

The casting of a male tradesperson was regarded as a true representation of gender representing this occupation. The communication was created for casting of a tradesman rather than a tradeswoman.

Issue # 3.

“We wonder what would be the reaction had the roles been reversed and a Plumbing Company chose to advertise on the basis of a female acting in an equally sexist manner to promote a plumbing service”.

Response:

Without prejudice, the complainant states “we wonder” which translates to a “desire to know” “feeling of curiosity” or “self questioning”, and we regard the issue being more of a hypothetical statement, hence we are not in a position to further respond to this issue

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 the advertisement is sexist and insulting to men and to plumbers in its depiction of a male plumber with part of his buttocks exposed.

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 that the advertisement features a tradesman wiggling his hips in time to music whilst reaching in to his van.

The Board noted the complainants' concerns that it is sexist to depict a tradesman in this manner.

The Board noted it had previously dismissed a similar complaint in case 0038/13 where it noted, "...when one of the unprofessional removalists bends down the woman looks horrified at the low level of one man's pants which exposes the top of his bottom. The Board noted the complainant's concerns that the woman's disgust is directed at the men because they are overweight and considered that the most likely interpretation is that the woman is not impressed with the unprofessional appearance and abilities of the removalists..."

The Board noted that in this instance the tradesman is depicted on his own and that a comparison is then made with a smarter dressed tradesman. The Board considered that the most likely interpretation of the advertisement is that consumers would prefer to choose a professional appearing tradesman and that the use of the tradesman wiggling his hips and exposing part of his bottom is intended to convey his personal professional standards and not the professional standards of all tradesmen.

The Board noted the advertiser's response that a male tradesman was used as men are more likely than women to be in the plumbing trade and considered that the advertisement is not suggesting that all plumbers or all men would behave or present themselves in the same manner as the man in the advertisement.

The Board noted the complainant's concerns about the reaction to the advertisement if the roles had been reversed and a female plumber had been used. The Board considered that its role is to consider each advertisement on its own merit and that addressing hypothetical alternatives is not part of their role.

The Board noted that the overall tone and theme of the advertisement is intended to be light-hearted and humorous and considered that the advertisement did not depict material that discriminated against or vilified any person or section of the community.

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 2.4 of the Code. Section 2.4 of the Code states: "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience".

The Board noted that the top part of the dancing tradesman's bottom is visible above his pants and considered that the level of nudity is mild and not inappropriate.

Based on the above the Board considered that the advertisement did treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.4 of the Code.

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