



Case Report

1	Case Number	0008/18
2	Advertiser	Origin Energy
3	Product	House Goods Services
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV - Free to air
5	Date of Determination	24/01/2018
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

- Other Other - miscellaneous
- 2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Gender
- 2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Other

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement features a man telling his wife he has officially saved them money on electricity by spending six hours insulating the house. His wife logs into the Origin Savernator app from her laptop and the screen displays how much money the couple could save by switching to Origin Savernator.

THE COMPLAINT

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

The message in the ad is that insulation and other energy saving measures are only for ignorant buffoons, and the smart way to save money is to use the Origin app. I object for two reasons: (1) the way it mocks genuine energy saving is irresponsible. (2) The claims in the ad are false. Roof insulation alone is estimated to save the average house \$299 per year, according to the 2012 ICANZ report "The value of insulation based residential energy saving measures in Australia" (http://icanz.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/ICANZ_Report2_-_V10d_.pdf , page 9). So that is \$75 per year on a quarterly bill - and that's 2012 dollars, so is almost certainly an underestimate! Furthermore, the app shows the woman saving \$92.40. Since the man has just mentioned \$20 per bill, the clear implication is that the app can save \$92.40 per quarterly bill. I assert that any house capable of saving \$92.40 just by changing plans, is capable of saving much, much more than \$20 through insulation. To save only \$20

on insulation (a quarter of the average), which would mean their electricity usage is so low that the \$92.40 saving impossible. That is, they have either exaggerated the savings their app can give, or they have falsely underestimated the energy savings from insulation (or both). Either way, it is false advertising. So I claim the ad certainly breaks advertising codes by false advertising, and probably breaks codes (and is certainly objectionable) because it mocks genuine energy saving measures.

*Thermally insulating housing is an extremely efficient way to stay warm in winter and cool in summer and significantly reduces energy costs for maintaining a comfortable temperature in the home. In the short version of the ad (the only one I've seen aired on TV), the part where the husband explains his \$20 per month savings due to his insulation efforts, is completely omitted. The ad obviously has the intention of making the husband look foolish for wasting his time insulating the house when, in fact, it significantly reduces energy costs and is enormously better for the environment. It implies switching to Origin energy will ***save more money than insulating your home***, which in 99.9% of cases would be certainly untrue. I understand its not specifically designed to misinform, but it also goes sharply against Australia's efforts to reduce carbon emissions and reduce climate change.*

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

In our Savernator campaign, we've chosen to present the playful competitive dynamic that exists within the typical Australian family to show there are a variety of ways to save on power bills, and to introduce a new one. It's not been our intent to parody energy efficiency itself, but rather to use humour to show the lengths that married couples will go to outdo each other.

In the exact example used in the complaint letter, it was not our intent to imply that the husband has wasted his time for insulating the home and that he could 'save more money with Origin'. Instead, our intent was to demonstrate how easy and quick it is to find out if you could save on electricity bills, just by using Savernator – as it only takes seconds. Compared to insulating the home, which is obviously a great thing to do, it's more labour intensive and obviously takes more than a few seconds.

As per the voiceover in the ad, we're suggesting 'there's an easier way to see if you can save on electricity', not necessarily a better way. We use the comparison of \$20 a month saving for insulating vs. \$90 a month by switching to Origin, as with insulating, there's no way to exactly know upfront what the saving would actually be at the time of insulating, unlike with Savernator which presents a saving (or not) in an instant.

Origin has traditionally, and will continue to promote energy efficiency as a practical and effective way to save on energy bills. The Energy Efficiency section on our website is one such example, but energy efficiency advice is also central to our financial hardship support program, Power On, and features prominently in much of the advice we present to our 4.2 million customers. We prominently promote energy efficiency via our website – here are some examples.

<https://www.originenergy.com.au/for-home/electricity-and-gas/info/energy-efficiency->

tips.html

<https://www.originenergy.com.au/blog/lifestyle/12-tips-for-an-energy-efficient-home.html.html>

<https://www.originenergy.com.au/blog/lifestyle/dont-break-a-sweat-10-tips-for-staying-cool-this-summer.html>

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 complainant’s concerns that the advertisement depicts a man in a stereotypical manner which suggests he is stupid and financially irresponsible.

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 the Practice Note to Section 2.1 of the Code which provides the following definitions:

“Discrimination – unfair or less favourable treatment

Vilification – humiliates, intimidates, incites hatred, contempt or ridicule”.

The Board noted this television advertisement features a man telling his wife “he has officially saved them money on electricity”. The woman is casually sitting at the kitchen bench logging into the Origin Savernator app from her laptop whilst the man continues to state how much money the couple will save due to the roof insulation he has just completed. At the same time a screen shot is displayed from the woman’s laptop indicating how much money the couple could save by switching to Origin Savernator.

The Board noted the complainant’s concerns that the advertisement ridiculed the man through a gender stereotype.

The Board noted the overall light-hearted tone of the advertisement and considered that the advertisement is depicting an interaction between a married couple where the man has one way of saving money on energy and the woman has a different way. The Board considered that the depiction is showing that the woman prefers her way of saving money but considered that the advertisement is not inciting ridicule of men. The Board considered that, consistent with previous determinations about the depiction of the different genders in advertising, (0038/17) the current advertisement did not portray or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person on account of gender.

The Board determined that the advertisement 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.