



ADVERTISING
STANDARDS
BUREAU

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Case Report

1	Case Number	0011/14
2	Advertiser	RAA of South Australia
3	Product	Insurance
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	29/01/2014
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Ethnicity

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement shows a man and woman at a funeral, crying. The man (George) says, "I can't believe he's gone. When things went wrong, he was always there for me...unlike my insurance company." When the woman consoles him about his loss it becomes clear that he is talking about his friend moving to Sydney and not the loss of his Uncle Nick whose funeral they are attending.

The final text on screen reads, "Trust a local for insurance. We're not going anywhere. RAA."

THE COMPLAINT

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

Disrespectful, racist and completely stupid.

I believe that this advertisement was making a racial insult on how the Europeans especially Italian and Greeks how they mourn at funerals. I don't know who thought of this ad but it's pathetic and does not excuse that the main actor is Greek.

The funeral is clearly ethnic - could be Greek, Italian etc.. The subject, the funeral, is off-colour and most offensive. The actors were insulting to ethnic groups, and a funeral is not a time to laugh for most people. I'm not normally one to complain but I found the theme and style cheap, tacky and offensive.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The George character depicted in the advertisement has been the main character of RAA insurance advertising for over 10 years. Given George is Greek and attending his Uncle Nick's (i.e. A blood relative) funeral, the lady with George is also of Greek heritage. This is for consistency; it is not racial vilification or stereotyping.

The fact that someone's crying at a funeral does not highlight their ethnicity. Any person of any race could be crying at a funeral.

Whilst the viewer has the right to their personal opinion on the quality of the advertisement, we steadfastly disagree with their view that the advertisement is discriminating or vilifying towards an ethnic group.

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 racist in its depiction of Europeans mourning at a funeral.

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 George, the main character of RAA advertisements for over 10 years and a well-known Greek comedian, mourning the fact his friend has moved whilst at a funeral.

The Board noted the advertiser's response that George is Greek therefore his relatives at the funeral would also be of Greek heritage.

The Board noted that whilst George is portrayed as crying in an over the top manner, in the Board's view it is reasonable to depict people crying at funeral and the actor's heritage is not being made fun of or demeaned in any way.

The Board noted it had previously dismissed complaints regarding the stereotypical portrayal of Europeans in advertisements (329/08, 331/09, 0016/12) and considered that consistent with its determination in case 0016/12, in this instance there was "...no derogatory or demeaning treatment of the characters based on their ethnicity."

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 complaints.