



**Ad Standards** Community Panel  
PO Box 5110, Braddon ACT 2612  
P (02) 6173 1500 | F (02) 6262 9833

**AdStandards.com.au**

Ad Standards Limited  
ACN 084 452 666

## Case Report

<b>1. Case Number :</b>	<b>0013-22</b>
<b>2. Advertiser :</b>	<b>IKEA</b>
<b>3. Product :</b>	<b>House Goods Services</b>
<b>4. Type of Advertisement/Media :</b>	<b>TV - Free to Air</b>
<b>5. Date of Determination</b>	<b>2-Feb-2022</b>
<b>6. DETERMINATION :</b>	<b>Dismissed</b>

### ISSUES RAISED

AANA Code of Ethics\2.1 Discrimination or Vilification

### DESCRIPTION OF ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement features animation of different people on small worlds in the sky undertaking various activities, like riding a bike, watering a garden, playing dominos, dancing and laying on a bed.

A voice-over with a Swedish accent states, "At IKEA we want to make everyone's little world a little better. Even a tiny change can have a huge impact. Like a water bottle that lives on beyond one use or sleeping easy in responsibly sourced cotton sheets. Shhh!  
Because with IKEA, a better world starts at home".

### THE COMPLAINT

Comments which the complainant/s made regarding this advertisement included the following:

*Not all Swedish people talk like Vikings and I doubt the actor is Swedish.*

### THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE



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

*Nature of the complaint:*

*The complainant has alleged that the advertisement is racist because not all Swedish people talk like Vikings and doubts that the actor is Swedish.*

*The complainant is referring to the voiceover in the advertisement which is a woman speaking in a Swedish accent.*

*The complainant does not raise any concerns about the script or any visual aspects of the advertisement.*

*Relevant section/s of the Code of Ethics*

*We consider that the advertisement complies with all sections of the Code of the Ethics (Code).*

*The relevant section of the Code, that forms the basis of the complaint, is section 2.1 – "Advertising shall not portray people or depict material in a way that discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of race, ethnicity, nationality....." The other parts of section 2.1 are not relevant to the advertisement.*

*We also consider that no other section of Section 2 of the Code of Ethics is relevant to the advertisement as it does not portray any violence, does not include any sexual content or nudity, does not use any inappropriate language or any material that is contrary to community standards on health and safety.*

*Our response will focus on addressing section 2.1 of the Code, as we do not consider that any other sections are relevant to this advertisement.*

*The Code of Ethics Practice Note defines the following terms that are used in section 2.1:*

*Discrimination: unfair or less favourable treatment.*

*Vilification: humiliates, intimidates, incites hatred, contempt or ridicule.*

*Race: viewed broadly this term includes colour, descent or ancestry, ethnicity, nationality, and includes, for example, ideas of ethnicity covering people of Jewish or Muslim origin.*

*Ethnicity: those with a common social identity as a result of customs, traditions or belief about historical origins.*

*Nationality: people belonging to a particular nation either by birth, origin or naturalisation.*



*The Code of Ethics Practice Note refers to an example of 'advertising which shows members of a certain group as ridiculous, unintelligible or unable to recognise a dangerous situation incites ridicule towards their behaviour.'*

#### *Use of Swedish accent*

*IKEA chose to use a Swedish accent in the voiceover for this advertisement for the following reasons:*

- as a celebration of the IKEA Swedish heritage;*
- aligning to our Swedish heritage gives IKEA a clear point of difference to other businesses when advertising;*
- the use of a consistent voice over artist is used across all IKEA campaigns and becomes a brand cue. It sets the advertising apart from IKEA's competitors so that when an Australian audience hears the Swedish accent, it is iconic to IKEA; and*
- IKEA brand tone of voice is unique, with the aim of delivering a "twinkle in eye". This aligns to IKEA's global brand personality, with IKEA characteristics defined as inspiring, caring, curious, optimistic and genuine.*

*The voiceover artist is an Australian actor who was chosen by IKEA on the basis that her accent is an accurate representation of a Swedish accent in the Australian market. IKEA consulted with its native speaking Swedish employees to ensure the accuracy of the pronunciation of the scripted language in the advertisement and to ensure it was culturally acceptable to them.*

#### *No discrimination or vilification*

*The use of the Swedish accent in the advertisement does portray people of Swedish race, ethnicity and/or nationality (Swedish people). However, the use of a Swedish accent in the voiceover does not portray Swedish people in a way that discriminates against or vilifies them on account of their race, ethnicity and/or nationality.*

*There is no aspect of the advertisement that discriminates against Swedish people. The advertisement does not include any visual representation of any Swedish people and the script of the voiceover does not include any language that refers to any unfair or unfavourable treatment of Swedish people.*

*The use of the Swedish accent in the advertisement also does not involve any vilification of Swedish people. The advertisement does not include any visual representation of Swedish people and the script does not refer to anything negative about Swedish people. There is no humour in the voiceover script so it cannot be said to be ridiculing the Swedish accent.*

*The Swedish accent is used in the advertisement as a genuine accent for the Australian market. As mentioned above, IKEA ensured that the accent was culturally acceptable by consulting with its native Swedish speaking employees. The advertisement does not humiliate, ridicule or incite hatred against Swedish people.*



*Given IKEA's Swedish heritage, it would be absurd for it to have any intent to discriminate or vilify Swedish people in its advertising.*

*We do not consider that IKEA has breached section 2.1 (or any other section) of the Code.*

*CAD approval*

*We obtained CAD approval for the advertisement before it was aired. CAD did not raise any concerns or warnings about the advertisement portraying people in a way that discriminates against or vilifies a person on account of race, ethnicity and/or nationality.*

## **THE DETERMINATION**

The Ad Standards Community Panel (the Panel) considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics (the Code).

The Panel noted the complainant's concerns that the advertising was racist in its depiction of a Swedish voice.

The Panel viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser's response.

**Section 2.1: Advertising or Marketing Communication 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 Panel noted the AANA Practice Note which provides guidance on the meaning of:

Discrimination - unfair or less favourable treatment

Vilification - humiliates, intimidates, incites hatred, contempt or ridicule

Nationality – people belonging to a particular nation either by birth, origin or naturalisation.

The Panel considered that while making fun of the accents of minority groups in the community can be harmful, the advertisement's tone is light-hearted and the portrayal of a Swedish accent is not exaggerated or mocking but rather consistent with a normal Swedish accent, and that is relevant to the product advertised, being a well-known Swedish brand.

The Panel considered that the accent of the speaker was neutral and did not amount to a negative stereotype of Swedish people.



The Panel considered that the advertisement did not depict people receiving unfair or less favourable and did not humiliate, intimidate or incite hatred, contempt or ridicule a person or section of the community on the basis of nationality.

**Section 2.1 conclusion**

Finding that the advertisement did not portray material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of nationality, the Panel determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.1 of the Code.

**Conclusion**

Finding that the advertisement did not breach any other section of the Code the Panel dismissed the complaint.