



Case Report

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| 1 | Case Number | 0022/17 |
| 2 | Advertiser | Reckitt Benckiser (Aust) Pty Ltd |
| 3 | Product | House Goods Services |
| 4 | Type of Advertisement / media | TV - Free to air |
| 5 | Date of Determination | 08/02/2017 |
| 6 | DETERMINATION | Dismissed |

ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Age

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The television advertisement shows a family sitting around a table outside eating. The voice over states, 'where there's smoke there's Alfred' and we see the grandfather lighting a mosquito coil on a table where there are already some candles and coils lit.

The voice over continues, 'not another barbie smoked out by coils and candles. There's ash everywhere. It's in your soup Alfred. In her soup.' The rest of the family is shown coughing and unable to eat the soup with ash in it.

The father character then turns the automatic spray on and the voice over describes the benefits of the spray. Alfred is shown with his arms crossed looking annoyed.

THE COMPLAINT

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

The ads show ageism by portraying older Australians as stupid and useless. I am an active 88 year old. I am passionate about ageism and how senior Australians are depicted in the media. We are not old stupid people who exist to be made fun of.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

RB have received a complaint that the Mortein automatic outdoor pest control TV advertisement is non-compliant with the Code under 2.1 - Discrimination or vilification age. The advertisement is designed to show that there are alternative ways to control pests in your home. it is a family setting in which the Grandfather attempts to use mosquito coils inappropriately, he is trying to use too many coils, candles, incense sticks and torches . the use of products is exaggerated, too many products being used at one time, so not a real scenario. The ash is getting in their food. An alternative solution is provided by the Mortein low dose automatic outdoor spray that can be used outdoors to control pests.

The complainant is of the view it is "ageist by portraying older Australians as stupid and useless. in fact the ad is designed to depict exaggerated use of mosquito coils/candles incense sticks etc.. An alternative product Mortein automatically outdoor spray is provided to demonstrate an easier solution to controlling flies. RB therefore do not agree that this advertising is in breach of the code. We are simply depicting a normal family group including a Grandma and Grandpa, Mum, Dad and Children. There is no intention to depict older people as stupid or useless, it is simply to say, there are alternatives that can be used to control pest in your garden and they are easier to use and you only need 1 product.

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 an older man in a manner which is ageist as it suggests he is stupid.

The Board reviewed 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 this television advertisement depicts a family eating together outside with the grandfather lighting lots of mosquito coils to keep away bugs, much to his family’s distaste.

The Board noted it had previously dismissed complaints about a different version of the advertisement which featured the grandmother using fly sprays (0021/17) where:

“The Board noted the advertiser’s response that the advertisement was depicting the exaggerated use of fly sprays in order to promote a less invasive product. The Board noted that the grandmother’s use of the fly spray is excessive but considered that this is reflective of how many people would use this product and in the Board’s view the focus is on the

efficiency and less invasive nature of the automated spray rather than a suggestion that the grandmother is behaving in a manner which is stupid and/or useless. The Board noted that as automated bug sprays are a newer product it is reasonable to imply that older people may not be aware of this alternative and considered that while advertisers should take care on how they portray older people, in the Board's view the focus in the advertisement is on the behaviour and not the age of the woman. The Board noted that in the final scenes of the advertisement the grandmother is shown to be engaging with her family as they continue with their meal and considered that she is not depicted in a manner which is negative or ageist.”

The Board noted in the current version that the grandfather's use of mosquito coils in the advertisement, while excessive, is not uncommon and considered that consistent with its previous determination the focus is on the product rather than the person. The Board noted that advertisers should take care on how older people are depicted in advertising but considered that in this instance there is no suggestion that the grandfather is stupid but rather that his ideas are outdated. The Board noted that the grandfather continues to participate in the family meal and considered that while he looks annoyed he does not look upset.

The Board considered that the advertisement did not portray or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of age and 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.