



Case Report

1	Case Number	0030/16
2	Advertiser	Strippers Wanted Agency
3	Product	Sex Industry
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Billboard
5	Date of Determination	10/02/2016
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Gender
- 2.2 - Objectification Exploitative and degrading - women
- 2.4 - Sex/sexuality/nudity S/S/N - general

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This billboard advertisement depicts six woman in a row with their backs to the camera. Each woman is wearing lingerie of some form and they are visible from their lower backs to the top of their heads. The text reads, "Strippers and Topless Waitresses. Stripperswanted.com.au For bookings call 0435 805 080".

THE COMPLAINT

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

The sex industry facilitates, perpetrates and profits from the objectification of women.

This is not something I want my children to be exposed too as we drive along the road.

Women deserve better and should be allowed the freedom to walk down a public street without being constantly bombarded with these sorts of images (and strip clubs in general), which are extremely triggering and upsetting.

The sex industry should not be able to advertise in public like this, especially where children are exposed to it. Domestic violence is all due to inequality and this just reinforces the idea

that women are just sexual objects for men's entertainment. Being exposed to this imagery is sexual harassment. I feel uncomfortable and intimidated being forced to look at this. Women and girls are more than just sexual objects. This ad needs to be taken down.

Pornography should not be displayed in public places.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

Strippers Wanted Agency is an agency that screens and organises bookings made by customers wanting female waitresses and entertainers for parties. No sexual acts are offered through the agency. All sub-contractors must provide legal documentation to prove that they are 18+ and legally eligible to work within Australia.

The advertising billboard on Hoodle street, Melbourne was launched on the 30th of November 2015 and will be taken down on the 22nd of February 2016. Before contacting APN (the reputable billboard company) Strippers Wanted spoke with the Advertising Standards Bureau to get a list of guidelines to abide by in association with the adult entertainment industry. The Outdoor Media Association was then sent the creative for pre-approval, which was successful. APN then followed up with the OMA before going to print.

Strippers Wanted can see that a group, organisation or circle of people have had a strong, negative reaction to the advertisement and have rallied together and sent 95% (if not more) of the complaints to ASB. What gives us that impression?

- *The billboard was visible from the 30th of November and there was not one complaint made until the 14th of January. Once that initial complaint was made they were all sent through within a ten-day period.*
- *The emails repeatedly raise the issues of protecting children, the exploitation of women working in the industry and the suggestion of using the same laws for adult entertainment advertisement as the sex industry, eg. Brothels. This illustrates a confined group of people with the same beliefs have come together and is not representative of the entire community.*
- *The exact same wording has been used across multiple emails. Which implies that some sentences have been copied, pasted and sent to the next person/s to use in their complaint.*

To rectify false allegations made in the emails, here are some corrections:

- *You cannot visibly see any part of any of the six females' bottoms in the image. They are cropped at hip height.*
- *You can see all of the six females' heads.*
- *The advertisement states "for bookings call" which clearly means that the*

advertisement is aimed at customers wanting to make bookings and that its purpose is not to recruit females.

- *The agency's business name is Strippers Wanted. *relating to above correction*
- *The six girls are standing in dead-pan poses which IS NOT sexually suggestive body language. Their faces are not in the image, which eliminates any use of "sexual" facial expression.*
- *The only objectified women's body parts are their backs and arms.*
- *The online, website advertisement sentence stated in multiple emails IS NOT included on the billboard.*
- *There is no use of pornography on the advertisement.*

Blaming an advertisement like this for issues such as rape, incest and domestic violence is undue. Rape, incest and domestic violence existed before Strippers Wanted chose to advertise. These societal issues are of a serious nature, and there are many contributing factors that lead to such heinous acts. Blaming the billboard, therefore the females (and men) that choose to work in the adult entertainment industry is discriminatory.

The sexualisation and objectification (of both genders) is omnipresent across a very broad spectrum of our society, in many different forms. The sexualisation of a woman selling a perfume brand is not deemed as disgraceful, because we are more immune to seeing it.

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 demeaning to women, objectifies women and overall is sexually suggestive.

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 this billboard advertisement features six woman, viewed from behind, wearing lingerie and the text reads, "Strippers and Topless Waitresses. Stripperswanted.com.au For bookings call 0435 805 808".

The Board noted that the advertised product is a company that provides strippers and topless waitresses and is not a recruitment advertisement for strippers. The Board noted that some of

the complainants were concerned about the nature of the business being advertised but considered that this product is legally allowed to be advertised.

The Board noted that advertisers are free to use whomever they wish in their advertisements and considered that in the context of a service which provides strippers and topless waitresses it is justifiable to use images of women to promote the service. The Board noted that the women are not shown in full but with their backs turned and no faces visible, and considered that this is suggestive of being more of a modesty issue not as objectifying of the women.

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 gender.

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 2.2 of the Code. Section 2.2 of the Code states: "Advertising or marketing communications should not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative and degrading of any individual or group of people."

The Board noted the complainant's concerns that the advertisement depicts women as sex objects and noted that in order to breach this Section of the Code the images would need to be considered both exploitative and degrading.

The Board acknowledged that some members of the community would find the use of female models in lingerie to be exploitative. The Board noted that the women are wearing lingerie and have their backs to the camera. The Board noted that the women's faces are not visible but considered that their heads are and that whilst they do have their backs to the camera in the Board's view this limits the level of nudity rather than presents the woman as objects. The Board noted that as we cannot see the women's faces it is not possible to see if they are happy but considered that overall their stances with their heads held high and their shoulders squared are suggestive of the women feeling confident. The Board considered that overall the advertisement does not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative and degrading of women.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.2 of the Code.

The Board then 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 the complainants' concerns that the women are wearing lingerie and that the image is sexually suggestive.

The Board noted that the women's backs are shown and therefore their breasts are not visible. The Board noted that whilst the tops of the women's underwear are visible on some of the women, their bottoms are not shown. The Board considered that the level of nudity was not inappropriate in the context of a billboard which could be viewed by a broad audience which would include children.

The Board noted the poses of the women and considered that the manner in which they are presented, lined up in a row, is not sexualised. The Board noted that the image is in black and white and considered that the overall tone is artistic and stylised and is not sexually suggestive.

The Board noted that the area in which this billboard is displayed is well-known for brothels and considered that the advertisement is relevant to the area in which it is advertised, and the content does treat the issue of sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant broad audience which could include children,

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.