



Case Report

1	Case Number	0033/12
2	Advertiser	Assistance Dogs Australia Ltd
3	Product	Other
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	22/02/2012
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.5 - Language inappropriate language

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

John Cleese voice over describes the antics of assistance dog puppies to create awareness and to raise funds for the charity Assistance Dogs Australia. In one scene he refers to a puppy as a "...little bastard".

THE COMPLAINT

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

After being attracted by the sight of all the puppies the word for one scene being shot used was "BASTARD"

I am only too aware with children and grandchildren that this ad would have attracted many young viewers how totally unnecessary to use such foul language at prime viewing time 4.10pm. I was shocked that such an innocent scene could end so badly offensive language is no way to "sell" anything to the general public. For the sake of innocent children and the good of society as a whole I make this complaint.

The use of the word 'bastard' in an advertisement.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

This advert has been shown across the nation on all television networks. It has also appeared on several website pages like Mumbrella, BandT Media and Marketing, Youtube and ADNEWS. It also featured on Facebook, Twitter and many blogs and social media. It is a typical John Cleese look at life with his usual use of language. The advert has gained our small national charity many donations, new volunteers and loads of publicity. We have had many calls of appreciation and 3 calls and 2 emails which were negative.

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 uses offensive language and can be viewed by children.

The Board reviewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser’s response.

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.5 of the Code. Section 2.5 of the Code states: “Advertising or Marketing Communications shall only use language which is appropriate in the circumstances and strong or obscene language shall be avoided.”

The Board noted the advertisement has been narrated by the British comedian, John Cleese, and that he refers to one of the puppies as a “little bastard” whilst we see this puppy chewing on a large pile of feathers.

The Board noted that puppies are of appeal to children and that the PG rating of this advertisement means it could be viewed by children and that they could repeat the word “bastard”. The Board considered that as the advertisement is rated PG any children viewing the advertisement should be accompanied by adults who could explain that the word “bastard” is not appropriate for use by children. The Board noted that the word ‘bastard’ is used affectionately in the advertisement and considered that it is a word commonly used within the Australian vernacular. The Board considered that most members of the community would consider the word ‘bastard’ to be inoffensive when used in the context of this advertisement.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not use language considered strong or obscene and did not breach Section 2.5 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on other grounds, the Board dismissed the complaint.