



ADVERTISING  
STANDARDS  
BUREAU

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## Case Report

1	Case Number	0047/14
2	Advertiser	Outdoors Warehouse
3	Product	Retail
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Poster
5	Date of Determination	26/02/2014
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

The advertisement is an image approximately one metre high. It takes up around one tenth of the display space. It is a cartoonized image of a female athlete in a professional strength pose, wearing a singlet and boy cut shorts. It has the Outdoors Warehouse slogan and phone number written over the top.

### THE COMPLAINT

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

*Outdoors Warehouse is objectifying women and using sexual innuendo to sell camping and outdoor gear. The slogan "Do it outdoors" has sexual connotations which are reinforced by the way the woman is pictured in the advertisement. Facing away from the camera and only partially dressed, her bottom is the focus of the ad, even to the point of picturing a phone number printed across it.*

*This is not an advertisement for lingerie or swimwear, this is for camping equipment including tents, military, marine and hunting. ( see here: <http://www.outdoorswarehouse.com.au/> ) To use a woman's body and sexual appeal to sell outdoor equipment is exploitative and degrading. The ad undermines women's equal participation in these activities and reinforces an idea that a woman's value lies in her sexual*

*appeal. The ad is on a main road so all travelling along this road are subject to this harmful message.*

## **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE**

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

*Thank you for allowing us at Outdoors Warehouse to respond to the complaint. We would like the board to consider the detailed information below before making its decision. We wish to express that we do not consider the Advertisement to in any way be in breach of the Code. In accordance with Section 2 of the Advertisers Code of Ethics, we feel the window advertisement on Olsen Avenue is entirely appropriate in the context of our business. The window advertisement was created from an original image of an athlete during a fitness competition, and digitally altered to ensure we are emphasising the theme of Outdoors Warehouse. Our theme colours of black and green are dominant in the image, used boldly through the clothing and company font. The entire image has been cartoon-ized and highlights have been enhanced showing Outdoors Warehouse as a bright, fun company to deal with. We believe the advertisement does not objectify women or use sexual connotations in any way. The ad was created to encourage fellow outdoor enthusiasts, male and female, to get out and enjoy the endless ways you can embrace the outdoors.*

*Complaint One:*

*“Outdoors Warehouse is objectifying women and using sexual innuendo to sell camping and outdoor gear”*

*A leading purpose of the window advertisement is to show that women too can take part in outdoor activities and are in fact, encouraged to shop at Outdoors Warehouse. The lady in the ad is a friend of Outdoors Warehouse, with the original image being sourced from a fitness competition and has been cartoon-ized. Her whole body is not shown, as we particularly emphasised on how happy and confident she is in her expression and stance, and we hoped this would encourage other females to get out and enjoy the outdoors too. Equally as important, the ad also displays our website colours, bolded slogan and call-to-action details. Thus providing an obvious level of coverage and discretion for the lady, and also the necessary details in order for the viewer to be able to contact us if they would like more information about Outdoors Warehouse.*

*Complaint Two:*

*“The slogan Do It Outdoors has sexual connotations”*

*Our slogan “Do It Outdoors” is printed on most of our marketing materials (including our uniforms) and is in no way sexually suggestive. It is a widely recognised open phrase that is used worldwide in numerous companies promoting outdoors and fitness. The slogan has our company colours and wood-like font (Burnstown Dam) to strongly relate to the outdoor theme. The broad expression ensures fellow outdoor enthusiasts that by doing “it” outdoors, you can do “anything” outdoors.*

*Complaint Three:*

*“This is not an advertisement for lingerie or swimwear”*

*The cartoon-ized lady in the advertisement is a digitally altered image of an athlete during a fitness competition wearing a two piece sportswear/active wear including sports top and boy cut pants in a strong athletic stance. This is highly relevant to our website as they are similar to those worn by athletes and sportswomen for outdoors activities ie. Running/ Swimming/ Boating/ Sports/ Hiking etc. As our company has only been established since 2009 we are applying for quality new brands to add to our selection on a weekly basis. Our long term*

*goal for Outdoors Warehouse is to provide a comprehensive range of outdoor gear including apparel, swimwear and sportswear. Again to make sure we flow with the colour theme on our website, the sports top the lady is wearing had the detail altered to display camouflage print. Complaint Four:*

*“The ad undermines women’s equal participation in these activities”*

*When creating our ad it was deliberate that the lady was a big part of the image to make our store more appealing to other females, as we wanted them to feel comfortable shopping with us as we did not want to come across as a boys club/shop. We take great pride in the amount of ladies who are interested in our store and also our social news feeds, and in fact 43% of our social followers are female. We have a very large range of products in our site that are male and female suited, with most products appealing to both.*

*We strongly believe the window advertisement is clearly relevant to our business as we advertise a very broad range of outdoor gear and encourage both males and females to shop with us. It does not portray females or depict material in a way that discriminates against or vilifies any person or section of society in any grounds, does not employ exploitative or degrading sexual appeal and does not fail to treat sexuality with sensitivity. We believe the advertisement featured is a legal, decent and honest representation of Outdoors Warehouse and considers our future prospects for Outdoors Warehouse. We appreciate the concern of the complaint and respectfully believe it should be dismissed.*

## **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 concern that the advertisement depicts an image of a woman which is objectifying and that the accompanying text, “Do it outdoors”, has sexual connotations which are not appropriate for outdoor display.

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 an image of a woman wearing a camouflage cropped sports bra top and black shorts with a telephone number written across her bottom.

The Board noted the complainant’s concern that that the use of a woman in bikini style clothing promoting the sale of outdoor equipment undermines women’s equal participation in these activities. The Board considered that the woman in the advertisement is presented as strong and healthy is not sexualised. The Board noted that the woman looks like she is exercising and considered that exercise and outdoor wear is relevant to the product advertised.

The Board noted that the advertiser’s products are aimed at both men and women and considered that overall the advertisement does 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 concern that the advertisement presents an image of a woman which is objectifying.

The Board noted that in order to be in breach of this section of the Code the image of the woman would need to be both exploitative and degrading. The Board noted that the pose of the woman is not sexualised and is relevant to both the product sold and the outdoor activity theme of the advertisement and considered that whilst some members of the community may find the use of a woman in minimal clothing to promote a product to be exploitative in the Board's view the image is not degrading.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative and degrading and did not breach Section 2.2 of the Code.

The Board 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 complainant's concern that the text of the advertisement, "Do it outdoors", has sexual connotations.

The Board noted that the advertised product is outdoor equipment and considered that whilst the phrase, "do it outdoors" could be interpreted as referring to having sexual relations outside, in the Board's view this innuendo is relatively mild and is unlikely to be understood by younger children. The Board considered that the use of the phrase, "do it outdoors" in the context of a retail outlet selling outdoor equipment and an image of a woman in exercise gear is not inappropriate and does treat the issue of sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant outdoor audience which would include children.

The Board noted that the clothing of the woman in the advertisement is bikini style sportswear and considered that the woman's private areas are well covered and the level of visible skin is not inappropriate for an outdoor advertisement which would be seen by children.

The Board considered that the advertisement did treat the issue of sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience and 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 complaint.