



Case Report

1	Case Number	0081/12
2	Advertiser	Motor Accident Commission SA
3	Product	Community Awareness
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Billboard
5	Date of Determination	14/03/2012
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.5 - Language inappropriate language

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

Billboard featuring the text: "Don't Drive Like a" followed by a picture of a rooster. Sub headline: "Country Roads Need Safer Drivers"

THE COMPLAINT

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

I am 70 years old and my husband had to explain what these signs meant. I was appalled at the language. There is no respect for the older or younger generation. I have spoken to many people since who are also disgusted that our taxes are used in this way.

On my return trip it was worse as we had our 8 and 10 year old grand children with us. I will tell you what happened.

The 10yr said "Granny what does that rooster mean?" to which Miss 8yo said "Daa! Don't you get it they have the music too loud and it wakes everyone just like granny's rooster" I left it at that but the next two signs I couldn't explain and my answer was "You will have to ask Daddy when you get home"

These big signs are displayed publicly so that little children can read them and they want an explanation.

I know it is aimed at the feral drivers aged between 19 and 25 but other drivers on the road have no choice.

*I have been a nurse for 47 years and seen all shades of humanity experienced all aspects of foul language but this has been when people have been in pain.
How about some real photos from the casualty departments showing the fatal injuries e.g.a head in one bag and the body in another.
Is the truth to be hidden?*

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

I refer to the complaint submitted against our regional safe driving campaign, reference number 0081/12

The complaint references a billboard owned and maintained by MAC displaying a safe driving message aimed specifically at regional residents. The billboard is a support message for a wider road safety education campaign that employs regional television, radio, press, cinema, online and ambient advertising. The mainstream media campaign has been augmented by road safety education through engagement with 190 country football clubs. The outdoor execution displays three variants across the billboard network, each in market at the same time.

- 1. ""Don't Drive Like a"" followed by ""w/picture of anchor""*
- 2. ""Don't Drive Like a"" followed by a picture of a doorknob*
- 3. "Don't Drive Like a" followed by a picture of a rooster*

*The complainant is concerned that the billboard message uses inappropriate language. As such, we direct our comments to section 2.5 of the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics:
2.5 Advertising or Marketing Communications shall only use language which is appropriate in the circumstances and strong or obscene language shall be avoided.*

The Anchor execution has previously been submitted to ASB for consideration and the complaint dismissed. Case ID: 0268/11

The Door knob execution has previously been submitted to ASB for consideration and the complaint dismissed. Case ID: 0037/12

This complaint references the Rooster variant in which the tactic is identical and the execution similar to the previous two complaints. As such we reiterate our previously submitted comments.

1. Addressing regional road safety is of paramount importance:

Regional South Australia is over represented in road trauma. Generally, regional residents make up 30% of the SA population yet account for 60% of those killed. In 2010 64% of fatal crashes occurred on rural roads.

Amongst those fatal crashes, the demographic of the driver at fault skews overwhelmingly to young males, specifically 16-24 year olds followed by 25-39 year olds.

As much as possible MAC campaigns seek to speak universally with those most implicated in road trauma due to specific behavioural issues. However, in light of these alarming statistics MAC and the road safety community determined that the unique characteristics of regional life and related road safety experience warranted individual attention and communication.

2. The regional campaign has been extensively researched:

MAC conducted in depth interviews amongst relevant regional residents across 13 regional towns to uncover insights regarding regional life and attitudes toward driving and road safety. This research formed the basis for the development of potential campaign themes and creative executions that were in turn tested with 15 focus groups of regional residents.

Groups were skewed to the previously identified young males and broader residents of males and females of various ages. Four different campaigns were developed and tested, including that which is now in market.

Chief amongst the themes to emerge from research that resonated most strongly with the target audience were those of mateship, community and taking greater responsibility for both. Research also identified those communications that empowered and encouraged mates to speak up and intervene to prevent their mates from making a bad driving decision had the potential to perform strongly.

Those communications that used humour were well received.

Those communications that depicted regional residents and 'real' language were well received.

These insights sit at the heart of the country campaign currently in market. To encourage mates to speak up and intervene while reflecting those important elements identified in research to add to our persuasiveness.

The complainant suggests we should use real photos showing fatal injuries. The literature and industry views regarding effective techniques for road safety advertising is voluminous. That the realistic depiction of road trauma is more effective in changing behaviour is one widely supported view and has been used by MAC in past campaigns. In this instance, and as previously detailed, research supported the use of a humorous approach. We will continue to explore new ways of engaging with and presenting information to our target markets and more impactful techniques will continue to be part of that consideration.

3. A picture of a rooster is not obscene language:

The campaign visually implies words that more closely reflect the everyday language of our target audience than we have employed in the past. With reference to the complainant's comments, MAC believes this is eminently justifiable and not in violation of 2.5 of the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics:

- The word is visually implied, not explicitly stated profanity
- Judging the level of offence of a word is a subjective exercise, however we believe prevailing community standards would not categorise this particular word as amongst the 'strong or obscene'.
- The symbolised word reflects the language of our audience and it was imperative that this message be credible and relevant to them, and not seen as a watered down message from a government department.
- It is unlikely to be understood by children
- Literature concerning effective road safety advertising is becoming increasingly interested in the area of humour, particularly toward young men. The symbolised word is intended to be humorous and engaging, not for its own sake, but to be more resilient to a generally dismissive audience and give it the best chance to achieve its objectives. Judgment of humour is also subjective, but based on anecdotal feedback received, other vocal members of the community agree.

4. The campaign is demonstrating encouraging results:

Campaign awareness tracking by our market research company reports the following decreases in undesired driving behaviours amongst regional residents, comparing pre campaign figures to post campaign figures.

- 9% peak reduction in seatbelt non-compliance
- 5% peak reduction in drink driving

- 15% peak reduction in any speeding
 - 15% peak reduction in speeding 10km/h + over the legal speed limit
- 55% of respondents indicated that they had actually intervened to prevent a mate from making a bad driving decision as a result of seeing the campaign.

There was a 19% reduction in regional fatalities in 2011.

In light of the importance of this issue and its demonstrated impact, we hope you will agree that this execution is justified under 2.5 of the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics and will continue to support what has so far been a positive contribution to reducing the regional road toll.

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 uses presumed language unsuitable for public display.

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

The Board then 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 that the advertisement features the text “Don’t drive like a (picture of a rooster)”.

The Board noted the advertiser’s response that the advertisement was tailored to appeal to the section of the community most affected by unsafe driving on country roads and that the language implied in the advertisement was chosen as it was most likely to have an impact and get the message across.

The Board noted that no strong language is explicitly stated in the advertisement, but rather a word is implied through the use of a picture of a rooster. The Board accepted that the implied word could be considered offensive by some members of the community however the Board considered that the juxtaposition of the text next to an image of a rooster was unlikely to be understood by most children.

The Board considered that the implied word is not strong or obscene. The Board noted the important message of the advertisement and considered that the advertisement is not unsuitable for display on a public billboard.

Based on the above the Board determined that the advertisement used appropriate language and did not use strong and obscene language and that it did not breach Section 2.5 of the Code.

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