



Case Report

1	Case Number	0087/17
2	Advertiser	Telstra Corporation Ltd
3	Product	Telecommunications
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV - Free to air
5	Date of Determination	08/03/2017
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Gender
- 2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Race

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement opens on a man using a dance machine which is placed in front of the television his housemates are trying to watch. A male voiceover says, "This is Eric. Eric and you just moved in together" before going on to describe the benefits of signing up to Belong.

THE COMPLAINT

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

I would like to complain about the BELONG ADS featuring stupid and objectionable men, for no good reason, as usual.

This is pure MAN-HATING fare that portrays men NEGATIVELY for absolutely NO REASON. There are so many ads just like this. so MANY!!!

No similar ad portraying a female in this light has EVER been screened since television was invented. I AM SICK OF MINDLESS DENIGRATION OF MEN. Do you understand? You would not tolerate the treatment of a WOMAN like this! Men kill themselves because they are treated like SHIT. That is the reason!! We are taught to denigrate MEN. What do you people stand for?

Please have the SAME STANDARD for MEN and WOMEN! Too hard?

*P.S. Just ask: If the gender roles in this ad were reversed would it be acceptable?
Why can't you ask this?
Try being HONEST, and stop using DOUBLE STANDARDS, please.*

The stereotyping of Asian people in the one scene, suggesting that all Asian people are annoying housemates that play on some dance machine. Such racial stereotypes should not belong on tv, it is a careless and racist advertisement that offends.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

We refer to the above complaints raised against Telstra in relation to advertisements for our Belong NBN product which were shown on free to air TV.

In summary, we do not agree with the concerns raised by the complainants that the advertisements are discriminatory and do not intend to pull them from air or change them.

As both advertisements were shown on free to air TV, they were vetted by CAD and received ratings as follows:

Advertisement BEL 0007TR30 G46HLROA – Housemates ad: G rating

Advertisement BEL0007TUE30 G46HMROA – Robbo ad: G rating

We note that neither advertisement received any negative feedback from CAD in relation to any discrimination.

We otherwise set out a more detailed response in relation to the complaints below.

Complaint 0087/17 – Alleged discrimination or vilification of race

We do not consider that the contents of this advertisement discriminate or vilify against race as has been suggested.

When viewed as a whole, we do not agree with the complainant's comment that the advertisement suggests that "all Asian people are annoying housemates that play on some dance machine".

The content of the actors' performance, the voiceover, printed text and product alignment in the advertisement is to portray that Telstra, through its Belong product, aims to provide hassle free service and one less thing to worry about for our customers in comparison to our competitors.

This was conveyed through the actor dancing in front of his housemates and blocking their view to the television, which was the cause of their annoyance.

There are no express or implied connotations that prospective customers should connect to

the NBN via our Belong product for any discriminatory purposes, or to find a housemate that wasn't annoying.

Complaints for 0088/17 – Alleged discrimination or vilification based on gender

It appears to us that these two complaints do not provide any detail to which we can meaningfully respond to and otherwise appears without merit.

We note that neither advertisement contains any content which denigrates men in general nor content which would incite hatred against men. As mentioned above, our advertisements in relation to the housemates and the one featuring “Robbo” are meant to highlight Telstra’s difference to our competitors.

We also would like to point out in closing that Telstra is committed to promoting values of inclusion and diversity across our company and within our business. We treat complaints as these in relation to discrimination and exclusion seriously, and aim to create advertisements which speak to our customers, without compromising on our values.

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board (the “Board”) considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics (the “Code”).

The Board noted the complainants’ concerns that the advertisement portrays a man in a stereotypical way and denigrates men.

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 television advertisement features a man dancing in his lounge room in front of his flat mates using an arcade style dance machine. The man is of Asian appearance and his name is Eric.

The Board considered the complainant’s concern that the advertisement is stereotyping Asian people by suggesting they all play the dance game and also denigrating men by portraying Eric as foolish in front of his flatmates.

The Board noted the Practice Note to the Code which states that “advertisements can suggest stereotypical aspects of an ethnic group or gender with humour provided the overall impression of the advertisements is not a negative impression of people of that ethnicity or gender.”

The Board noted that in the current advertisement, Eric is seen dancing using a game

commonly seen in arcades. The Board noted that the game is played by many people in arcades and the depiction of the man using the machine in the home was a portrayal of a young person, skilled at the game and his race was not a focal point in the advertisement.

The Board considered that the depiction of the man playing this game in the home did not portray him in a negative light but rather in a familiar way. The Board noted that the inclusion of a game of this size in the lounge room of any home was unlikely and that the intention was to create an exaggerated depiction of a flat mate being ‘annoying’ because he is in the way of the television rather than a negative depiction of his ethnicity or race.

The Board also considered the complainant’s concern about the ‘foolish’ behaviour of the man and that this was denigrating to men in general. The Board noted that advertisement is shown in slow motion with funny music to exaggerate the annoying behaviour of Eric – the flatmate. The voiceover then refers to how the product won’t cramp your style with hassle free broadband.

The Board considered that most members of the community would understand the humour and exaggeration used in the advertisement at the person using the dance machine in front of the television. In the Board’s view, the advertisement overall 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.

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