



Case Report

1	Case Number	0088/17
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

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement opens on a man trying and failing to catch a ball in a backyard, biting in to a hot dog roll causing the hot dog to fall out to the floor and then holding a cup with its contents spilt down his shirt. A male voiceover says, "This is Robbo. Robbo is the mate helping you move house this Friday. At least you made the right choice when you went with Belong's hassle free broadband" 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 ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

Complaint Reference: 0087/17, 0088/17

We refer to the above complaints raised against Telstra in relation to two 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 complainant’s concern that the advertisement depicts men as foolish and is therefore offensive to men.

The Board reviewed 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 – “Robbo” in various scenes: in his backyard trying but failing to catch a ball, trying to eat a sausage on bread and with spilt drink all down the front of him. The voiceover describes that he is the mate who is helping you move house.

The Board noted the complainant’s concern that the man is deliberately made to look foolish and that this is offensive to men.

The Board noted that they had previously considered an advertisement for Virgin Money (504/12) where the complainants’ concerns were that the advertisement portrays men as unable to fit car seats or do any task unless it is easy.

In the case mentioned above, the Board noted that “the suggestion that the man would not be able to fit a car seat is stereotypical and considered that it is presented in a manner which is mildly humorous and not negative or demeaning. The Board noted that the advertisement does not suggest all men would have a problem fitting a car seat, just this particular man, and considered that the overall tone of the advertisement is light-hearted...”

Similarly, in this advertisement, the man is being presented in a stereotypical and clumsy way. The scene of him dropping things and generally being awkward is mildly humorous and is not negative or demeaning. The Board noted that the voiceover mentions that this is the man who will be helping you with moving house. In the Board's view the exaggerated portrayal of the man's clumsiness adds to the overall humour that he would then be helping to move and carry things that could be of personal importance.

The Board considered that the advertisement is not suggesting that all men are this clumsy, just this particular man.

Overall 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 and 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 complaint.