



Case Report

1	Case Number	0105/17
2	Advertiser	Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (SA)
3	Product	Automotive
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Billboard
5	Date of Determination	08/03/2017
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Lifestyle Choices
- 2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Other

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The billboard has two images of two registration plates. The first says vegan, the second bacon, with the word becomes in between the two. A line of text below says everyone has a story. 'Start yours EzyPlates.com.au'

THE COMPLAINT

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

Being a vegan, I don't appreciate being the butt end of a joke. With all the millions of alternative approaches, it's disappointing a government/tax payer media campaign is at the expense of a growing demographic of compassionate tax payers. This insensitive campaign further fuels the disdain many people have for vegans. It offends me not only as a vegan, but as a person who doesn't enjoy jokes at the expense of someone else.

I believe this advertisement breaches advertising standards as it is discriminating against a minority of people who live a vegan lifestyle. It also endorses animal cruelty and mocks those fighting against it. This type of advertisement could upset and offend many people especially children and teenagers who are vegetarian and vegan and who are upset by what happens to pigs to become food.

I strongly suggest you reassess this billboard and have it removed immediately.

If this had the words changed to GAY becomes STRAIGHT that would be unacceptable as is the way it is now. Even more shocking that it is a government organisations advert.

Hi!

I want to communicate my enormous disappointment regarding your "Vegan to Bacon" advertisement. I am, myself, not Vegan; however, I strongly disapprove of the alienation and insinuated judgements made by this advert, and the stigma it inevitably supports against a perfectly healthy, legitimate lifestyle. This advertisement is in extremely poor taste, and only highlights an obvious lack of creativity, innovation and intelligence regarding the creation and approval of it's instalment. It is highly disrespectful and ignorant of any government advertisement to single out a minority of people (it's own citizens!) and isolate them. It is dehumanising and unprofessional. As a lifestyle movement that has been rapidly growing, I find it extremely worrying to see a government advert supporting negative stereotypes and stigmas within it's own society.

Please consider this in the future. Your job is to maintain an inclusive, forward-thinking community - not to destroy it with ridiculous, uninformed banter that is nothing more than ignorant opinion. I cannot believe it has to be said that a government agency should educate itself, but in this situation, consider your message next time you make the decision to target a group of people to sell something.

Thank you

I was offended! Vegan to bacon. Why couldn't it be bacon to vegan? Or nothing at all!

It ridicules, belittles and mocks a particular group of people. It is akin to "MUSLIM becomes CHRISTIAN" or the other way around. It is an unnecessary put down of a minority group. Vegans find this insulting and upsetting.

Because we live in a multicultural country there are many sections of the community that would most definitely be offended. Eating a plant based diet because of religion or because you respect all creatures, It is very disappointing at the least to any Vegan and highly offensive to people who don't eat Bacon that are forced to see such a ridiculous advertisement which is also nonsensical for car rego plates?

Given the current anti-vegan sentiment in the media as of late, I find this ad distasteful as it clearly insults my pro-animal welfare lifestyle choice. It is unnecessary to run an advertisement like this, and I feel it would have been a perfect opportunity for the advertiser to run a more positive message.

I find the advertisement offensive as a vegan.

In addition, the featured number plate "VEGAN" currently belongs to an acquaintance of mine, who also finds this offensive.

The image of his number plate was used without his consent, and for an ad campaign he disapproves of (for obvious reasons).

I believe this is a very rude and offensive billboard. especially to those with ethics.

This ad is extremely offensive to the vegan community. It is not good nor clever advertising and should be removed. The vegan community of Australia simply want to save animals from harm, torture and murder. To have a government business belittle us for being

compassionate people is a low act. Please have it removed.

Like the majority of Vegans in Adelaide we are appalled and saddened at the blatant bullying, disdain and discrimination shown to those choosing a compassionate lifestyle by your latest billboard.

Can you possibly explain what is meant by this message and why the general public seem compelled to flaunt the cruel and barbaric treatment and murder of innocent beings?

As the director of the Vegan Festival Adelaide and Give Foundation Charity (aimed at raising monies and awareness for the voiceless in the world) I am shocked by this extreme show of anti-veganism.

Why would Ooh Media want to promote such unkindness on such a broad scale to the creatures of our planet?

We do hope they reconsider this new advertisements removal.

In peace and compassion

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The EzyPlates campaign consists of thirteen different concepts that each tell a story from fictional person's a point of view, based on the notion that 'Everyone has a story'. The campaign encourages individuals to start their own story by going to the EzyPlates website to check if a number plate that describes their personal story is available. The campaign was designed to generate interest in customised and personalised number plates and is based on all thirteen concepts that collectively tell fictional personalised stories.

With reference to Section 2.1 of the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics (2.1 Advertising or Marketing Communications 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.) it is our belief that this advertisement does not discriminate against vegans or those who choose to follow a vegan lifestyle – it is a personal story. While this may not tell the story of all vegans, it is possible for a person to live a vegan lifestyle and then depart from it.

With regards to comments that the advertisement endorses, promotes and advocates for the harm of pigs by using the word 'bacon' – we refute this claim. A word's offensiveness is subjective, however the word bacon is a common term used in everyday language. The advert does not directly or indirectly provide commentary on how bacon is produced.

The intent of the advertisement is neither to promote 'vegan' or 'bacon' but to reveal a fictional individual's story. The advertisement is one of a suite of concepts that provide an overarching message in a creative way, prompting new and existing customers to think about how they would express their personal story on a customised or personalised number plate

DPTI respects and acknowledges that people have different points of view and would like to reiterate that our intent was not to cause offence, discriminate or vilify lifestyle choices of any members of the community. For the remainder of the current campaign period, the advertisement has been exchanged for alternate concepts and will not be seen in any other

planned media. We believe this advertisement is not in violation of Section 2 of the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics.

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 features a slogan that is belittling and offensive to Vegetarians and Vegans.

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 billboard advertisement features several examples of the types of licence plates you can purchase from EzyPlates. One of these reads “Vegan becomes Bacon.”

The Board noted that the campaign consists of thirteen different concepts and that the Vegan one is just an example of one of the options. Other options include Lofty becomes Everest, Mrright becomes Divrced and Plumber becomes DrColon.

The Board considered the issue of ‘veganism’ and whether ‘vegans’ are a section of the community within the terms of section 2.1 of the Code. The Board noted that section 2.1 prohibits discrimination or vilification on the basis of ‘race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual preference, religion, disability, mental illness or political belief.’

The Board noted the AANA Practice Note which clarifies that: “‘political belief’ includes ‘support for or opposition of a particular political party or ideology.’” The Board considered the Macquarie Dictionary definition for ideology and noted that the Dictionary defines ideology as: 1. The body of doctrine, myth and symbols of a social movement, institution, class or large group. The Board considered that the ideology of the vegan community meets the definition of a social movement or group which shares a doctrine as stated within the Practice Note.

The Board accepted that veganism can be a choice for religious reasons and that it is also an ideology shared by a group of people. The Board agreed that the reasons behind a person’s veganism are varied but in the context of the Code, the consideration of vegans as a group can reasonably be considered under section 2.1 of the Code.

The Board considered therefore that ‘vegans’ are a section of the community to which section 2.1 applies and that advertising or marketing communications should not depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies them. The Board noted the complainants’ concerns that the advertisement discriminates or vilifies those who are vegan.

The Board noted that overall the concepts depicted in the current advertisement are intended to be humorous and are not targeting a particular person or group of people. The Board noted that individuals can order the product online and can review the options available to see if

there is one that suits them.

In the Board's view, the example of 'Vegan becomes Bacon' in this campaign is not an aggressive or vilifying reference to those who make this choice and does not amount to a depiction that discriminates against a person or section of the community.

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 race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual preference, religion, disability, mental illness or political belief 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 complaints.