



Case Report

1	Case Number	0134/16
2	Advertiser	AAMI
3	Product	Insurance
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV - Free to air
5	Date of Determination	13/04/2016
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Gender

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement features a call centre staffed by women dressed identically in red skirts and white blouses. A flipboard shows the phrase, "skilled drivers course" and we see a man undertaking the course whilst AAMI women line the road and clap. We then see a jeep with two AAMI women in it driving off road in bad weather before a woman hanging out washing receives a notification of a weather warning on her phone. AAMI women are then shown helping to fix a burst pipe in a coffee shop whilst another AAMI woman holds an umbrella over the barista. The final scene shows the AAMI call centre and the voiceover says, "At AAMI there's one thing that always comes first. You. That's why in everything we do, we aim to be an insurance company, that's not very insurancy."

THE COMPLAINT

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

I find this ad extremely offensive and oppressive to women. It depicts women as if it were the 1950s with ONLY women in the call centre, answering calls and supporting customers. I find this ad to be degrading to women everywhere in a time where we are trying to fight for equality and who have more to offer than just pandering to customers running around an office singing and then standing in a large stadium cheering a male driver as he drives past. Not ONE male is pictured.

Sexist. It depicts only women as working in call centres for AAMI which is extremely sexist - only attractive women are depicted

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

We would like to address some of the concerns and provide commentary relating to our advertising approach and the specific claims raised against Section 2.6 of the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics.

Launching in November 2015, these commercials were created to drive awareness of products and services that AAMI offer – which you wouldn't normally expect of an insurance company. For example, free skilled driving courses for under 25s, weather alerts sent direct to your mobile phone, unlimited medical cover whilst travelling overseas and so on.

There's no argument that the symbol of the AAMI girl is considered a somewhat tangible representation and mnemonic of AAMI's good service. She has been an Australian icon since the 1970s and is now as synonymous with the brand as the "Lucky you're with AAMI" sting. Therefore the AAMI girl was the perfect vehicle to carry the brand throughout the series of commercials.

Almost as synonymous as the AAMI girl is our use of exaggerated and dramatised scenarios in our TV commercials and these ads are no different. As can be read in the script, we quickly cut to a wide shot of AAMI HQ which looks more like a space station than a call centre, because that's essentially what it is. AAMI HQ is our version of NASA's Mission Control Centre where the lead AAMI girl knows where all of our customers are at all times, with her apprentices sent to the rescue when trouble arises. This is an exaggeration and creative concept, not a real life depiction of an AAMI call centre.

We believe that we are promoting gender equality with these ads, as there are numerous scenarios where AAMI girls come to the rescue of our customers – in situations one might typically expect a male to arrive. For instance, we have females in roles such as roadside assist (mechanic), fixing burst water pipes (plumber) and saving people from the imminent danger of ostriches (whilst a male is running in fear). We do not solely depict woman in call centres, we empower them.

Amplifying the AAMI girl had to be done carefully so that the brand wouldn't be depicted in an unfavourable way, let alone in a way that vilifies or discriminates. Whilst we were careful not to add too much personality, we were able to cast contrasting AAMI girls to more accurately represent the Australian population which can be seen throughout the various Not Very Insurance commercials. This includes talent of different backgrounds, ethnicities and ages. The brand equity that's held in the AAMI girl meant that casting males was out of the question and potentially would have only confused the viewer while not reinforcing the service message as intended.

We take these types of complaints very seriously so we thank you for raising the issue with us.

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 is sexist in its depiction of only attractive women working in a call centre.

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 call centre staffed by women who are dressed identically in the manner of the traditional AAMI call centre lady who features at the end of AAMI advertisements.

The Board noted the complainant’s concern that the advertisement only depicts women working in a call centre and that it is not the 1950s any more so this depiction is degrading to women.

The Board noted the advertiser’s response that the use of women in the advertisement was intended to be in keeping with their brand: the women are all similar in appearance and demeanour to the call centre woman who features at the end of all their advertising.

The Board noted that although the advertisement does open on a call centre setting the Board considered that the subsequent scenes showing the women helping customers in a variety of situations depicts the women as capable of rising to any occasion or challenge. The Board considered that the manner in which the women are depicted, including driving a four-wheel drive vehicle across rough terrain in a storm and helping to fix a leaking pipe, is empowering and in the Board’s view presents the women in a positive light rather than as 1950s stereotypes.

The Board noted the complainant’s concern that the women in the advertisement are attractive. The Board noted that advertisers can use whomever they wish in an advertisement and considered that the use of attractive females is common in advertising and is not of itself a breach of the Code. The Board noted that the women in the advertisement have been selected due to their similarity to the recognisable face of the AAMI brand and considered overall that the use of attractive women in the advertisement is not sexist or demeaning to women.

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.

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.