



**Ad Standards** Community Panel  
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Advertising Standards Bureau Limited  
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# Case Report

1	<b>Case Number</b>	<b>0138/18</b>
2	<b>Advertiser</b>	<b>Australian Football League</b>
3	<b>Product</b>	<b>Sport and Leisure</b>
4	<b>Type of Advertisement / media</b>	<b>Poster</b>
5	<b>Date of Determination</b>	<b>11/04/2018</b>
6	<b>DETERMINATION</b>	<b>Dismissed</b>

## ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Ethnicity

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This poster advertisement is a black and white shot of a girl in a head scarf looking straight at the camera. The headline "never" is next to her, and the AFL logo below.

## THE COMPLAINT

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

*The poster has a Muslim woman in head covering with 'NEVER' in large letters printed under her image, with the AFL logo in a small image below that. I can not find any way in which this does not give the impression of 'never' for Muslim women in the WAFL. I find it racist and effectively marginalising Muslim women. I can't see any other interpretation of this possible, and after posting it on facebook, neither could any of my friends.*

## THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complainant/s regarding this





advertisement include the following:

*This correspondence is in response to the complaint received by Ad Standards about one out of home execution within our recent season launch campaign, Don't Believe In Never. The complaint falls under section 2.1 relating to ethnic discrimination or vilification.*

*We are particularly sad to have received this complaint because the primary objective of the campaign is to bring new fans to AFL by showing them that anything is possible in the game, no matter where they come from, their race, religion or gender.*

*Our response to the complaint comprises two key arguments:*

1. *This was one of a suite of teaser out of home executions which highlighted individuals who had triumphed against adversity - who had succeeded when it never seemed possible. The other executions included Erin Phillips of the WAFL, and Anthony McDonald Tipungwuti, an Essendon player from the Tiwi Isles. The teasers included the word "never" to illustrate all the times they had been told they would not succeed. After a matter of days, all executions were switched to launch communications proclaiming "Don't believe in never" showing that in this sport anything is possible. Rather than vilifying or discriminating, these ads are designed to celebrate all of their incredible achievements.*

2. *The broader campaign objectives included championing the diversity of the AFL and the power of the sport to bring people from diverse backgrounds together. The campaign has been lauded by both consumer and trade press for the power of the stories and painting an honest and inspiring picture of multicultural life in Australia. By following the url on the reveal out of home, people were able to watch three documentary style films about triumph against adversity in AFL. One of these featured Dema, the Muslim girl from the ad in question, and respectfully followed the challenges she faced persuading her father to let her play AFL and travel to games with girls from other religions. It has proven inspirational and emotional for other girls and fathers in the same position. This film has been uploaded for your reference.*

*Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the complaint.*

## **THE DETERMINATION**

The Ad Standards Community Panel (the "Panel") considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics (the "Code").

The Panel noted the complainants' concerns that the advertisement discriminates against a woman on the basis of her race.



The Panel viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser's response.

The Panel 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 Panel noted this poster advertisement features a teenage girl in a headscarf with the word "Never" beneath her.

The Panel noted the complainants' concern that the advertisement is racist because it gives the impression of 'never' for Muslim women in the WAFL, and marginalises Muslim women.

The Panel noted the advertiser's response that the advertisement was a teaser, and was replaced within a days with a different poster stating "Don't believe in never". The Panel noted that it can only consider the content of the teaser advertisement identified in the complaint and not the whole campaign.

The Panel noted that the girl in the advertisement projects confidence and looks empowered. The Panel considered that most Muslim members of the community would recognise that the girl is wearing sporting clothing, and that her head scarf is suitable for physical activity.

The Panel noted that the specific advertisement is unclear, and could have benefitted by a question mark after the word 'never'. The Panel considered that the conclusion the complainant came to was understandable, but did not consider that it was a view that would be shared by the wider community. The Panel noted the range of activities undertaken by the advertiser in seeking to broaden the inclusiveness of its' sport and considered that a reasonable person would conclude that the Australian Football League was not promoting discrimination, and may be prompted to seek further information on the message of the campaign.

The Panel considered the advertisement did not portray material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person on the basis of race and did not breach Section 2.1 of the Code.

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

