



## Case Report

<b>1</b>	<b>Case Number</b>	<b>0142/16</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Advertiser</b>	<b>Sir Walter Premium Lawn Turf</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Product</b>	<b>House Goods Services</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Type of Advertisement / media</b>	<b>TV - Free to air</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Date of Determination</b>	<b>13/04/2016</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>DETERMINATION</b>	<b>Upheld - Modified or Discontinued</b>

### ISSUES RAISED

2.3 - Violence Bullying

2.3 - Violence Violence

### DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

There are three versions of this television advertisement. The 60 second version opens on a man, Richard, lying face down on a brand new lawn at a bustling backyard BBQ. He knowingly caresses the grass but something is not quite right.

Richard throws a handful of grass into Phil, the house owner's, face, then sprinkles some over his head, and complains that the grass is not "DNA certified Sir Walter".

The lively party goes from high energy to dead silence except for the sound of the sizzling BBQ. In an instant, all attendees turn and stare, completely shocked at Richard's suggestion. In a matter of seconds the thirty odd people have completely disappeared from the backyard. The meat on the BBQ bursts into flames and a garden sprinkler instantly turns on. The front door slams shut, leaving Phil shocked and disappointed standing there in his empty messed up backyard, getting soaked by the sprinkler, holding nothing but a sausage sandwich.

A talking sausage advises Phil that he should have got DNA certified Sir Walter turf.

We then cut to the future and Phil's backyard now looks almost post-apocalyptic. The BBQ is all rusty, the grass is dead, brown and patchy. Phil looks on to this catastrophe with sadness. Richard and the talking sausage are watching and laughing from inside the house. The sausage suggests it's time for a new lawn.

We transition from the dying lawn into a shot of a perfect Sir Walter glowing green lawn. In

foreground, Phil finishes rolling out the last piece of brand new turf a He nods to himself knowingly now understanding what it means to own Sir Walter grass. Behind him a glowing DNA CERTIFIED 3D logo floats happily above the pristine backyard. Richard and the sausage are watching and laughing with approval from their deck chairs.

Logo resolve : LAWN SOLUTIONS - DNA Certified Sir Walter, ONLY at Lawn Solutions Australia.

The thirty second version of the advertisement opens on the grass being thrown in Phil's face and the fifteen second version opens on people running from the yard and then the talking sausage giving advice.

## **THE COMPLAINT**

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

*To sell a product this ad promotes and encourages physical bullying and peer pressure during a familiar social activity. In a time when we are trying to stop bullying we allow this 'bully' to physically violate this man in such a derogatory way that all the guests leave the party, the host is left depressed, the bully glorified. It uses aggression, personal space invasion and humiliation to make the point, it implies that if you do the "right" thing then people will like you, and if you don't then you will be socially isolated and excluded.*

*In this day and age when we are being made aware of bullying, violent behaviour, rage and aggression I am extremely offended by this campaign which promotes all of the above. In an age where there is so much social pressure trying to eradicate bullying of all types this ad serves to legitimise bullying.*

*The way the product is advertised is meant to be funny but it comes across as a form of bullying. Shoving grass in someone's mouth is not acceptable for any reason - the message the commercial is trying to get across could be just as easily done with someone asking about the grass and everyone running away.*

## **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE**

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

*In response to the complaints received that the Lawn Solutions Australia TV commercial portrays violence and bullying.*

*The producers of this TV commercial are well aware of the AANA code of ethics section 2.3: "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised."*

*The action portrayed in TV commercial was not intended to depict violence or bullying in any way. Rather it was intended to portray a totally unrealistic but humorous scenario, through the actions and reactions that are grossly exaggerated and removed from reality, to reinforce a message about choosing the right turf product.*

*In writing the script, we also considered the AANA code of ethics practice note 2.3 that "More leeway is permitted where the depiction is stylised rather than realistic"*

*The behaviour depicted in the ad was intended to be seen as stylised, in that it is part of an overall humorous, and totally unrealistic situation, including party guests fleeing because of the host's choice of turf, and a talking sausage.*

*In addition we considered AANA code of ethics practice note 2.3 that "Realistic depictions of the consequences of violence are not acceptable." Our TV commercial clearly shows that there is no injury or harm caused to the party host, and that he is very happy with the final outcome with his lawn.*

## **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 depicts and endorses bullying and aggressive behaviour.

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

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.3 of the Code. Section 2.3 states: "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised".

The Board noted that there are three versions of the advertisement. The complaints received all relate to the 30 second and 60 second versions which portray a man pushing grass into another man's mouth and face; the 15 second version does not contain this scene.

The Board noted that the advertisement portrays a series of scenes that are intended, through the use of humour, to demonstrate the benefits of buying the product.

The Board noted the advertiser's response that the advertisement is stylised and therefore intended to portray an unrealistic but humorous scenario.

The Board considered that exaggerated scenes of guests fleeing the party, the dead lawn and the talking sausage were humorous and unrealistic depictions.

The Board noted the scene where the man has grass pushed into his mouth and face, and considered this scene a realistic depiction of an action that could be considered as a violent act. The Board noted that the overall tone of the advertisement was intended to be humorous, but considered that the scene of the grass being pushed into the man's mouth and face was confronting and not justifiable in the context of promoting a variety of lawn.

In the Board's view the man's actions were realistic and indicative of aggressive and bullying behaviour. The Board considered that as there is no consequence to the behaviour of both pushing the grass into the other man's mouth and rubbing grass in his face, the behaviour appears to be condoned.

The Board noted that bullying type behaviour is of strong community concern and considered that the issue is being trivialised in the advertisement.

The Board considered that the advertisement did present violence that was not justifiable in the context of the product being advertised.

The Board determined that the advertisement did breach Section 2.3 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement did breach Section 2.3 of the Code, the Board upheld the complaints.

### **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE TO DETERMINATION**

Lawn Solutions Australia does not endorse violence or bullying in any form. The company's current TV advertisement was intended to portray a humorous, slapstick-style scenario where party guests are shocked by a homeowner's choice of lawn. However, in response to complaints received by the ASB, Lawn Solutions Australia has decided to modify the ad to remove the scene that has caused concern. The revised TV ad will not show grass being pushed into the face of the homeowner. The company is working with its production agency and CAD to modify the advertisement and have a new version approved as quickly as possible.