



Ad Standards Community Panel
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AdStandards.com.au

Advertising Standards Bureau Limited
ACN 084 452 666

Case Report

1	Case Number	0147/19
2	Advertiser	Revolution Roofing
3	Product	House Goods Services
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV - Free to air
5	Date of Determination	12/06/2019
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Nationality

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

It is an advertisement for Poly Piu, a brand of polycarbonate roof sheeting, made in Italy and Revolution Roofing are the Australian agents. The advertisement depicts two South Australian celebrities - Mark Ricciuto and Taylor Walker - standing under a pergola structure which features the Poly Piu product.

THE COMPLAINT

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

In the commercial one character caricatures Italian Italian people & stereotypes the way they are perceived to talk. As someone from a CALD background I find stereotyping & caricatures like this make it difficult for people to not be stereotyped.

I am sick & tired of people saying how an italian acts. Not ALL italians wave their hands around & speak in a stupid voice. most of us are very educated. I think that in these times of political correctness & respect for other cultures, this should not be allowed. I have spent years having to put up with this offensive rubbish & am over it. I'm sure that there are other ways of explaining outdoor roof sheeting than to say you



need to wave your arms around & speak with a ridiculous accent. It may be funny to some, but try living with the aftermath, when confronted with sections of the commercial from people in everyday life who also think its funny & wave around their arms. Italians do not wave their arms around like a dammed helicopter!!

This ad is ridiculing a nationality. It is stereotyping the Italian culture. It lends itself to cultural appropriation which is not helpful in our current social climate. This ad sends a message (to the younger audiences specifically) that it's acceptable to ridicule people for how they speak. If this ad were imitating an Indigenous or African trait would it still be appropriate? Racism is racism.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

1. Introduction

1.1 This is prepared in response to the letter dated 28 May 2019 from Ad Standards Limited ('Ad Standards') in relation to complaints made by individuals (three) about a Revolution Roofing advertisement. The television advertisement in question is for the Poly Piu product sold by Revolution Roofing (the 'Subject Advertisement').

1.2 The issues raised in the complaints relate to Section 2.1 of the Australian Association of National Advertisers ('AANA') Code of Ethics (the 'Code'), which relevantly states: "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not portray people or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of race, ethnicity, nationality..."

1.3 Each complaint is ostensibly made on the basis of the way in which the advertisement portrays or depicts people of Italian descent or nationality.

1.4 For the reasons which follow, we do not believe that the Subject Advertisement is contrary to Section 2.1 of the Code.

1.5 For the avoidance of doubt, we also consider that there would be no basis for any allegation that the Subject Advertisement contravenes any other subsection contained in Section 2.1 of the Code. We therefore do not address the other subsections individually.

2. Poly Piu

2.1 The product advertised in the Subject Advertisement is Poly Piu, a brand of



polycarbonate roof sheeting. The product is made in Italy, and Revolution Roofing are the Australian agents for the product.

3. The Subject Advertisement

3.1 The Subject Advertisement depicts two men standing under a patio structure which features the Poly Piu sheeting.

3.2 The two men are both well-known personalities in South Australia, the former Adelaide Football Club player Mark Ricciuto ('Ricciuto'), and current co-captain of the Adelaide Football Club, Taylor 'Tex' Walker ('Walker'). Of the pair, Mark Ricciuto is proudly of Italian heritage, with his parents having migrated to Australia before he was born. We believe that those who recognize Ricciuto as a public figure are aware of his heritage.

3.3 The commercial begins with both men admiring the structure. Walker asks Ricciuto what the structure is made of, to which Ricciuto responds, 'Poly Piu, bit of Italiano style just like me'.

3.4 Walker replies, incorrectly pronouncing Poly Piu. Ricciuto corrects him with the correct (and Italian) pronunciation of the product, and jokes, 'you have to say it correctly, wave your hands a little bit'.

3.5 Walker jokes in response, exaggerating both the correct pronunciation of the product and waving his hands in the air.

3.6 A narrator concludes, 'be cooler, be stylish, with Poly Piu polycarbonate sheeting.'

3.7 The Subject Advertisement makes clear:

- the product is Italian; and*
- the correct pronunciation of the product name is based on the Italian pronunciation of the word 'Piu'.*

4. The Subject Advertisement does not breach Section 2.1 of the Code

4.1 Revolution Roofing submits that the Subject Advertisement does not breach Section 2.1 of the Code as:

- it does not depict people of Italian descent or Italian culture in a negative light; and*
- it does not involve the gratuitous appropriation of the Italian culture devoid of any connection to the product being advertised.*

4.2 Rather, it is a positive advertisement in which the Italian culture is associated with a high quality product of Italian origin, and the correct way to pronounce the



product's Italian name.

4.3 Insofar as Ricciuto's suggestion that Walker ought to 'wave [his] hands a little bit' might be thought to be a cultural stereotype, we do not believe that that it perpetuates a damaging stereotype.

4.4 Revolution Roofing does not consider that the reasonable viewer would consider a tendency to gesticulate when talking to be an undesirable mannerism; and, in that regard, we do not consider that the advertisement could possibly be seen to be disparaging or degrading to Italian culture or its participants.

4.5 By way of example, the Heads and Shoulders shampoo promotional campaign, 'Take your Hair to Paradise', featured a 'tribesman' wearing body paint and 'traditional' attire ostensibly with its origins in one of the various South American cultures.

4.6 Ad Standards determined that the ad did not breach 2.1 because the tribesman was not depicted in a negative or demeaning way and, more generally, did not represent Indigenous people in any particular way that discriminated or vilified them.

4.7 Similarly, the Advertising Standards Authority ('ANA') was satisfied that a Cadbury campaign, featuring Ghanaian music and people, was not racist. The ANA considered that, 'although the council acknowledges that Cadbury had used stereotypes in their ads, they felt that the stereotypes were not harmful or offensive'.

4.8 We consider that, like both the Heads and Shoulders advertisement and the Ghanaian Cadbury Campaign, the Subject Advertisement is not confronting, demeaning or detrimental to Italian Culture or identity.

4.9 On the other hand, the Subject Advertisement is very easily distinguishable from the 2016 Cadbury advertisement for their Picnic Chocolate Bar.

4.10 The Advertising Standards Board considered that the advertisement breached Section 2.1 of the Code as 'it depicted a man, on account of racial background, in a negative manner.' The majority of the Board considered 'that the depiction of the announcer as an Indian man with a strong accent, in an advertisement which highlights his inability to be understood, is presenting him in a negative way and does perpetuate a stereotype that would generally be considered to be a negative stereotype of a person from a particular racial background.'

4.11 In the Subject Advertisement, rather than an accent being equated towards an inability to be understood, an accent is being depicted as necessary for the correct pronunciation of a word.



5. Conclusion

5.1 *Revolution Roofing submits that the depiction of Italian culture in the Subject Advertisement is not negative in any way. It is intended to be a positive advertisement celebrating quality Italian products and appropriately acknowledging the origin of those products. It is not demeaning to Italian Culture or those of Italian descent.*

5.2 *Revolution Roofing therefore does not consider that the Subject Advertisement breaches Section 2.1 of the Code.*

THE DETERMINATION

The Ad Standards Community Panel (“Panel”) considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (the “Code”).

The Panel noted the complainants’ concerns that the advertisement is a mockery of the manner in which Italian’s speak and promotes a negative stereotype.

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

The Panel noted that this television advertisement is for a brand of polycarbonate roof sheeting, made in Italy and Revolution Roofing are the Australian agents. The advertisement depicts two South Australian celebrities - Mark Ricciuto and Taylor Walker - standing under a pergola structure which features the Poly Piu product. Mark Ricciuto is explaining to Taylor Walker how to pronounce Poly Piu.

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 the Practice Note to Section 2.1 of the Code which provides the following definitions:

“Discrimination – unfair or less favourable treatment

Vilification – humiliates, intimidates, incites hatred, contempt or ridicule”.

The Panel noted that the advertisement depicts Mark Ricciuto, who well known to be of Italian descent, explaining to Taylor Walker how to pronounce Poly Piu and telling him to “wave your hands a little bit”.

The Panel noted the complainants’ concerns that this stereotype of Italians waving their hands when they speak is a negative one which incites ridicule, and that the



advertisement is ridiculing the Italian nationality.

The Panel considered the advertiser's response that the advertisement makes clear that the product is Italian, and the correct pronunciation of Poly Piu, and that the advertisement is positive in that the Italian culture is connected to a high quality product.

The Panel recognised that this is a stereotype of Italians using their hands when they speak, but considered that most members of the community would not consider that depiction of itself to be a negative one, particularly as the actor encouraging the accent and gesticulation is himself Italian and he is making fun of the other man's inability to speak with the appropriate accent and enthusiasm.

The Panel considered that the advertisement does not depict Italians or the Italian culture in a manner that is unfair nor in a manner that would be likely to humiliate or incite ridicule. The Panel determined that the advertisement does not discriminate against or vilify a person or section of the community on account of nationality or race.

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

