



Case Report

1	Case Number	0164/15
2	Advertiser	Catholic Ladies College
3	Product	Education
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Transport
5	Date of Determination	13/05/2015
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Gender

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement is on a solid pink background with white text. There are three small leaves floating amongst the text. The text reads, "girls learn best together. See how your daughter can thrive in an all girls learning environment at one of our College Tours throughout the year. www.clc.vic.edu.au".

THE COMPLAINT

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

No matter what way you look at it, there is a clear underlying level of sexism. Implying that girls cannot learn with boys, that they would get distracted, or be intimidated, or the boys would be a nuisance. No matter what way you want to see it, it's implying that girls cannot learn as well when there are boys in the class. Which is sexist to boys and girls. It reinforces the idea that boys and girls cannot work together, because even as children they are fundamentally different and require completely different learning styles or they would get so distracted by the other that they couldn't focus. Yes, that's if you look into it, but it's a totally crap one liner designed to have a blunt sexist undertone. It's just wrong to assume that all girls and boys are so fundamentally different that they need to be separated in order to work best.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

2.1 In our school context of an all girls learning together with current educational research data we experience girls successful learning in a collaboration with other girls. This advertisement does not compare or imply discrimination in relation to how boys learn or how girls and boys learn together. It does not portray people or depict material in ways which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of race, ethnicity, nationality, age, sexual preference, religion or disability.

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 complainant’s concern that the advertisement is sexist to both boys and girls.

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 poster advertisement features the details of the Catholic Ladies College and the statement “girls learn best together” The advertisement includes the website details for the college and details for the College Tours.

The Board noted that the concept of single sex schools by nature creates a gender exclusive environment. The Board considered that most members of the community understand that to be the case and make choices about student attendance at these schools based on that knowledge.

The Board noted that there is no specific reference to boys in any way in the advertisement and that the statement “girls learn best together” is implying that girls learn best without boys being present at the school with them. The Board agreed that the statement could be interpreted more than one way and that the likely interpretation is either that boys would interfere with girls learning either because girls are easily distracted by boys or because the boys create a distraction due to their behaviour etc.

The Board noted that there is ongoing discussion and research into the benefits of single sex schools and that it is not the role of the Board to decide on the accuracy of the statement itself. A minority of the Board felt that as an education institution, the chosen terminology and way the school is being promoted in this advertisement is discriminatory in nature and that it is portraying boys in a negative way.

The majority of the Board considered however, that the College is legally allowed to promote their service and that highlighting the key feature of the school ie: being girls only, as a marketing tool to attract attendance is not discriminating or vilifying a section of the community on account of their gender 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 complaint.

