



**ADVERTISING
STANDARDS
BUREAU**

Level 2, 97 Northbourne Avenue, Turner ACT 2612
Ph: (02) 6173 1500 | Fax: (02) 6262 9833
www.adstandards.com.au

Case Report

1	Case Number	0172/13
2	Advertiser	Love and Rockets.tv
3	Product	Sex Industry
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Billboard
5	Date of Determination	12/06/2013
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.4 - Sex/sexuality/nudity S/S/N - general

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

Headline: You deserve it, experience our VIP booths

Subhead: Love & Rockets Brisbane's No 1 Adult Club

Vision: Red background with an image of a woman's face. A Rocket is 'flying' across the billboard underlining the headline.

THE COMPLAINT

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

I am writing yet another complaint regarding the sex industry's casual advertisement of a form of prostitution in public space. The latest marketing campaign by Love and Rockets is truly disgusting. A large, red billboard (owned by EYE Billboards) shows a woman's face and the words "YOU DESERVE IT. EXPERIENCE OUR VIP BOOTHS". A phallic symbol of a rocket taking off towards the woman's face is clearly visible. What exactly is this billboard promoting? What do the Johns who frequent these VIP booths actually deserve? To purchase a woman's body as a commodity or as a play thing? Or do they deserve to watch a woman

degrade herself for their pleasure because they have had such a hard day at work? This type of advertising is not OK and based on the signatures received from a recent Change.org petition regarding a billboard advertising the same industry, it appears I am not the only one who is fed up with this kind of advertising. The QLD State Government has responded to growing public concern. Queensland Attorney General Jarrod Bleijie has recently announced that the State Government will review the regulation of outdoor advertising. People have had enough of the sex industry shaping the culture of society and intruding on public space. Stripping is live pornography and pornography should be something one chooses to opt into not opt out of.

The argument that no nudity is shown and that there is more skin shown to advertise other products such as swimwear or underwear is ill-informed and ignorant. As I keep communicating to the ASB, the messages on these billboards are of great concern. One does not need a psychology degree to understand the difference. Love and Rockets is a strip club and promotes the exploitation of women for male pleasure. How can this form of advertising be so widely promoted in a country that prides itself on respect and equality for women? This billboard is a form of sexual street harassment and if an advertisement on a billboard was to demean an ethnic or religious group, it would be immediately taken down or never considered in the first place. Why is it then, that advertising that exploits, demeans and hurts the majority of women is so acceptable? The common rebuttal of "if you don't like it don't look at it" is a defence of misogyny. Sexism doesn't go away if we ignore it, nor if we dress it up as 'edgy' in order to accept it.

It is highly irresponsible for the ASB to allow such advertising. Strip clubs not only harm the women who work there, they also harm the status of women more generally. The clubs foster a prostitution culture which constructs and reinforces women's inequality. Through this kind of advertising practice, new generations of men are trained in accepting prostitution as a normal and inevitable facet of life. This inevitably affects the way that men relate to women in their lives: their family, partners, workmates and friends. Strip clubs are not a little bit of harmless fun and should never be so casually and carelessly advertised as so.

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 complainant's first point about the billboard advertising prostitution this is a moot point as it does not advertise or suggest anything of the kind. We are advertising our club and the additional exclusivity of the VIP booths. This VIP treatment is something that brings a bit of exclusivity. Much like the VIP treatment at Gold Class cinema.

The second point regarding the 'phallic' rocket again is misinformed; this is the brand device and is consciously used in a non-suggestive manner. The complainant makes the point that one should be able to opt in or out of pornography. Firstly we are not depicting pornography, secondly we consciously create these ads so that they do not overtly suggest 'adult content' and therefore we are not forcing content on anybody and not forcing anybody to 'opt in'. We

do not believe that the content of the billboard can be described as 'adult content'. We have used a headshot and we have made an effort to ensure that the model's expression is neutral and non-suggestive. This image is no different to any number of images that are viewed on mainstream media at any given time. In direct response to section 2.4 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics: Advertising or Marketing Communications shall treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience. We believe that we have treated the subjects of sex, sexuality and nudity sensitively to the general public by making sure that there is no direct reference to sex, sexuality or nudity in this billboard.

In answer to section 2.5 we have not used strong or obscene language and the language we have used we believe is appropriate.

The complainant argues that the advertisement is demeaning to women. Again we have made an effort to ensure that the advertisement is not demeaning in any shape or form. We would argue that there is nothing demeaning at all in the content of the advertisement. If the suggestion is that advertising VIP booths as one might deserve communicates that this is demeaning we would argue that it is no different to advertising an extra level of service at any venue. This is in direct response to section 2.2 of the Advertising Code, we have made a conscious effort to ensure we are not being exploitative or degrading in this advertisement.

In developing this campaign a great deal of effort was made to ensure that the content was not suggestive or offensive and that there was no overt references to nudity, we believe we have maintained this in the attached creative work. This campaign is not targeted at children but given that it is an outdoor campaign we have made sure that the billboard does not include any sexual imagery that is in contravention of Prevailing community Standards, this is in direct response to section 2.6 of the Advertising and Marketing Communications to Children point a) must not include sexual imagery in contravention of Prevailing Community Standards. Following on from this we acknowledge that outdoor advertising as a medium is viewed by all cross sections of society and in response to section 2.3 of the Code for advertising to Children 'Placement' we have again made a conscious effort to ensure that the model used on the billboard is fully covered up and ensured that there is no suggestive posing or messaging on the billboard itself. We have done this to ensure that the artwork is acceptable and does not run counter to prevailing community standards.

Lastly the complainant has suggested that we are 'casually and carelessly' advertising Love & Rockets. Nothing can be further from the truth, we believe that we are highly responsible in our advertising. We are very careful to ensure that we are not offensive or demeaning in

any way and that we are simply advertising our club within acceptable community standards.

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 concerns that the advertisement promotes the exploitation of women for male pleasure.

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

The Board noted the advertisement features an image of a woman’s face with text to the right hand side that reads: “ You deserve it – Experience our VIP Booths.” The background of the billboard is red and under the text is the picture of a rocket. The business name is on the billboard – Love & Rockets.

The Board noted that this is a business establishment that is legally able to be advertised provided that it meets the requirements of the Code. The Board agreed that they cannot comment on the appropriateness of such a business, only on the content and suitability of the advertisement.

The Board noted the complainant’s concerns that the slogan implies that a man deserves to ‘purchase’ or treat a woman as a commodity and is encouraging people to utilise the services of strip clubs and gentlemen’s clubs.

The Board first considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.2 of the Code. Section 2.2 of the Code states: “Advertising or marketing communications should not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative and degrading of any individual or group of people.”

The Board noted that, some people may consider that the image of the woman in connection with the text “you deserve it” and the relationship to an adult venue amounts to advertising that is demeaning. The Board considered that the advertisement does not include images or text that could be considered exploitative or degrading and advertising this type of establishment is not of itself exploitative or degrading and did not breach section 2.2 of the Code.

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.4 of the Code. Section 2.4 of the Code states: “Advertising or Marketing Communications shall treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience”.

The Board noted that the company is an adult club and that they are legally able to advertise. The Board noted that the advertisement does not contain any nudity and does not contain any images of a sexual nature.

A minority of the Board felt that the direction of the rocket aiming at the woman’s face was an aggressive image and gave a mild suggestion of violence, however, the majority of the Board considered that the image of the rocket is relevant to the name of the premises and that although the rocket is directed at the woman, it does not appear overtly phallic nor is it

positioned inappropriately as in previous advertisements for this advertiser where the rocket was shown flying up toward the model's open legs (case 0051/10).

The Board agreed that the advertisement is not inappropriate for the relevant audience and did treat the issue of sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience and determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.4 of the Code.

Further finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on any grounds, the Board dismissed the complaint.