



Ad Standards Community Panel
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AdStandards.com.au

Ad Standards Limited
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Case Report

1. Case Number :	0276-19
2. Advertiser :	Greenstone Financial Services
3. Product :	Insurance
4. Type of Advertisement/Media :	TV - Free to Air
5. Date of Determination	11-Sep-2019
6. DETERMINATION :	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

AANA Code of Ethics\2.1 Discrimination or Vilification

DESCRIPTION OF ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement features two men talking at a party about life insurance. One of the men congratulates the other on expecting a baby. The man responds by saying thank you, and that because they have more at stake now they finally got life insurance.

The first man responds by stating, "that's funny because the wife and I just had this same conversation. So who did you go with?"

The second man then states why he chose Real Insurance.

A woman wearing a Real Insurance uniform then speaks about the benefits and features of the product.

THE COMPLAINT

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

One man says The Wife. This is sexist and derogatory, like she is an object such as The Table or The Chair. My Wife is much more appropriate for this day and age.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE



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

Description of the Advertisement

The advertisement is a 90 second advertisement made for television. The advertisement is part of a 3-part series, also including a 30 second and 60 second version. Importantly, however, neither the 30 second nor 60 second variants contain the sequence being complained of. The product being advertised is Real Family Life Cover, a life insurance product.

Summary of the complaint

The complaint is concerned with one segment of the advertisement in which one of the male actors used the words "the wife" to refer to his spouse in the third person. This statement, it has been alleged, is derogatory and sexist, and not appropriate.

Response to this complaint

We acknowledge that our advertisement does include a segment in which contains the phrase being complained of. However, we dispute any suggestion that this is derogatory or sexist.

The Advertising Association of National Advertisers (AANA) Code of Ethics includes, at section 2.1, a requirement to ensure that "Advertising or Marketing Communication 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 ... gender..."

We consider that this piece of advertising has not contravened this requirement.

We acknowledge that acceptable use of pronouns is constantly changing, and some people may consider the usage of the phrase referred to within this advertisement as being impolite. However, we consider that this does not represent the average person's view. The conversation being had in this advertisement is an attempt to create the type of casual banter that is had between adult Australian men, and the language used is consistent with common usage.

Moreover, it is certainly not the case that any person could reasonably consider the use of this phrase to be a form of discrimination or vilification.

Discrimination means an "unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people".

Vilify means to "speak or write about in an abusively disparaging manner".

These are both very significant thresholds that no person could reasonably consider that our advertisement achieves with the use of this phrase.

For all of these reasons we argue that Greenstone Financial Services has not breached the AANA Code of Ethics and Ad Standards should rule that the advertisement is acceptable in its current form.



Conclusion

In conclusion I have outlined that the phrase complained of in the advertisement is consistent with common usage. It certainly does not meet the thresholds set out in the AANA Code of Ethics, which is designed to restrict advertisements that, amongst other things, are discriminatory or vilifies certain identified protected classes of people.

Accordingly, I request that the Advertising Standards Board find that there is no reason to restrict the use of the advertisement in this instance.

THE DETERMINATION

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

The Panel noted the complainant's concern that the advertisement's use of the phrase 'the wife' is sexist and derogatory and implies she is an object.

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 the Practice Note to Section 2.1 provides the following definitions:

"Discrimination – unfair or less favourable treatment.

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

The Panel noted the advertiser's response that language used in this advertisement is a reflection of common use, and not discriminatory or vilifying.

The Panel considered that the man who uses the phrase, 'the wife', is not using it in a negative or aggressive manner. The Panel considered that it is common for people to refer to 'the wife' in the same way as they refer to 'the kids' and it is not a suggestion that his wife is an object.

The Panel considered that the phrase used in the advertisement is consistent with common vernacular and is not depicting a woman receiving unfair or less favourable treatment, and did not refer to the woman in a way which humiliates, intimidates, incites hatred, contempt or ridicule.

The Panel considered that the advertisement did not portray or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on



account of gender and determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.1 of the Code

Finding that the advertisement did not breach any other section of the Code the Panel dismissed the complaint.