



Case Report

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| 1 | Case Number | 0282/16 |
| 2 | Advertiser | Port Augusta Veterinary Service |
| 3 | Product | Professional Service |
| 4 | Type of Advertisement / media | TV - Free to air |
| 5 | Date of Determination | 13/07/2016 |
| 6 | DETERMINATION | Dismissed |

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Gender
- 2.4 - Sex/sexuality/nudity S/S/N - general

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement opens on a man inside a veterinary clinic explaining that Port Augusta Veterinary Services has the right people, skills and equipment to deal with pets. We then see staff members with a horse, and then a dog. The next scene shows a female staff member holding up two small dogs and saying, "Check out these puppies" before the male staff member continues his voiceover to say that they provide healthcare for puppies to seniors and everything in between. The final scene shows all staff members grouped together and the on-screen text reads, "Every Pet...Every Patient...Every Day. 8642 4011, 40 Railway Parade, Port Augusta".

THE COMPLAINT

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

The professional pet care team member holds up two puppies up to her chest and says "check out THESE puppies." My nine year old said "Grandma said means boobies" [sic] I said I know and it's not good.

During the advertisement a female member of staff holds up two small puppies against her large bosom and reports 'look at these puppies' while a male member of staff looks on. It is offensive and degrading to women and not anything to do with Veterinary care of animals.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The advert has been aired on local television since 2014 and has been a successful promotion of our business and the services we offer. As a regular visitor to numerous community events in our local area we have received a lot of positive feedback in regard to the advert and its content. The response to the humour has been for the greater part positive.

In defence of the vilification of women when viewing the advert please pay attention to the following:

- The female staff member is not dressed provocatively, nor provides any body language to suggest that she is alluding to her own breasts. The female staff member is wearing a black clinic work shirt buttoned up to the top, making it difficult from the footage to determine if her bosom is large or not as mentioned in the complaint.*
- There is no direct verbal or physical reference made by the male staff member in correlation to the puppies and breasts, therefore there is no degradation or vilification of the female staff member.*
- The puppies are held in a way that is practical and safe for young dogs of this age and not as suggested to draw attention to the breast of the female staff member.*
- The line from the advert is actually “check out these puppies” not “look at these puppies” as alluded to in the complaint, which changes the tone of the phrase.*
- The puppies are actually used as the subject matter for the next statement “...professional healthcare for puppies to seniors and everything in between”. Our line of thought was that most people find puppies to be cute which is the response we have received from the wider community.*
- Probably most importantly the female staff member has never felt degraded or vilified by the advertisement and she is recognised in the wider community and subjected for the most part to good natured attention rather than ribald or openly sexual comments.*

We do not have much further to add because we covered our arguments in our last response. I would like to point out however, that the 9 year old child was only made aware that “boobies” were being referred to by their grandmother and hence the complainants problem should really be with what the grandmother discusses with her child. From a child’s perspective they would not think anything more was being said when a woman holds up a pair of young dogs and says check out these puppies, than “oh, look at those cute puppy dogs”. Again, I think she needs to be discussing the issue with her parent and not with us.

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 is offensive and degrading to women as it shows a woman holding up puppies against her bosom, saying “look at these puppies” while a male staff member looks on, and that the reference to puppies is actually a reference to the woman’s boobs.

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 this television advertisement features staff from the Port Augusta Veterinary Service promoting their services.

The Board noted the complainant's concern over the scene showing a female staff member holding two puppies. The Board noted that 'puppies' can be a slang word for a woman's breasts (<http://onlineslangdictionary.com/meaning-definition-of/puppies>) but considered that in this instance the woman is holding two puppies in her hands and the most likely interpretation is that she is referring to the very young dogs and not her own breasts.

The Board noted the complainant's concern that a male staff member looks on while the woman presents the puppies. The Board noted that the male staff member features in many scenes in the advertisement and provides the voiceover throughout. The Board noted that when the female staff member holds up the puppies the man is looking at the camera and considered that while he does glance at the puppies briefly his main focus is on talking to the camera and not on the woman's chest or the puppies she is holding.

The Board 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.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.1 of the Code.

The Board then 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 the complainants' concerns that 'puppies' is a euphemism for a woman's breasts. The Board noted that a woman is shown holding two puppies and considered the interpretation taken by the complainants is based on their own interpretation as there is no suggestion in the advertisement that the woman is referring to her breasts. The Board noted that all staff members, including the woman holding the puppies, are wearing staff uniform and considered that this uniform is not revealing and in particular the woman who is holding the puppies is not exposing any part of her breasts. The Board noted the overall tone of the advertisement and considered that there is no sexual innuendo at all in the advertisement. The Board noted that the women depicted in the advertisement are clearly there in the context of their roles within the advertiser's business and considered that they are not being used for sexual appeal.

The Board considered that the advertisement did not depict sex, sexuality or nudity and determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.4 of the Code.

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