



Case Report

1	Case Number	0304/16
2	Advertiser	Pacific Brands Holdings Pty Ltd
3	Product	Retail
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Poster
5	Date of Determination	27/07/2016
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.2 - Objectification Exploitative and degrading - men
- 2.4 - Sex/sexuality/nudity S/S/N - general

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This poster advertisement features a side on view of a naked man holding a towel against his face and the front of his body. Across his naked buttocks is a text box which reads, "Sheridan Australia".

THE COMPLAINT

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

I am offended by, and object to this advertisement because it is revealing, lacks integrity and is inappropriate to put on a advertisement to be used to promote Sheridan.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

This instore poster shows a fit and healthy male model using a Sheridan towel to dry himself in a bathroom. It is a very old poster from 2005, most likely produced in 2004, that is no longer in use across the Sheridan network but has been found in our outlet store in Balcatta.

Sheridan is a well-known and loved Australian brand of beautifully designed, quality homeware products including bed linen, towels, table linens, loungewear and other home accessories. The advertisement in question was to promote our Sheridan towel range.

The complaint was that the image used was offensive because it is revealing, lacks integrity and is inappropriate in advertising Sheridan.

To the contrary the image is a professionally produced image of a fit and healthy male model who is posed in such a manner which is clearly intended to show the towel and is not overtly sexualised as the image portrays the male using the Sheridan towel to dry himself.

The complaint was that men were being exploited and degraded by this advertisement. Again we do not believe this to be the case the photo is tastefully produced and shows an accurate representation of the use of the product.

Under section 2.4 of the Code advertising communications must treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience.

Two copies of this advertisement were displayed on a 2.5m x 1.5m poster in the Sheridan Outlet store located in 1/207 Balcatta Rd, Balcatta, Western Australia. One poster was positioned in the window facing out onto the street and the second was blocking a window facing instore. Sheridan is a wholesome and trusted brand that utilises a diverse range of talent to showcase the breadth of the range available. The imagery is shot in a tasteful and dignified manner that is focused on the brand and product.

Also this image and window poster are more than 11 years old, having been in market in 2005 and likely produced in 2004. Due to its age, we are unable to find the media and creative agency or CAD details in our archives. We have had 4 media agencies in that time frame, and at the date of that image Sheridan was under the prior ownership of CS Brooks not Pacific Brands. The image itself has not been part of our marketing campaigns or in general use across the network for a very long time. Two posters have been found recently at one outlet store in Balcatta, and removed promptly.

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 of a naked man is revealing, lacks integrity and is inappropriate.

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

The Board 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 the advertisement is a poster outside a Sheridan outlet, which features a

naked man, with a side profile to the viewer.

The Board noted that in order to breach this Section of the Code the images would need to be using sexual appeal in a manner that is considered both exploitative and degrading.

The Board noted the AANA Practice Note which provides guidance on the meaning of the terms exploitative and degrading:

Exploitative - purposefully debase or abuse a person for the enjoyment of others, lacking in moral, artistic or other values.

Degrading – lowering in character or quality a person or group of people.

The Board considered that the man is posed in a manner which is clearly intended to show a context for the towel he is modelling and although the image is somewhat sexualised, he is not posed in a manner that is degrading. The Board considered that the image does focus on the model's body but that the relevance to the product is apparent given he has emerged from a shower. The Board considered that the relationship between the product being advertised and the image shown is not about promoting the man as an object but about the towel available to purchase in store.

The Board noted that some members of the community could find the use of a man naked, save for a label placed across his bottom, to be exploitative, however, the Board noted that the advertised product is the towel and considered that it is not inappropriate or exploitative, of itself, for an advertiser to depict someone using the advertised product in a manner that is not otherwise debasing the person.

The Board considered that the advertisement did not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative and degrading of any individual or group of people.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.2 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 its determination in Case 0043/11:

In the case of this specific advertisement, despite the broad audience of the advertisement, most members of the Board considered that the advertisement's relevance to the product, the lack of any sexualised suggestion in the advertisement and the fact that the nudity depicted no genitalia meant that the advertisement treated nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience.

Consistent with this decision, in the current advertisement, despite the broad audience, which would include children, the Board considered that the advertisement's relevance to the product, being a person using a towel, the lack of any sexualised suggestion in the advertisement and the fact that the nudity depicted no genitalia meant that the advertisement treated nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience.

The Board considered that the advertisement 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.

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