



**Ad Standards** Community Panel  
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Ad Standards Limited  
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## Case Report

<b>1. Case Number :</b>	<b>0308-19</b>
<b>2. Advertiser :</b>	<b>South Australian Tourism Commission</b>
<b>3. Product :</b>	<b>Travel</b>
<b>4. Type of Advertisement/Media :</b>	<b>TV - Free to Air</b>
<b>5. Date of Determination</b>	<b>25-Sep-2019</b>
<b>6. DETERMINATION :</b>	<b>Upheld - Modified or Discontinued</b>

### ISSUES RAISED

AANA Code of Ethics\2.1 Discrimination or Vilification

AANA Code of Ethics\2.6 Health and Safety

AANA Code of Ethics\2.0 Other

### DESCRIPTION OF ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement has two versions:

Version 1 - 30 seconds

We open on a man in his mid-70s hopping onto a bus. We see the bus travelling through some vineyards in the Adelaide Hills. We cut to the man at a winery. He's holding a glass of red in his hand, watching a nearby couple enjoying the venue. The old man begins to look a bit sad. We cut to the old man on a pier at the beach in Glenelg. He looks down at a beach club on the sand, where younger people are dancing and having a great time. Again, he looks sad, and keeps walking. We cut to the man doing the Adelaide Oval Roofclimb and hear the roar of the crowd. We cut in to a close up of the old man who has tears in his eyes. VO: "Don't feel sorry for old mate." The music shifts to a much more upbeat, almost jazzy tune. VO: "It's his own damn fault he didn't visit Adelaide sooner."

Version 2 - 15 seconds

We open on a man in his mid-70s hopping onto a bus. We see the bus travelling through some vineyards in the Adelaide Hills. We cut to the man at a winery. He's holding a glass of red in his hand, watching a nearby couple enjoying the venue. The old man begins to look a bit sad. We cut to the old man on a pier at the beach in



Glenelg. He looks down at a beach club on the sand, where younger people are dancing and having a great time. Again, he looks sad. We cut to the man doing the Adelaide Oval Roofclimb and hear the roar of the crowd. We cut in to a close up of the old man who has tears in his eyes. VO: "Don't feel sorry for old mate." The music shifts to a much more upbeat, almost jazzy tune. VO: "It's his own damn fault he didn't visit Adelaide sooner."

### **THE COMPLAINT**

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

*I find the portrait of the lonely older man distasteful! The ad says not to feel sorry for the old man because he should have gone to SA before now and then he is walking to the top of the stadium crying! Not all people in Australia have been afforded the luxury of travelling in their life time and the feelings of loneliness in this country is something to be treated with empathy not made fun of! Then on first watch he looks like he is walking to the top of the stadium to commit suicide. Then on second watch you see him harnessed. It's just all wrong SA! Surely you have better things to show than this in Adelaide*

*I find it hard to understand that in a society that suffers from elder abusers that the advertising company find it necessary to show a senior citizen on display in this appalling way. As if the sadness and the tear are not stressing enough. Then having the gal to say "don't feel bad for old mate It's his dam fault!! Is this how we want our. Children to care about our elderly? Really? I can't think Adelaide would really be impressed.*

*I found this offensive as it showed a lonely old man sitting on his own looking at a couple drinking wine on his own looking sad then he climbed the adelaide stadium and he was crying they said dont feel sorry for him because he didnt visit adelaide earlier or something like that. It is offensive to those older ppl who have lost their partners like my mother and others out there its poor taste and disrespectful*

*I find it both offensive and distressing to have the implied loss of a loved one mocked in such a flippant way. After watching a loved one pass without visiting a dream location it is quite callous to see the memories mocked. My family are distressed and angered each time this commercial is played.*

*The assumption that an old man is attempting suicide because he is lonely and it is because he has not visited South Australian attractions sooner  
The phrase "Don't feel sorry for old mate" is offensive when considering the numbers of male suicides each day or year!  
It is in poor taste to promote a states tourism using attempted suicide as the reason!*

*At a time where there are many baby boomers dealing with lost partners or being alone, here is an advertisement making light of depression and the concept of the*



*elderly having made their own mess, deserving their pain. Its a cold and callous statement to make, and shows no regard for the potential of many older gentlemen to be so lonely and / or depressed that such a message could push them further into depression, or even over the edge into becoming a suicide statistic. It suggests that the people in charge of tourism SA hate old men, that the baby boomer generation is responsible for its own mess and will be abandoned by society and morality. Its quite offensive.*

## **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE**

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

*Thank you for taking your time to write in to Ad Standards. We take complaints seriously at the South Australian Tourism Commission (SATC).*

*This TV commercial is one of a series of adverts being shown in our key interstate audiences of Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane to address misconceptions many people have about Adelaide. Our market research indicates that while Adelaide, as a destination, is emerging with interest and awareness both on the rise, there are still many people who have put off coming to Adelaide to "one day", or it's "on the bucket list", and this advert is saying "don't leave it until later, come now". Research also shows that solo travel, in all age demographics is on the rise.*

*The SATC had no intention to offend or discriminate against any age groups, nor increase levels of depression or isolation and welcomes all travellers. The advert shows "Old Mate" doing a number of great activities including wine tasting and climbing the Adelaide Oval RoofClimb (perfectly safe and clearly harnessed). The aim of the advert is to show the regret that 'Old Mate' felt at not having visited Adelaide sooner. Following this, there have been a number of other adverts showcasing fantastic reasons why you should visit Adelaide. Adelaide and South Australia has a wide variety of tourism experiences that are perfect for our mature audiences that are young at heart. Visitors can try their own birth year vintage Tawny directly from the barrel at Seppeltsfield, experience some of Australia's most spectacular landscapes in the Flinders Ranges and Outback and shuck fresh oysters in Port Lincoln.*

*The aim of the advert was to show the regret that Old Mate felt at not having visited Adelaide sooner rather than a sense of loneliness or depression. There is no reference within the advert that Old Mate has lost his spouse or has been separated from his family. On Old Mate's Instagram page, he refers to his wife and a grandchild. There is no cruelty, abuse, mistreatment or lack of care towards Old Mate, he is simply crying tears of regret from not having visited Adelaide earlier in life.*

*Whilst we understand and appreciate that not all Australians can afford the luxury of travelling in their life time – our research shows that 72% of Australians are intending*



*to take a holiday in the next 12 months so this advert is designed to get South Australia on their radar for their next holiday.*

## **THE DETERMINATION**

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

The Panel viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser's response.

The Panel noted the complainants' concerns that the advertisement is hurtful and cruel towards the elderly, and suggests the man in the advertisement is planning suicide.

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 some complainant's concerns that the advertisement shows the elderly man visiting Adelaide and that he appears to be sad to come alone. Some complainants considered this sadness was related to the recent loss of a loved one.

The Panel noted the advertiser's response that the intent of the advertisement was to show the regret that the man felt at not having visited Adelaide sooner, and that there is no reference to the man losing a loved one.

The Panel considered the intent of the advertisement and the actual impression of the advertisement is quite different.

The Panel considered that the entire theme of the advertisement would be interpreted by most members of the community as giving a negative impression of the man, and that the negative impression is entirely related to his age. The Panel considered that the advertisement implies that the man cannot join in and enjoy positive experiences because of his age and the man's age is the barrier to the man joining the fun.

The Panel noted that the man is shown to stare at another couple in a winery, and is shown looking at other people wistfully in other scenes. The Panel considered that he



is shown to be excluded from group activities, such as sitting with others at the winery or participating at the beach.

The Panel considered that the majority of the other people depicted in the advertisement are in couples or groups, and that they are shown to be having a good time. The Panel noted that the man is at times shown to stare at the other people wistfully, most notably in a scene at a winery when he stares at a couple while looking sad. The Panel considered that the advertisement creates a feeling of pathos – creating pity and sadness towards the man. In the Panel’s view the sense of pathos is due to the man’s age and he is depicted in a manner where is unable to have the enjoyment everyone else is having solely because of his age.

The Panel noted the advertiser’s response that social media for this campaign depicts the man as having a wife and grandchild. The Panel considered that its role is to consider the content of an advertisement, and it cannot take outside references into consideration as the TV advertisement is viewed in isolation and not in conjunction with social media.

The Panel considered that the man is clearly portrayed as being isolated and alone and noted that the voiceover at the end of the advertisement advises the viewer to not feel sorry for him, as it’s his own fault he didn’t visit Adelaide sooner. The Panel considered that this also gives an impression of the man being foolish. The Panel considered that the tone of the voiceover is quite scornful and has the effect of making a viewer feel ridicule and mockery towards the man.

The Panel considered that advertisement highlights the man’s age by referring to him as “old mate”. The Panel noted that “old mate” is common Australian slang for a person who you know but cannot name at the time, but considered that in this advertisement the use of the term is to highlights the man’s age.

The Panel noted that in case 0110-18 it considered an advertisement under Section 2.1, in which the complaint was that a foreign man was excluded and therefore discriminated against due to his race. In that case the Panel found that: “The perpetrators are incidental and in the Panel’s view there is not a negative view of “Anglo Saxons,” rather only a negative perception of unconscious discrimination.”

In the current case, the Panel considered there is a negative view of the man, that the man’s portrayed loneliness and isolation in conjunction with the disdain of the voiceover at the end depicts material which is vilifying towards the man by inciting contempt and ridicule for his foolishness at not visiting Adelaide earlier, and that the voiceover directly references his age.

The Panel considered that the advertisement did portray or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of age and determined that the advertisement did breach Section 2.1 of the Code.



The Panel considered whether the advertisement complied with Section 2.6 of the Code. Section 2.6 of the Code states: “Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety”.

The Panel noted the complainants’ concerns that the advertisement suggests the man in the advertisement is planning suicide.

The Panel noted the advertiser’s response that the man depicted in the advertisement climbing the Adelaide Oval RoofClimb is clearly secured to harness. The Panel considered that while the man did seem sad throughout the advertisement, there is no indication that he plans to end his life. The Panel considered that the impression of this scene is that he had wanted to complete this activity for a long time and was sad to be doing it alone.

The Panel considered that the advertisement did not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety.

The Panel determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.6 of the Code.

## **THE ADVERTISER’S RESPONSE TO DETERMINATION**

Thank you for sending through the Panel’s determination. I can confirm that the SATC’s “Old Mate” TV commercial, subject of case reference number 0308-19, is no longer on air, as of Friday 27 September 2019, and will not be aired in the future.

We would like to raise some key points in response.

The Ad Standards panel referred to “Old Mate” as possibly an ageist term. We dispute this strongly. “Old Mate” is a colloquial term used for someone in Australia regardless of their age.

Some of the complainants said that the TVC made them feel negatively about Old Mate. Again, contrary to most feelings being negative towards Old Mate, there was a lot of interest in him, his family and his time in Adelaide. Many people felt sorry for him because of his regret, not negatively towards him.

Central to the panel’s reasoning behind upholding the complaint was a view that Old Mate was excluded from the activities depicted in the ad, and that he was excluded because he was old and the voiceover was in essence mocking him. We don’t agree at all that him looking wistfully at other people means he’s excluded. This is not the case - no-one told him he could not participate, and he is definitely not being prejudiced against because of age. He is simply an observer – it is his regret coming through – ie, “this looks and is great, but I wish I’d come to Adelaide sooner to do this”. The voiceover is also instructing the viewer – not mocking Old Mate.



We wish to point out that the “Old Mate” TVC campaign has had 2 parts. The first concluded on Friday 27 September as scheduled. In its first nine days on air, the campaign was mentioned 407 times in published media, including on high profile media shows, with many of the hosts supporting the ad’s proposition while noting its ‘quirky’ nature. The ad resulted in a cumulative earned reach of 12.5 million Australians and more than \$2.5 million in earned media value. Visitation to southaustralia.com in this period was 110% higher than the same period last year. On the weekend of 7 and 8 September, there were 21,498 and 22,201 visits to southaustralia.com from within Australia. These are the highest two days for domestic traffic to southaustralia.com on record.

This online activity has produced 77,061 leads to South Australian tourism operators, which is a 99% increase year on year. These figures show that consumers took action and engaged in response to the campaign.

The original ad was then followed by ‘the Sequel’, fleshing out the story of Old Mate, now back in his favourite city with his mates, and sharing his favourite spots. This ad and the combined effect have been unanimously well received.