



Ad Standards Community Panel
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Ad Standards Limited
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Case Report

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| 1. Case Number : | 0310-19 |
| 2. Advertiser : | Westpac Group |
| 3. Product : | Finance/Investment |
| 4. Type of Advertisement/Media : | TV - Free to Air |
| 5. Date of Determination | 25-Sep-2019 |
| 6. DETERMINATION : | Dismissed |

ISSUES RAISED

AANA Code of Ethics\2.1 Discrimination or Vilification

DESCRIPTION OF ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement features a male and female on a date. The female says, "oh we've run out of oysters, we should get more" and motions for a waiter. He looks nervous and motions that he is going to the bathroom. He is climbing out the bathroom window when the St George dragon says him, "Darren, Darren, Darren, what are we doing buddy?" Darren replies, "a runner. I'm never going to be able to get that bill". The dragon slaps him on the face and he drops his phone. The dragon catches it and reminds him that he can check the credit card balance on his app and that they are fine to pay. Darren comments that he is going back for dessert.

THE COMPLAINT

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

This kind of advertising perpetuates sexist stereotypes being that the man has to pay for the date and that the woman is some fiscally irresponsible person who would freely spend a mans money. These insidious stereotypes being reinforced in advertising damage the progress towards equality.



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 the time to share your concerns.

Although our ad is absolutely not intended to be provocative, sexist or reinforce stereotypes, I can understand your point of view and apologise sincerely for any distress caused.

Our intention for the ad was to tap into the customer insight of feeling financially insecure in certain situations – here we depict the comical story of a somewhat innocent man who's developed a crush on a woman who's clearly out of his league.

At St.George we support diversity and inclusion, and our campaigns showcase a wide range of different scenarios and people.

I can confirm we put the ad into pre-live testing; sexism or stereotyping were not raised as an issue. We will continue to monitor the response from our audiences and will take action should this theme of interpretation continue.

THE DETERMINATION

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

The Panel noted the complainant's concerns that the advertisement perpetrates negative stereotypes towards men and women.

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 of the Code which provides the following definitions:

"Discrimination – unfair or less favourable treatment

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

The Panel further noted the Practice Note to Section 2.1 of the Code in relation to Gender Stereotypes, which provides:



“Portrayals may amount to discrimination or vilification as determined by the Community Panel where they depict unfair or less favourable treatment of gender; and/or humiliate or invite contempt or ridicule of gender For example, advertising which:

- *depicts family members creating a mess while a woman has sole responsibility for cleaning it up;*
- *suggests that a specific activity is inappropriate for boys because it is stereotypically associated with girls, or vice-versa; or*
- *features a man trying and failing to undertake simple parental or household tasks.”*

The Panel noted the complainant’s concern that the advertisement perpetrates sexist stereotypes towards men by depicting him as having to pay for the date.

The Panel considered that the concept of a man paying for a first date is a stereotype of dating culture, but is not of itself a stereotype of men. The Panel noted that some members of the community may consider it to be a stereotype of men, however the Panel considered that the old fashioned depiction of the expectation of a man paying on the first date is neither a good nor bad stereotype.

The Panel considered that the implication in the advertisement that the man will be paying for the woman’s meal does not depict unfair or less favourable treatment of the man, and does not humiliate or ridicule him due to his gender.

The Panel noted the complainant’s concern that the advertisement perpetrates sexist stereotypes towards women by depicting her as a fiscally irresponsible person who would spend a man’s money.

The Panel noted that the woman is depicted ordering more oysters for the table, and asking the man if he liked caviar. The Panel noted that the woman states “we’re out of oysters”, indicating that they were shared.

The Panel noted that the man leaves the table due to his concern that he will not be able to pay for the entire meal, however the Panel considered that there is no direct indication that the woman does not intend to split the bill with the man, or that she is fiscally irresponsible.

The Panel considered that the woman was not shown to receive unfair or less favourable treatment, and while she was shown in a potentially negative light, she was not humiliated or ridiculed because of her gender. The Panel considered that the depiction of the woman would be unlikely to be considered by most members of the community to incite contempt or ridicule of women in general.

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 the Code on other grounds, the Panel dismissed the complaint.