



Case Report

1	Case Number	0330/14
2	Advertiser	My Plates
3	Product	Automotive
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV - Free to air
5	Date of Determination	27/08/2014
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Gender

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

A delivery driver rings the doorbell of a house and says: "G'day Mate. I've got a parcel here for Tanya".

Soft music begins to play. The courier holds up the parcel to show the man who appears to grimace slightly and shake his head in denial. The courier checks the address and asks: "Are you sure? This is the right address".

A young woman appears at the door, tidying her hair. The couriers says: "G'day. Tanya? Parcel for you." She replies: "Yes. Thank you" as the courier hands her the parcel. The young man appears even more dismayed.

The young woman opens the parcel to reveal a set of number plates. They are pink with a cupid heart pattern.

The headline super: "myPlates now deliver" appears on screen above the shield. The words "Eligibility Criteria apply. See myplates.com.au" are below the shield.

THE COMPLAINT

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

There is obvious use of normal Australian satirical humour. I understand the humour. I am Australian after all. The TV ads for this product have quite a noticeable level of saturation. I received notification for my registration renewal. Opened envelope to read "tired of man smell in your car?" Imagine the outcry if it read "woman" instead of "man". If we are ever to

remove the gender competition and achieve true equality the respect has to work both ways. Demeaning men (satirical or not) is not an option in this regard. Very poor selection of advertising content. This ad bounces off such adverts like the man who wears sanitary pads on his body and pretends to be a ninja etc. Funny? Yes. Demeaning and counterproductive in attaining gender equality? Yes. If women are to ever have a fair chance at equality the playing field must be even. These ads perpetuate the gender divide. I've seen 2 different ad's and the both claim to be a man proof success story, in an attempt to stop male partners from driving their cars. I believe its sexist or at least telling portraying its for females only. Planting the idea of his and her cars!

This advertisement is extremely sexist, and displays women in a very harmful and stereotypical manner- the man is characterised as unassuming and unfortunate, who must suffer with the fact that his female partner Tanya happens to like a stereotypically female and supposedly unmanly colour. Tanya is shown to be frivolous and vapid, whereas the man is shown as the victim in this situation. God forbid that a woman buy number plates in a colour she likes for what can be assumed to be her car.

The concept itself- of using a colour to somehow deter men- also continues the sexist idea that the colour pink is somehow 'unmanly' and that no reasonable man, such as the man in the advertisement is shown to be, would use a car that is frivolous and girly. It shows women to be inferior and something that no man should be like.

Similarly, it suggests that the women who do like the colour pink are vapid, and that the men who like the colour are not real men. I object to the reinforcement of sexist stereotypes. This advertisement is shown at times where children are often present, and to suggest to little boys that there is something wrong with liking a colour or design associated with femininity is to tell them that women are not really worthy of their respect.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

With respect to the specific complaint

We do not believe that this advertisement is sexist and regard the language used by the complainant to describe the behaviours portrayed by the male and female characters as extremely exaggerated and based on her own unsubstantiated conclusions about the portrayals.

There is nothing in this advertisement to confirm that the man is "unassuming", "unfortunate" or "suffers", or is a "victim". He is simply dismayed that his partner has chosen a set of number plates that he doesn't like.

There is nothing in this advertisement to confirm that the woman is "frivolous" and vapid". The word "frivolous" is defined as carefree and superficial. The word "vapid" is defined as "offering nothing that is stimulating or challenging, or bland". We contend that for the complainant to draw these conclusions from less than 6 seconds of screen time, saying the words "yes" and "thank you", and appearing excited about receiving a delivery of a parcel that she has been expecting, sadly says more about the complainant's stereotypical and blinkered view of the world than it does about our advertisement.

The fact that the woman has the freedom to choose whatever design or colour number plates for her car is a positive and empowering thing. It definitely does not imply that she is inferior. Quite the contrary. If this upsets the man then that's his problem, not hers.

With respect to the use of the pink coloured plates in the advertisement, they are one of nine

new designs that have been released under the Le Chic range name. In research, this particular design was shown to be one of the most popular amongst younger women, which is why we chose to feature it in this advertisement. To date, this plate has been the third best-selling plate within the range. The plate featured in one of the other advertisements "Interview" (complaint reference number 0301/14) is the highest selling plate in the range since launch.

*Reference to sections is to the AANA Code of Ethics downloaded from the website
With respect to section 2.1 – Discrimination or Vilification (on the basis of gender)*

This advertisement is one of a series from the manproof campaign that is currently on free to air television in Sydney and regional NSW.

The key message for this advertisement is that myPlates now deliver (as opposed to customers having to go to a RMS registry to collect their new number plates).

Both the male and female characters in the commercial were cast to be normal, polite, clean-cut professional, working people.

The behaviours portrayed in the advertisement are slightly humorous, tongue-in-cheek, and with clearly no malice or denigration towards either gender.

We therefore submit that this advertisement does not breach this section of the code.

With respect to section 2.2 – "Employing sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative and degrading of any individual or group of people".

There is clearly no attempt whatsoever to use sexual appeal as a communication device in this advertisement and respectfully submit that there is no case to answer under this section of the code.

With respect to section 2.3 – "Present or portray violence".

There is no presentation or portrayal of any violent act in the script or actions contained within this advertisement and respectfully submit that there is no case to answer under this section of the code.

With respect to section 2.4 – "shall treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience".

There is no representation of sex, sexuality or nudity in this advertisement and respectfully submit that there is no case to answer under this section of the code.

With respect to section 2.5 – only use language which is appropriate for the relevant audience and medium. Strong or obscene language shall be avoided".

There is no use of strong, obscene or inappropriate language at any point during this advertisement. We respectfully submit that there is no case to answer under this section of the code.

With respect to section 2.6 – "shall not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety".

There is no use or depiction of any material at any point during this advertisement that could be considered contrary to Prevailing community Standards on health and safety.

We respectfully submit that there is no case to answer under this section of the code.

Additional information

The TVC first went to air on Sunday 27 July 2014. Airtime was scheduled by our media buyer, Sutherland Media Services, in co-operation with the three free-to-air television networks, and in compliance with the approved CAD ratings.

The geographical coverage of the campaign is limited to metro Sydney, regional NNSW and regional SNSW markets, although we acknowledge that there is some signal spill into ACT and SE Queensland.

It is planned that this commercial, together with a two other commercials in rotation will run for three to four weeks.

The media weight behind this commercial is not particularly heavy with the current media

plan to deliver 180 TARPs over three weeks in the Sydney metro market, and 145 TARPs over the same period in regional NSW markets.

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 is sexist in its portrayal of a woman choosing pink numberplates and a man who appears unassuming and unable to cope with his partner choosing these plates.

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 the advertisement features a man denying that a woman called Tanya lives at his address because he doesn’t want the postman to deliver the pink number plates Tanya has ordered.

The Board noted the complainant’s concerns that the woman in the advertisement, Tanya, is presented as ‘frivolous and girly’ because she wants pink number plates and that this marks her as inferior to the man.

The Board noted that it had previously considered similar advertisements for the same advertiser including case 0276/14 where: “The Board noted the complainants’ concerns that it is sexist and stereotyping men to have a depiction of a man behaving in a socially unacceptable manner to promote this product. The Board noted that the product is targeted to women as a humorous way of encouraging women to purchase personalised number plates.”

In the current advertisement the Board noted that the advertised product is targeted to women and considered that the advertisement does not suggest that all women would prefer pink number plates with love hearts but rather that this particular woman does.

The Board noted the man’s reaction to Tanya’s choice of number plates and considered that the most likely interpretation is that he would prefer not to drive a vehicle with pink number plates. The Board considered that the advertisement does not suggest that all men would share this view or that those men who do share this view are superior or inferior to women.

The Board noted that the man and woman in the advertisement are presented in a stereotypical manner (women liking pink and men not liking pink) but considered that this of itself is not discriminatory as advertisers often use stereotypes to help viewers quickly identify with characters or situations presented in advertisements. The Board noted in this instance that the man and woman are not presented in a manner which is negative or demeaning and 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 their gender.

The Board 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 Board dismissed the complaint.

