



Case Report

1	Case Number	0351/10
2	Advertiser	Scotty's Beach House
3	Product	Leisure & Sport
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Billboard
5	Date of Determination	25/08/2010
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.3 - Sex/sexuality/nudity Treat with sensitivity to relevant audience

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

Advert for Mission Beach which features three cartoon depictions alongside text: a person falling through the air next to Get HIGH, two people paddling a canoe next to Get WET, and a person lying in bed next to Get LAID. Underneath is the text "...at Mission Beach! Call: 1800 SWEET AS - TURN LEFT 7km"

THE COMPLAINT

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

I feel disgusted that this should be allowed to remain. Surly Mission beach is one of the most beautiful parts of Queensland. How can it be allowed to become a place to be denigrated in such a way?

We must be proud of our lovely land and I feel these signs must be demolished.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The intended purpose of the advertisement in question - offering a package deal for skydiving, white water rafting and accommodation - is certainly not to be overtly explicit, or, as the complaints states, "offensive," in any way. The advertiser agrees that Mission Beach is one of the most beautiful locations in Queensland. Having owned and operated a backpacker hostel that has been in operation for upwards of 22 years and with 3 young children of his own, the reputation of Mission Beach is just as important to the advertiser as the attraction to travelers on which the local economy relies. To suggest that the ad serves to denigrate the area stands in direct opposition to the spirit of the advertisement.

The billboard, which features the copy "Get High; Get Wet; Get Laid...at Mission Beach", is a call to action designed to alert the motoring youth/adventure traveler of the fact that rafting and skydiving are actually located in the Mission Beach, rather than Cairns, locale. The secondary function is to promote the raft-skydive-accommodation package deal in Mission Beach, known as the "Get high, get wet, get laid" package.

The sign prominently features cartoons which depict a person skydiving, rafting, and sleeping in a bed. Taken out of context - separated from the cartoons - the copy does contain sexual undertones. However, taken in context, and in the only manner in which the advertisement appears, the combination of the copy and the images serve to portray the intended literal reading of the message. It is with sensitivity to the relevant audience in mind that the billboard appears in no form without the accompanying cartoons, which mitigate the sexual undertones and provide, in context, a humorous depiction of the adventure activities that make Mission Beach so unique and popular.

As intended, the double entendres present in the copy serve to entertain rather than offend. Conceived with the view that humour of this nature will be eye-catching, the billboard represents a vehicle through which to highlight both Australian humour and the products and services which Mission Beach has to offer travelers. The backpacking, skydiving and white water rafting industries are synonymous with a whole-hearted dedication to adventure and fun. To advertise a package which joins the three in a playful manner is in keeping with the very nature of the spirit of youth travel.

It is unfortunate that the complainant felt "disgusted" by this particular piece of advertising which is backed by three of the most prominent businesses in Mission Beach, who all operate with the well-being of the community and the tourism industry of the area in mind. It is highly unlikely that sexual undertones of this veiled nature in the billboard would be perceived by children, especially in light of the accompanying cartoons for which the copy provides a quite literal, pictorial description.

The advertiser is strongly of the view that the complaint should be dismissed.

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 contains adult inferences and inappropriate language.

The Board reviewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser's response.

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of section 2.3 of the Code. Section 2.3 of the Code states: “Advertising or Marketing Communications shall treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience and, where appropriate, the relevant programme time zone”.

The Board noted the advertiser’s response that the intended purpose of the advertisement in question - offering a package deal for skydiving, white water rafting and accommodation - is certainly not to be overtly explicit, or, as the complaint states, “offensive,” in any way.

The Board considered the advertisement’s animated pictures and text were relevant to what was being advertised. The Board noted that the reference to ‘get laid’ was accompanied by a picture of a person in a bed and that there was no overt sexual imagery or suggestion.

The Board determined that the advertisement did treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience and that it did not breach section 2.3 of the Code.

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