



# Case Report

1	Case Number	0364/16
2	Advertiser	Unilever Australasia
3	Product	Toiletries
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV - Free to air
5	Date of Determination	14/09/2016
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

## ISSUES RAISED

2.6 - Health and Safety Within prevailing Community Standards

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement depicts a girl standing facing the viewer while text boxes appear on screen as search fields with the following questions typed in them: "Am I fat?", "Can teens get cosmetic surgery?", and "Do boys like a thigh gap?" The screen then fades to white and the following text appears: "What is your daughter searching for?"

We then cut back to the image of the girl with the questions still on screen and a female voiceover says, "The Dove self-esteem project teaches girls how to find greater self-esteem. Help us reach 100,000 young people"

## THE COMPLAINT

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

*On one of their ads there is a question raised.*

*Do boys like the thigh gap?*

*Very inappropriate when my 7 year old is subject to their advertising and wants to know what a thigh gap is.....*

*I approached dove they think it's appropriate even at 7 yrs. old to want to know what a thigh gap is.*

*The problem with this advertisement is the third question which states " Will boys think my thigh gap is wide enough?". I have children who are pre adolescent and do not need to have*

*these ideas planted before they may or may not arise. There are far more questions that could be used to show such challenges but do not impose themselves on girls unnecessarily. Such questions are insinuations that do not reflect the majority of girls, I believe.*

*To say I was shocked is an understatement. This sort of advertising should be barred from public viewing.*

## **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE**

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

*Dove Self-Esteem Project Campaign  
Complaint Reference No. 0364/16*

*I refer to your letters. You have received consumer complaints regarding a video promoting the Dove Self-Esteem Project.*

*Our response follows.*

*The Complaints*

*The Complaints are:*

*AD DESCRIPTION: The object is to give girls['] self confidence. Point 3 of the ad states "Do boys like a thigh gap?"*

*REASON FOR CONCERN: To say I was shocked is an understatement. This sort of advertising should be barred from public viewing.*

*AD DESCRIPTION: The program presents an adolescent girl standing in focus who is facing the challenges of puberty/adolescence. The advertisement presents the company as one that, through its products, supports girls going through these issues faced by the adolescent - three questions are posed as indicative of the general concerns that could challenge girls in the stage of development.*

*REASON FOR CONCERN: The problem with this advertisement is the third question which states "Will boys think my thigh gap is wide enough?". I have children who are pre adolescent and do not need to have these ideas planted before they may or may not arise. There are far more questions that could be used to show such challenges but do not impose themselves on girls unnecessarily. Such questions are insinuations that do not reflect the majority of girls, I believe.*

*The Complaints relate to the "Ella" Video described below.*

*The Dove Self-Esteem Project Campaign*

*Unilever's Dove brand recently launched its "Searching" campaign (Campaign) to raise awareness of, and promote, the Dove Self-Esteem Project.*

*The Campaign consists of four videos:*

- (a) “Searching” Film (2 minutes, 24 seconds): [www.youtube.com/watch?v=IW9kslKd-Ew](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IW9kslKd-Ew);*
- (b) “Ella” Video (30 Second): [www.youtube.com/watch?v=WvFtTJS5NwE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WvFtTJS5NwE);*
- (c) “Mei” Video (30 Second): [www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8K8oNdxTZw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8K8oNdxTZw);*
- (d) “Mei” Video (15 second): [www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXtbBBQMc\\_4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXtbBBQMc_4).*

*We kindly request that you watch the “Searching” Film (link above) as it helps provide the relevant context to the Campaign and the shorter “Ella” Video (which is the subject of the Complaints).*

*The Campaign aims to raise awareness about the self-esteem issues faced by adolescent girls in Australia.*

*Dove is on a mission to create a world where beauty is a source of confidence, not anxiety. Dove is committed to ensuring the next generation of women grow up with a positive relationship with the way they look – helping them raise their self-esteem and realise their full potential.*

*In 2004, Dove turned this commitment into the Dove Self-Esteem Project. Together with leading experts from fields including psychology, health, and body image, Dove created a programme of world-class resources to help develop and increase body confidence and self-esteem in young people.*

*As part of the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan, Dove is working to reach 15 million young people globally with self-esteem workshops.*

*In Australia, Dove, in partnership with the Butterfly Foundation, have run self-esteem workshops in schools and have already reached over 500,000 young girls. New online resources have been developed to help increase the reach of the project. In addition, the project has expanded into New Zealand.*

*Recognising the increasingly adverse impact that the internet and social media are having on self-esteem, Unilever commissioned research to identify and understand the types of questions that young girls frequently ask online.*

*The research showed an alarming number of girls were searching for answers to self-esteem related issues such as:*

- “Can teens get cosmetic surgery?”;*
- “Am I fat?”;*
- “Am I too skinny?”;*
- “Am I ugly?”;*
- “Do I have an eating disorder?”;*
- “Do boys like a thigh gap?”.*

*As a result, Dove and The Butterfly Foundation partnered with Coles to develop the Campaign and raise awareness of the need for more self-esteem education, both at school and at home. The Campaign aims to reach an additional 100,000 young people this year*

*with more Dove Self-Esteem workshops in schools and guides for parents and guardians to help build their children's self-esteem.*

*The Campaign was created to help inform parents and guardians about the self-esteem issues facing young girls and the fact that many girls are seeking advice from the internet on those issues. We hope the Campaign and the Dove Self-Esteem Project will empower and equip parents and guardians with the tools to help young girls overcome their self-esteem issues.*

#### *The Code*

*Dove is committed to helping the next generation of women develop a positive relationship with the way they look, helping them raise their self-esteem and realise their full potential.*

*The "Ella" Video, which is the subject of the Complaints, reveals that young girls are searching for a number of alarming things online, many of which are related to low self-esteem.*

*While it is confronting and shocking to see the results of our research, and to hear that young girls are searching online for "can teens get cosmetic surgery" and "do boys like a thigh gap", Unilever respectfully submits that bringing this issue to the attention of parents, guardians, teachers and the community as a whole is neither contrary to prevailing community standards nor the Code of Ethics (Code).*

#### *Section 2.1*

*Unilever submits that none of the videos in the Campaign discriminate against or vilify any person or section of the community contrary to section 2.1 of the Code.*

#### *Section 2.2*

*Unilever submits that none of the videos in the Campaign employ sexual appeal in an exploitative or degrading manner contrary to section 2.2 of the Code.*

#### *Section 2.3*

*Unilever submits that none of the videos in the Campaign portray or present violence in a manner contrary to section 2.3 of the Code.*

#### *Section 2.4*

*Unilever submits that none of the videos in the Campaign treat sex, sexuality or nudity in a manner contrary to section 2.4 of the Code.*

#### *Section 2.5*

*Unilever submits that there is no inappropriate or explicit language in any of the videos in the Campaign.*

#### *Section 2.6*

*Unilever submits that none of the videos in the Campaign depict material contrary to prevailing community standards on health and safety.*

*In response to the Complaints, Unilever acknowledges the consumers' concerns regarding the use of the search term "Do boys like a thigh gap?". However, as a company and brand committed to improving self-esteem, we believe we can play a role in helping tackle this wide-reaching social issue by making parents, guardians, teachers and the community aware of what young girls are searching for online and empowering them to start a conversation with kids about self-esteem.*

*The purpose of the "Ella" Video, and the other three videos in the Campaign, is to engage parents, guardians and leaders and help them acknowledge, consider and understand the self-esteem issues faced by young girls.*

*Unilever does not believe that bringing the real concerns of young girls into a public forum is contrary to prevailing community standards in respect of health and safety. Unilever believes this is a serious issue that Australians need to understand, discuss and work together to address to help the next generation reach their full potential life.*

#### *Conclusion*

*While the Campaign is confronting, Unilever believes it is well within prevailing community standards and complies with the Code.*

## **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 complainants' concerns that the advertisement asks if boys like girls with a thigh gap which is offensive and should not be allowed.

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

The Board considered 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 Board noted that this television advertisement features an image of a teenaged girl with text boxes appearing on screen with questions typed in to them followed by the question, "What is your daughter searching for?"

The Board noted the advertiser's response that this advertisement is part of a campaign to raise awareness about self-esteem issues faced by young girls and the questions shown in the advertisement are based on research which shows that these are the questions young girls are searching online for answers to.

The Board noted the complainants' concerns that it is offensive to put the idea of girls having a thigh gap to please boys in an advertisement but considered that the advertisement is not

promoting this idea but rather is raising awareness that some girls do wonder about issues such as this and their questions need to be addressed. The Board noted that the advertisement provides information about a place online that young women can go to to ask such questions.

The Board noted the advertisement had been rated 'W' by CAD and so would be seen by a broad audience which would include children but considered that those children who could understand the questions being posed in the advertisement would likely be aware of these issues themselves.

The Board considered that the advertisement did not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety around body image.

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

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