



Case Report

1	Case Number	0370/13
2	Advertiser	aBillboard company
3	Product	Professional Service
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Billboard
5	Date of Determination	13/11/2013
6	DETERMINATION	Upheld - Modified or Discontinued

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.2 - Objectification Exploitative and degrading - women
- 2.4 - Sex/sexuality/nudity S/S/N - general
- 2.4 - Sex/sexuality/nudity S/S/N - nudity

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

Image of a woman's chest and face which is visible through a hole ripped in to a piece of white paper/card. The woman is wearing a black bra and only her mouth and part of her nose are visible. The text reads, "Expose yourself. aBillboard. 0417 786 541. www.abillboard.com.au".

THE COMPLAINT

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

The images are in plain view of the highway. They depict images of a ladies breasts, being exposed in a sexual way. It is semi-pornographic and sexist. It is also objectifying women- they don't have a picture of a man unzipping his fly.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

In our defence, our company has been running for in excess of 5 years now, and not once have we received notification of any of our billboards being explicit or sexual in anyway. Nor

have we been contacted (as our phone number is displayed on the billboards) asking for the designs to be removed for any reason. Our designs have been nominated in the Queensland Media Awards also. None of which have drawn any complaints.

Our slogan 'Expose Yourself' is on all of our logos, that being on billboards or mobile billboard truck (see attached). We have continually used our slogan throughout the last 5 years, with no complaints and refute claims that our slogan is portraying nudity or objectify women. By using 'Expose Yourself' as a slogan we are saying to potential clients to use our services to advertise (expose) their businesses.

As for the comment in the complaint saying "The images are in plain view of the highway. They depict images of a ladies breasts, being exposed in a sexual way. It is semi-pornographic and sexist. It is also objectifying women- they don't have a picture of a man unzipping his fly."

Yes, our billboards are in plain view of the highway, as the majority of advertising mediums are in plain view of all ages.

Our company believes that in no way, do we, at any circumstance, display images of ladies breasts being exposed in a sexual way. Also we believe strongly that we have never been sexist in any of our advertisements. In proof of that I have attached a number of drafts designs we have ready to send to print for our available billboards. Proving that we have not, and do not objectify women, as we use both genders in our designs.

I would say the reason we have gone with the use of female over a male on our site on Peak Downs Highway, would be because the highway is frequented daily by mining companies, of which all our previous clients renting billboards on Peak Downs Highway have been Men, who are directors of companies supplying in the mining industry.

Our company strongly objects any claims that we are sexist and use nudity/semi pornographic images.

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 depicts a woman in a manner which is objectifying and pornographic.

The Board viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser's response. The Board noted that the advertiser had provided examples of other advertisements they intended to use and considered that in this instance the complaint concerns the image of the woman only therefore the Board cannot consider the other images.

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.2 of the Code. Section 2.2 of the Code states: “Advertising or marketing communications should not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative and degrading of any individual or group of people.”

The Board noted that the advertisement features a woman’s chest and part of her face along with the text, “Expose yourself”.

The Board noted the complainant’s concerns that focusing on a woman’s bra covered breasts is objectifying.

The Board noted that the advertised product is a billboard company and considered that whilst the text, “expose yourself” is relevant to the product advertised, the use of a woman’s breasts is not relevant. The Board noted the woman’s breasts are visible through a ripped hole and considered that this depiction is both exploitative and degrading as it reduces a woman to a part of her body and then uses that part to attract the attention of viewers.

The Board considered that the advertisement did employ sexual appeal in a manner which is both exploitative and degrading of women.

The Board determined that the advertisement did breach Section 2.2 of the Code.

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.4 of the Code. Section 2.4 of the Code states: “Advertising or Marketing Communications shall treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience”.

The Board noted the complainants’ concerns that the image is pornographic. The Board noted that the woman’s breasts are covered by a bra and considered that whilst the bra itself is not sexy the woman’s mouth, which is the only part of her face visible, shows her lips parted in a way which makes the overall image sexualized. The Board noted that the woman’s breasts are visible through ripped paper and considered that this depiction is suggestive of a peep show and that the combination of the text, the open mouth, the breasts and the peep show suggestion amounts to an overall depiction which is sexualized and not appropriate for a broad audience which would include children.

The Board considered that the advertisement did not treat the issue of sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience.

The Board determined that the advertisement did breach Section 2.4 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement breached Sections 2.2 and 2.4 of the Code, the Board upheld the complaint.

ADVERTISER RESPONSE TO DETERMINATION

Although ABILLBOARD strongly disagree with ASB's decision, we will comply with removing and discontinuing the advertisement. We have no intention of wasting any more time or bare any costs in fighting your decision.