



Ad Standards Community Panel
PO Box 5110, Braddon ACT 2612
P (02) 6173 1500 | F (02) 6262 9833

AdStandards.com.au

Ad Standards Limited
ACN 084 452 666

Case Report

1. Case Number :	0397-19
2. Advertiser :	Optus Communications
3. Product :	Telecommunications
4. Type of Advertisement/Media :	TV - Free to Air
5. Date of Determination	11-Dec-2019
6. DETERMINATION :	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

AANA Code of Ethics\2.1 Discrimination or Vilification

DESCRIPTION OF ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement has a 30second and 15second version.

The 30second version begins with a wide-screen shot of a community hall and four grannies sitting at a table enjoying a high-tea. The following text appears in large font on the screen --"5G Explained by 5Grannies- Presented by OPTUS".

The TV Ad then displays the fifth granny slowly approaching the table on her mobility scooter. Twenty-four seconds (24 seconds) of this 30-second TV Ad are focused on the fifth granny slowly approaching the table. While she approaches, we hear one of the grannies at the table say "well, at least 5G is fast" and the other grannies nodding in approval with one saying "Mm Hmm".

As the fifth granny approaches the table and her friends, she lightly bumps into the table with her mobility scooter and toots the mobility scooter's horn. The words "5G. Now you get it." appear on screen along with "Mobile and Home rolling out in selected areas".

The last scene finishes with a teal coloured screen with the Optus "Yes" logo, which then swishes away and the word "OPTU5G" appears on screen.



The 15 second version depicts the same scenes, does not show the fifth granny bumping into the table and tooting the mobility scooter's horn. The 15second version only captures the granny slowly making her way to the table on her mobility scooter.

THE COMPLAINT

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

My objection is the implication that all elderly people are slow - which is not true.

This advertisement is suggesting the elderly women in the advertisement are incapable of manipulating modern machinery such as motorised buggies and by inference modern electronic media. I feel the advertisement is both sexist and ageist.

An ads about 5 G it is discriminatory and offensive against older people to allure to their natural slowness and referred to the fastness of their product

I mean have our standards gone so low that we are now targeting disabled senior citizens? I get the message but it's the subject i am more consented for. I am all dry humour and Aussie larrikins etc but this is just wrong

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

We refer to your letter dated 19 November 2019 in relation to the two (2) complaints received by Ad Standards about our '5G Explained by 5Grannies' Free to Air television advertisement (TV Ad).

Firstly, thank you for the opportunity to respond to the complaints. Singtel Optus Pty Ltd (Optus) is committed to ethical practice in its advertising and appreciates all consumer feedback.

While Optus regrets that the complainants have interpreted the TV Ad as depicting discrimination or vilification on the account of age and gender, we strongly believe that the TV Ad does not portray people or depict material in a way that discriminates or vilifies. Rather, the general message of the ad is to show a light-hearted play on the concept of 5G and the speed of 5G in simple, easy to understand terms to Australians who may not be familiar with this new technology.

Accordingly, for the reasons set out below, we are of the view that the advertisement is compliant with, and does not breach, the Australian Association of National Advertisers Code of Ethics (Code).



Background to the TV Ad

Optus currently has two variations of the TV Ad on Free to Air TV--a 30-second version and a 15-second version.

The TV Ad is one in a series of four Optus television advertisements on 5G, each explaining in a light-hearted manner a different aspect of 5G in simple, easy to understand terms.

We confirm that the 30-second TV Ad received CAD approval on 31 October 2019 and the 15-second TV Ad received CAD approval on 7 November 2019. Both advertisements received a G rating.

We also confirm that the TV Ad was reviewed and approved by the Optus Legal team, both during the scripting and final edit stage.

Description of the TV Ad

Our 30-second version of the TV Ad begins with a wide-screen shot of a community hall and four grannies sitting at a table enjoying a high-tea. The following text appears in large font on the screen --"5G Explained by 5Grannies- Presented by OPTUS".

The TV Ad then displays the fifth granny slowly approaching the table on her mobility scooter. Twenty-four seconds (24 seconds) of this 30-second TV Ad are focused on the fifth granny slowly approaching the table. While she approaches, we hear one of the grannies at the table say "well, at least 5G is fast" and the other grannies nodding in approval with one saying "Mm Hmm".

As the fifth granny approaches the table and her friends, she lightly bumps into the table with her mobility scooter and toots the mobility scooter's horn. The words "5G. Now you get it." appear on screen along with "Mobile and Home rolling out in selected areas".

The last scene finishes with a teal coloured screen with the Optus "Yes" logo, which then swishes away and the word "OPTU5G" appears on screen.

In this TV Ad, all five granny characters are confident and glamorously dressed while enjoying an afternoon get-together.

We conveyed the lead character riding the mobility scooter as a glamorously-dressed granny in sunglasses with a laissez-faire attitude who takes her time to arrive at the table while her friends are waiting. When she does arrive at-the table, true to her personality, she announces her arrival with a bump and toot of her horn. The ad is intended to show the lead character displaying a 'Golden Girls' approach to life.

For the purpose of this submission, we have assumed that both complaints relate to the 30- second version of the TV Ad. However, we would like to note that while the 15-



second version of the TV Ad depicts the same scenes and characters, it does not show the fifth granny bumping into the table and tooting the mobility scooter's horn. This version of the TV Ad only captures the granny slowly making her way to the table on her mobility scooter.

Feedback in relation to the TV Ad

Optus would like to note that in the creation of the TV Ad and its broader 5G advertising campaign, Optus engaged Realeyes to provide creative testing on behalf of Optus. That testing identified that the TV Ad scored well above the regional benchmark on happiness (11.1% vs. the regional benchmark of 8.6%). The testing also identified that, in relation to emotion, it scored better than 75% of commercials tested regionally.

OPTUS The TV Ad has also been recognised globally as a positive advertisement. A sample of the comments received are below.

"Optus aims to explain the benefits of 5G to Australians with playful visual metaphors illustrating what it's like to not have it."

"Australian telecoms provider Optus shows the world how to promote technology with humour."

"It comes down to trusting in your product and giving consumers the credit to comprehend. This does it so beautifully."

The Complaints

The two complaints received by Ad Standards allege that the TV Ad portrays people or depicts material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of age and gender (section 2.1 of the Code).

The complaints specifically reference the following issues:

- sexism; and*
- ageism.*

Optus' Submission

Section 2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification (Gender)

One of the complainants alleged that the TV Ad was sexist and suggested that "elderly women in the advertisement are incapable of manipulating modern machinery such as motorised buggies and by inference modern electronic media". We respectfully disagree with the complainant.

The TV Ad displays an elderly woman using a mobility scooter to approach a group of four other women sitting at a table in a hall with one of the grannies saying "well, at least 5G is fast". The intention was to show, in a humorous, light-hearted way, that the mobility scooter was slow in contrast to the granny saying "well, at least 5G is fast."



The focus of the TV Ad is clearly the speed of the mobility scooter, not the sex of the woman operating the mobility scooter. We strongly believe that most members of the community would understand this to be the key intention and purpose of this TV Ad.

Further, in no circumstance is the woman operating the mobility scooter portrayed as incapable of using the mobility scooter. Her bumping slightly into the table is reflective of what any user of a mobility scooter might do when attempting to approach a table as close as possible. Also, her use of the mobility scooter's horn justifies that she understands how to use the scooter, and used the horn to, humorously, alert her friends that she has arrived at the table.

Section 2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification (Age)

Both complainants alleged that the TV Ad was ageist and one of the complainants alleged that the TV Ad implied that "al/ elderly people are slow". Again, we respectfully disagree with both complainants.

As outlined above, the purpose of the TV Ad was to demonstrate, in a comical way, that while mobility scooters might be slow, 5G is fast. We strongly believe that the most members of the community would understand this to be the key intention and purpose of the TV Ad.

We refer you to Ad Standards case number 0021/17, where complaints were made in relation to Reckitt Benckiser (Aust) Pty Ltd's TV - Free to Air advertisement for Mortein Automatic Indoor Pest Control. This advertisement depicted a grandmother at a family dinner using a can of fly spray excessively and the voiceover saying, "there's a smarter way". The complainants found that the ad was ageist, promulgated stereotypes of the ineffectiveness and uselessness of older people and showed older Australians as stupid and useless. The Board dismissed the complaints and noted that the focus of the advertisement was on the behaviour and not the age of the woman. The Board also noted that the focus was on the efficiency and less invasive nature of the automated spray rather than a suggestion that the grandmother was behaving in a way which was stupid and / or useless. We strongly believe that the Board's findings from this case can be applied to our TV Ad.

Further, Ad Standard's Determination Summary on discrimination and vilification (available at <https://adstandards.com.au/issues/discrimination-and-vilification/determination-summary#Age>) also outlines that while some members of the community may find the stereotypical depiction of older people in advertisements patronising, advertisements will not breach the Code unless the depiction discriminates against or vilifies a person on account of their age.

We strongly believe that the overall impression of the advertisement does not convey a negative impression of elderly women. It is intended to be a light-hearted reflection of the speed of the 5G network.

Other sections of the Code



Finally, we do not believe that the TV Ad, in any way:

- *employs sexual appeal (section 2.2);*
- *presents or portrays violence (section 2.3);*
- *treats sex, sexuality or nudity with insensitivity to the relevant audience (section 2.4);*
- *uses language which is inappropriate in the circumstances (section 2.5);*
- *depicts material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards (section 2.6); or*
- *does not clearly distinguish itself as an advertisement (section 2.7).*

Considering the advertisement overall in light of other advertising material, media and entertainment widely seen by the public, we believe that most members of the community would find the TV Ad to be acceptable.

We thank Ad Standards for the opportunity to provide these submissions in relation to the complaints and respectfully request Ad Standards dismiss these complaints.

THE DETERMINATION

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

The Panel noted the complainants' concerns that the advertisement:

- Implies all elderly people are slow
- Suggests that the elderly women are incapable of using modern machinery such as electric buggies/scooters

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 provides the following definitions:

"Discrimination – unfair or less favourable treatment.

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

The Panel noted the complainants' concern that the advertisement is discriminatory towards women.

The Panel considered that the "5 grannies" is a humorous relation to the "5G" technology and that grandmothers are women. The Panel considered that there is no suggestion in the advertisement that the woman is moving slowly or bumps the table



due to her gender. The Panel considered that the advertisement did not humiliate, intimidate, incite hatred, contempt or ridicule the woman on account of her gender.

The Panel noted the complainants' concern that the advertisement is discriminatory towards the elderly by implying that they are unable to use modern equipment mobility scooters, or 5G technology.

The Panel considered that the woman in the advertisement is shown to be using her mobility scooter very slowly. The Panel considered that the intention of the advertisement is to suggest that 5G is fast, in contrast to the mobility scooter which one of the women is on. The Panel noted the advertiser's response that the depiction of the woman bumping the table is reflective of what any mobility scooter user may experience when trying to approach a table as closely as possible.

The Panel considered that the scene showing the woman on the mobility scooter moving slowly and bumping into the table is intended to be a humorous demonstration that while mobility scooters are slow, 5G is fast, and the Panel considered that the advertisement is not suggesting that elderly people are unable to use mobility scooters or modern technology. In this advertisement one of the women at the table states 'well at least 5G is fast' and the other women all nod, clearly demonstrating they are up with technology.

The Panel considered that the overall impact of the advertisement is a depiction of 5 older women waiting with some frustration for their friend, and contrasting her slowness to the speed of 5G. The Panel considered that the overall impact of the advertisement does not show older women as being unable to deal with technology and does not depict them in a manner which is negative or humiliating.

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 age and determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.1 of the Code

Finding that the advertisement did not breach any other section of the Code the Panel dismissed the complaints.