



Ad Standards Community Panel
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Ad Standards Limited
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Case Report

1. Case Number :	0413-19
2. Advertiser :	George Western Foods
3. Product :	Food/Bev Groceries
4. Type of Advertisement/Media :	TV - On Demand
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 TV On Demand advertisement features a man talking about how long he and his family have grown the wheat that is used in producing Tip Top bread. He states "I've been living here growing wheat for 40 years, and for 30 years we've been delivering wheat to Tip Top bakery. Australian wheat is usually very high quality. The best of our wheat is milled into flour and goes to Tip Top bread. Our motto is that we treat our land as though it was not a gift from fathers, but a loan from sons. We really do enjoy watching crops grow. But we do work really hard on preserving our land, doing the right thing by the environment."

THE COMPLAINT

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

Re: Tip Top advertisement starring "Farmer Charles"

I have only viewed this advertisement this afternoon, and I was horrified at the blatant sexism of the advertisement. The line "...not as a gift from fathers but a loan from sons..." reeks of misogynistic attitudes of a later era. This statement disregards half of the population; as if no woman has ever owned a business, property or item of value to pass on to further generations.



THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

As one of Australia and New Zealand's largest food manufacturers, George Weston Foods is committed to being a responsible member of the community. Through our "caring everyday" initiative, we support charities and the community by donating products and providing funding. This approach is also reflected in our marketing and advertising.

We are thankful to the consumer in this instance who has expressed concern with our "Farmer Charles" advertisement and have regarded this feedback seriously. We always seek to ensure that our marketing communications reflect the values of a contemporary Australia.

The advertisement in question features a real farmer of 40 years describing his work and the wheat that he supplies to make Tip Top bread. We note that the consumer was concerned with the line "Our motto is that we treat our land as though it was not a gift from fathers, but a loan from sons". The consumer's feedback indicated that they interpreted this statement to be discriminatory against women.

You have requested that we respond in the context of Section 2.1 of the AANA Code of Ethics, which prohibits the discrimination or vilification of a person or section of the community.

The Code of Ethics Practice Note helpfully provides the following definitions:

- Discrimination: Unfair or less favourable treatment*
- Vilification: Humiliates, intimidates, incites hatred, contempt or ridicule*

The advertisement centres around the experiences of one farmer who has been farming his entire life and is deeply passionate about his work. The advertisement is a celebration of this work and recognises the achievements of our Australian suppliers.

The line "we treat our land as though it was not a gift from fathers, but a loan from sons" is a poetic and simple way of conveying the respect for the land that is held by Farmer Charles and our other suppliers. It promotes a sustainable attitude towards production that preserves the environment for future generations and is consistent with our core values.

The reference to "fathers" and "sons" in this statement does not suggest that women cannot be farmers or own land. The statement does not discount or denigrate the contributions of women in Australia's farming industry; rather it is a simple but effective way of communicating a respect for the land that is told through the personal experiences of the particular farmer featured in the advertisement. In this sense, it is worth noting that the farmer in the advertisement only has sons.



It is also worth noting that Tip Top's primary advertising theme since 1974 is "Good on ya Mum!" and which, we believe celebrates and appreciates the role of mothers in Australian communities.

On the subject of gender stereotypes, the Code of Ethics Practice Note indicates that an advertisement may be discriminatory if it suggests that stereotypes are:

- always associated with that gender;*
- the only options available to that gender; or*
- never carried out or displayed by another gender*

The fact that the advertisement explores the experiences of a man and uses language associated with his gender and that of his own children does not in itself imply that farming or land ownership is something that can only be done by men and cannot be done by women. The advertisement does not treat women unfairly or less favourably. Nor does the advertisement contain anything that humiliates, intimidates, incites hatred, contempt or ridicule towards women.

It is useful to refer to previous Community Panel Cases. In case number 0232-19, the Community Panel considered the use of the term "Pie hole" in the context of an advertisement that featured women. The Community Panel concluded that "this portrayal did not show the women receiving unfair or less favourable treatment and did not portray the women in a way which humiliates, intimidates, incites hatred, contempt or ridicule".

Similarly, in case number 0527/14 the Community Panel considered whether an advertisement that depicted a group of women receiving the advertised beverage from a group of men discriminated against women. The Community Panel found that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.1 as the overall advertisement did not portray the enjoyment of the women as being reliant on men.

The use of male pronouns "father" and "sons" does not ignore the fact that women can and do operate significant farming operations. It does not treat women unfairly or less favourably but is simply a poetic turn of phrase that was specific to the experiences of the farmer in the advertisement. The use of this language does not imply that women are reliant on the actions of men. George Weston Foods celebrates the many women that contribute to Australia's rich farming heritage.

We respectfully conclude that the advertisement in question does not breach Section 2.1

You have requested that we also consider the other elements of Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics.

2.2 – Exploitative or degrading

The advertisement is focused on celebrating the work of our suppliers and does not at any stage depict material that suggests exploitation or that might be degrading to any individual or group of persons.



2.3 – Violence

The advertisement does not depict violence at any stage. The subject matter of the advertisement depicts wheat farming and associated imagery.

2.4 – Sex, sexuality and nudity

The subject matter of the advertisement depicts wheat farming and does not present any sexually suggestive messaging. There is no nudity throughout the advertisement.

2.5 – Language

The language used in the advertisement is appropriate for the subject matter of the advertisement and is suitable for a viewing audience of all ages. No obscene language is used.

2.6 – Health and safety

The advertisement depicts farming imagery and does not display any unsafe practices or any imagery that undermines prevailing community standards on health and safety.

2.7 – Distinguishable as advertising

The advertisement is clearly distinguishable as such in the context in which it appears. It appears on television during a commercial break and contains prominent imagery of the brands that it is promoting.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide a response in this matter. We have the utmost respect for the Ad Standards process and look forward to the Community Panel's decision.

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' concern that the advertisement is based on sexist ideas that only men are farmers or can take over a farm from their fathers and such a suggestion is discriminatory towards women.

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 practice note for this section of the Code states:

“Stereotypes may be used to simplify the process of communication in relation to both the product offered and the intended consumer. As such, advertisements may feature people undertaking gender-stereotypical roles ... or displaying gender stereotypical characteristics... but they should take care to avoid suggesting that stereotypical roles or characteristics are:

- *always associated with that gender;*
- *the only options available to that gender; or*
- *never carried out or displayed by another gender.*

as this may amount to discrimination on the basis of gender.”

The Panel noted the advertiser’s response that the advertisement centres around the experience of one farmer, and that the phrase “Our motto is that we treat the land as though it was not a gift from fathers, but a loan from sons” was the personal motto of the farmer depicted in the advertisement. The Panel also noted the advertiser’s response that the farmer in the advertisement only has sons.

The Panel acknowledged that there is a gender stereotype that being a farmer is a male profession, however considered that there was no suggestion in this advertisement that this role is only associated with males, that this is the only option available to males, or that it is never carried out or performed by females.

The Panel considered that the phrase is intended to demonstrate that the particular farmer appearing in the advertisement is respectful towards the land and considers the history and future of that land, and was not specifically a statement that was intended to exclude women.

The Panel considered that most members of the community would recognise the overall impression of the advertisement is of a farmer telling his personal story.

The Panel considered that there is no language in the advertisement which is vilifying towards women, and considered that women not being specifically mentioned in the advertisement is not of itself discriminatory.

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 gender 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 complaint.