



Case Report

1	Case Number	0417/10
2	Advertiser	VIP Home Services
3	Product	Professional services
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	13/10/2010
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Sex

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

A husband comes home from work to find his front garden a mess and the living room a mess. His wife is getting the dinner ready whilst holding a young crying baby. The two daughters are sitting at the bench eating dinner, with one of the girls rushing to her father to greet him. The father greets the daughter then says to the mother ‘honey, I thought you were going to clean the house today’. Upon hearing this, the mother hands the crying baby to his father and goes to the computer (with the voice over announcing “need help? Log on to mylocalvip.com for all your cleaning and gardening needs”), logging on to V.I.P.’s webpage and submitting an enquiry form for help with the garden and the home cleaning. While she is doing this, the dad walks out the back to see the backyard is also in a mess. After completing the enquiry form the mother says “all done” with a big smile on her face. The voice over finishes this section by saying “don’t you deserve the V.I.P. treatment?” and then a screen shot of the V.I.P. logo, website and phone number.

The advert then shows a V.I.P. franchisee washing a window with the voice over saying “for all your cleaning needs”, then a gardening franchisee mowing the lawn with the voice over saying “for all your gardening needs”. The advert then shows the V.I.P. gardener pulling his mower out of the back of his trailer and proceeding to mow the back yard. This part is finished by the father coming home again, but this time with a different result, the house looks magnificently clean and the wife is smiling. He gets greeted again by his daughter, and then proceeds to kiss his wife and say “this looks great doesn’t it?”. The voice over finishes this section by saying “doesn’t your home deserve the V.I.P. treatment” and then a screen shot of the V.I.P. logo, website and phone number.

THE COMPLAINT

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

It portrays a man verbally chastising his wife because the house isn't clean in front of children. It makes me feel (as a woman) completely undervalued and that sexism (man the breadwinner, woman the housewife) and stereotypes are still alive and well in Australia (particularly Tasmania). I have never complained before but I have found this advertisement extremely offensive.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The complaint refers to 2.1 – sexual discrimination or vilification. The code states that advertising shall not portray people or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of sex.

The complainants objection to the advert seems to be that the husband “verbally chastises the wife in front of the kids” regarding having the house in a state of disarray when he arrives home from work.

In response to this objection we submit that the advert was intended to be written in a way which the husband doesn't “verbally chastise” his wife, he questions what his wife had been doing all day – as he was under the expectation that she was going to clean the house. The children do not appear fazed by the father's comments, or the tone with which he spoke. We submit that the father's question and tone of voice does not fit the definition of “verbally chastise” nor fall within the definition of 2.1 as being sexual discrimination.

The wife is not treated discriminatorily due to her being female; it is the fact that she is the non-working partner with the household duties that is the subject of the question. The advert would work just as well in reverse, or if the couple were of the same sex – however – typically, in most of our customers' situations the mother is the one who is the stay-at-home mum, while the husband is the one that works to support the family.

Any mother / wife would know that trying to look after three children and keep the family home in a perfect state is an almost impossible task – which is why a company like ours exists. We take the stress out of the household tasks – to enable mums and dads to spend more time with their family, doing the things they love; this is what the advert is depicting.

It should be noted that the husband's reaction is over the top, but sometimes life's stresses do make people react in a way in which they would not normally react if they stepped back and examined the particular situation outside of the heat of the moment.

In the advert the wife has reacted in a way which shows she did not take the comment personally, and knowing that she doesn't have the time to perform all the duties herself, requires help; help from a professional service company.

The advert was designed to be a tongue in cheek depiction of the everyday stresses that a modern family faces and showing the viewer that they don't need to do everything themselves – if they are time poor and stressed – that they can call us and we will help.

The two follow ups in the 60 second commercial depict the family in a happy situation because they are spending quality time together because our V.I.P. franchisees were able to clean their home and tidy their garden for them.

The advert was intended to be humorous and an exaggerated send up of the stresses of everyday life. During the scripting stage we consulted with many of the mothers / wives around the office and saw the light hearted and exaggerated nature with which the advert was intended, as we imagined members of the community would.

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 is offensive as it portrays a man verbally chastising his wife, in front of the children because the house isn't clean and thereby highlights that stereotypes are still a matter of concern in Australia.

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

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of section 2.1 of the Code. Section 2.1 of the Code states: “Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not portray people or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of sex...”.

The Board noted that the advertiser's response that the advertisement was intended to be a humorous and exaggerated send up of the stresses of everyday life. The Board noted that in this instance the man is working outside of the home whilst the woman is working in the home and that whilst some members of the community including the complainant could find this depiction to be a stereotype, the Board considered that it was a reflection of many households in Australia. The Board considered that the advertisement was not negative in this portrayal, but rather it was using a household scene which would be familiar to most members of the community.

The Board noted that the man in the advertisement does mention the cleanliness of the house, but considered that his tone was not strong and that he was questioning rather than chastising his wife. The Board noted that the children in the ad do not appear fazed by the father's comments, or the tone with which he speaks.

The Board noted that the woman in the advertisement hands over the baby she is carrying to the man and considered that this suggested that the woman is empowered. She responds to her husband's questioning by seeking a solution: in this case booking a cleaning service via the internet. The Board considered that the advertisement does depict a stereotypical situation and stereotypical roles. However in the context of the product advertised this is not demeaning or discriminatory to either the woman or the man.

The Board determined that, in this instance, the advertisement did not depict any material that discriminated against or vilified any person or section of society on account of their sex. The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach section 2.1 of the Code.

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