



ADVERTISING
STANDARDS
BUREAU

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Case Report

1	Case Number	0427/13
2	Advertiser	Meat & Livestock Australia Ltd
3	Product	Food and Beverages
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	11/12/2013
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Physical Characteristics

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The 30 second TVC is part of MLA's Summer Beef campaign. The TVC, featuring Merrick Watts, aims to correct the "throw another shrimp on the barbie" phrase made famous in a tourism advertisement from the 1980s. Merrick says that shrimp has a different meaning in Australia and he is then joined by various other people, all of whom are shorter than he is. At the end of the advertisement Merrick suggests throwing a steak on the barbie instead.

THE COMPLAINT

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

While I feel grown ups are able to cope with being called a shrimp either to their face or behind their backs due to years of such rebuke, I am not very sure of how children who are short would be able to bear such references to them. Children are impressionable and watching this ad makes me wonder whether children can be bullied in school. I am offended because it encourages name calling short people "shrimps". I am petite and find this very offensive and hurtful. I have endured name calling all my life and even as a senior I think it is a form of bullying. Please stop this type of advertising

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 28 November 2013 regarding a complaint to the Advertising Standards Bureau (ASB) received in relation to the Meat & Livestock Australia's (MLA) "Throw Another Steak on the Barbie" television commercial. We have considered the complaint, and for the reasons set out below, submit that the complaint should be dismissed.

The 30 second TVC is part of MLA's Summer Beef campaign. The TVC, featuring Merrick Watts, humorously aims to correct the "throw another shrimp on the barbie" phrase made famous in a tourism advertisement from the 1980s. The word "shrimp" in the well-known Australian vernacular refers to our short mates and the TVC creates humour around the double meaning of "shrimp" in a way that is sympathetic to short people.

The CAD reference for the TVC is WYMYPFDA and was given a rating of W.

The complaint

The complaint alleges that the advertisement is offensive to short people. The ASB has raised this issue under Section 2.1 of the AANA Code of Ethics (the Code) which states that "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 race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual preference, religion, disability, mental illness or political belief."

Submissions

At the outset, we note that height is not one of the criteria on which people could be discriminated against or vilified in breach of Section 2.1 of the Code. Even if it was, we submit that the impugned advertisement does not discriminate against or vilify.

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 the advertisement is discriminatory towards people of short stature.

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

The Board 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 Board noted that the advertisement features a play on the well-known Paul Hogan tourism advertisement which suggests you should put a shrimp on the barbie and that in this instance the advertisement is suggesting that a shrimp has another meaning in Australia and you should put a steak on the barbie instead.

The Board noted the complainants' concerns that shrimp is a reference to short people and its use in the advertisement is offensive.

The Board noted the Macquarie Dictionary definition of ‘shrimp’ includes “a diminutive person” and that the depiction of short people was consistent with Australian culture and language.

The Board noted that the advertisement does feature many people who are shorter than the main character, for example jockeys. The Board noted that it had previously upheld complaints about the use and depiction of people of short stature in advertisements (410/08, 522/08) where it found that the advertisements suggested that a person of short stature is less of a person. The Board considered that in this instance the way in which short people are presented in conjunction with the overall theme and tone of the advertisement amounts to a celebration of short people and there are no negative depictions.

The Board considered that the advertisement did not depict material that discriminated against or vilified any person or section of the community.

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 complaints.