



Case Report

1	Case Number	0546/16
2	Advertiser	TP Concreting
3	Product	Hardware/Machinery
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Radio
5	Date of Determination	18/01/2017
6	DETERMINATION	Upheld - Modified or Discontinued

ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Race

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This radio advertisement features a man who identifies himself as Ping Pong and speaks with an Asian accent. Mr Ping Pong rings TP Concreting to ask them to fix his driveway right now and offers them sushi. In the background we can hear a woman speaking, although her words are unintelligible, and Mr Ping Pong refers to her as his mother and asks her to be quiet.

THE COMPLAINT

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

I feel this ad depicts a negative stereotype of the Asian community. I also feel that it is inappropriate for the radio.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The ad you are referring to is not racist or degrading in any way, not sexist, and the language is English with an accent. When it mentions food it is no different than saying a

vegemite sandwich.

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 contains a negative stereotype of the Asian community.

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 this radio advertisement features a man who identifies himself as Ping Pong, speaks with an Asian accent and offers sushi.

The Board noted that the man speaking with an Asian accent is called Mr Ping Pong. A minority of the Board noted the light-hearted tone of the advertisement and considered that the focus is on Mr Ping Pong’s situation rather than his name, and while he clearly has an accent he is speaking English and is able to be understood. The majority of the Board noted that while imitating an accent is not of itself discriminatory ‘Ping Pong’ is not an Asian name: it is an offensive term that can be used to refer to a person of Asian descent (<http://www.rsdb.org/race/chinese>). The Board noted that while Mr Ping Pong speaks English, albeit grammatically incorrect, in the background we can hear his mother speaking and considered that the words she speaks are not identifiable as any known language but rather it sounds like she is speaking gibberish. A minority of the Board considered that the mother was not intended to be legible but rather she is providing background noise to prove her existence. The majority of the Board however considered that by having the mother speak made up words the suggestion is that all Asian languages can just be described as ‘made-up’ as the advertiser has not even tried to use a real language to add authenticity. The majority of the Board considered that the advertisement normalises making fun of a person’s English language skills.

The Board noted that the man from TP Concreting responds to Ping Pong in an amused manner and says he will come round as he has “gotta see this” and the voiceover which follows says that no job is “too weird”. A minority of the Board considered that the reference to ‘weird’ is in the context of the situation and not Mr Ping Pong himself. The majority of the Board however noted that when Mr Ping Pong describes why he wants TP Concreting to come round (“Mama has bog in driveway”) the man from TP Concreting appears to misunderstand as he replies with, “She did what?!” which suggests he believes the mother has gone to the toilet on the driveway. The majority of the Board noted that the man from TP Concreting appears to accept that this is something an Asian mother would do and considered that this acceptance, along with the reference to weird jobs, amounts to an overall suggestion that Mr Ping Pong and his mother are objects of ridicule.

The Board noted that Mr Ping Pong offers the man from TP Concreting some sushi if he comes round straight away to fix his driveway. The Board noted the advertiser's response that the reference to sushi is no different to saying a vegemite sandwich and a minority of the Board considered that the reference to sushi is not of itself discriminatory as this is a food eaten by many people in Australia regardless of their nationality or cultural background. The majority of the Board however noted cumulative effect of the man's fake accent, the mother's made up language, the naming of the man as Mr Ping Pong, the reference to the situation as weird and the man's offer of sushi and considered that this amounts to a suggestion that Asian people are being mocked.

The Board noted that the Practice Note for Section 2.1 of the Code of Ethics provides the following definitions:

- Discrimination – unfair or less favourable treatment
- Vilification – humiliates, intimidates, incites hatred, contempt or ridicule.

The majority of the Board considered that the advertisement presents Asian people in a manner which incites ridicule and that by mocking their command of English grammar and using a fake name, which is considered racist, rather than a real name, the advertisement is making fun of a difference between Western and Asian cultures which is humiliating for people of Asian descent.

Based on the above, the majority of the Board determined that the advertisement did breach Section 2.1 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement did breach Section 2.1 of the Code, the Board upheld the complaint.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE TO DETERMINATION

As mentioned, we had already taken the ad off air. We didn't realise that it would in any way be inappropriate, we can see your point and are organising a new ad.