



Case Report

1	Case Number	0569/17
2	Advertiser	Commonwealth Bank of Australia
3	Product	Finance/Investment
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Internet - Social
5	Date of Determination	24/01/2018
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Ethnicity
- 2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Nationality

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The television advertisement features a customer calling a helpline which is answered by a man called Ishaan. The men realise that they went to school together. A voice over then details that Commonwealth Bank call centres are not overseas, they're over here.

THE COMPLAINT

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

This ad - in fact the entire "over here" campaign - is completely distateful and plays into the xenophobic attitudes of many Australians.

It is offensive to suggest the someone based overseas is unable to provide the customer with the necessary service because they speak English as a second language.

Having worked in a large global organisation with many employees based outside of Australia, I can say with confidence that ALL call centre operators working overseas for Australian companies are well educated and hard working people.

It is disappointing and saddening that CBA is suggesting that a person located overseas or who speaks English as a second language lacks the ability to provide proper service to the customer.

Additionally, those working in call centres in Australia who are originally from other

countries would feel highly uncomfortable with this ad.

The ad unfairly suggests that those who aren't in Australia are unable to provide adequate customer service. It ridicules the operator for his attempts to relate to the customer through football. Those working in call centres in Australia who are originally from other countries would feel highly uncomfortable with this ad. This ad reinforces bigoted attitudes to those who speak English as a second language.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

2.1 – Discrimination or vilification: This advert is set in a Melbourne Customer Call Centre and includes a culturally diverse range of people, which reflects the true to life CommBank Customer Call Centres.

Diversity is an integral part of CommBank's vision, culture, values and the way we do business. We have a proud history of supporting all our employees and customers from all walks of life. We are a diverse organisation with a strong focus on maintaining an inclusive workplace where all employees can thrive. We strive to create an inclusive culture where everyone belongs because of their uniqueness, not in spite of it – a place where 'you can be you' to do your best every day to achieve our organisation's vision.

2.2 – Exploitative and degrading: This advert was created to celebrate and highlight the diverse range of people working within the CommBank Customer Call Centres. As the main talent for the advert (Ishaan) is of Indian heritage, we wanted to ensure that the video would be well received by the Indian community, so prior to going live with the adverted, Huss Mustafa OAM, General Manager –Multicultural Community Banking Australia, consulted several leading members of the Australian Indian Community. Please find below their thoughts:

President of Australian Indian Chamber of Commerce who is also on our External Cultural Diversity Advisory Board: Ravi thought that it will be seen as a very positive message by the community, as Australians from an Indian cultural heritage are very proud Australians who have integrated very well into the Australian society and way of life.

Executive Director of Australian Multicultural Foundation and Chairman of SBS who is also on our External Cultural Diversity Advisory Board: Hass also had similar views to Ravi. The main message is about demonstrating CBA as an inclusive employer who is providing jobs for Australians by choosing to have all its call centres in Australia.

Victorian President of Australian Indian Business Council: Harish also did not see any risk in members of the Indian Community being offended by this ad and it should be seen as a positive message for the Indian Community by keeping jobs in Australia and providing employment opportunities for people from culturally diverse backgrounds including Australians with an Indian heritage.

2.3 – Violence: There is no violence present or portrayed within the advert.

2.4 – Sex, sexuality and nudity: There are no sex, sexuality or nudity related content within

the advert.

2.5 – Language: There is no strong or obscene language used within the advert.

2.6 – Health and safety: There are no health and safety issues or violations within the advert.

2.7 – Distinguishable as advertising: The advert is clearly distinguishable as advertising

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 that the advertisement is xenophobic. The Board viewed 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 the Practice Note to Section 2.1 of the Code which provides the following definitions:

“Discrimination – unfair or less favourable treatment

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

The Board noted this television advertisement features a customer calling a helpline which is answered by a man called Ishaan. The men realise that they went to school together. A voice over then details that Commonwealth Bank call centres are not overseas, they're over here.

The Board noted the complainants' concerns that the advertisement is xenophobic and suggests that someone from another country is unable to provide the same level of service to a customer because English is their second language.

The Board noted the advertiser's response and considered that they had done research to ensure that the advertisement would not be offensive to people in the Indian or multicultural community.

The Board noted that the main character of the advertisement, Ishaan, was of Indian decent and it was unclear whether English was his first language and considered that the advertisement did not make any suggestion that people from different ethnicities were unable to provide the same level of assistance to customers.

The Board considered there was no suggestion in the advertisement that call centres overseas were not preferred because of language barriers, rather that there was more convenience to having call centres in Australia.

The Board considered the overall tone of the advertisement was positive and inclusive and did not discriminate against any particular ethnicity.

The Board 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 ethnicity and 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.