



CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	138/99
2. Advertiser	Snack Brands Australia (Thins)
3. Product	Food
4. Type of advertisement	TV
5. Nature of complaint	Discrimination or vilification Other – section 2.1 Other - Causes alarm and distress to children Other - Miscellaneous
6. Date of determination	Tuesday, 11 May 1999
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement shows a ‘doctor/surgeon’ conducting a ‘ward round’. He draws level with a bed in which a patient is swathed in bandages about the face and head. The doctor says, ‘This, special request...he loves ‘Thins Chips’ so much I help’ The doctor then indicates that he is going to take a look (observed by onlookers both from the patient’s family and other staff). The bandages are removed showing that the man has an abnormally large sized mouth and lower jaw. The mouth is shown wide open. The doctor says, ‘Now, we check’ and calls for a large packet of ‘Thins’ the entire contents of which he proceeds to ‘pour’ into the man’s mouth. After this has been achieved the doctor pronounces the operation a ‘big success’ and the patient gives the thumbs up. The advertisement draws to a conclusion with the voiceover saying, ‘Thins...Cut thin to fit more in.’

THE COMPLAINT

Comments which the complainants made regarding this advertisement included the following:

‘I find the ad disturbing myself but that wasn’t the reason I called (the advertiser)...I have a four year old son and every time this ad comes on tv, he starts screaming and crying....which isn’t like my son at all because you couldn’t get a rougher or tougher little boy but the ad really disturbs him.’

‘You try to teach your children not to eat with their mouths full or put to (sic) much food in at once...how do company’s think these ads are good and will sell products, when all they do is sicken you and make you stop buying the products.’

‘As a nurse who works with people with a range of facial and jaw abnormalities...I find this add quite tasteless. These people endure much pain and suffering (both psychological and physical) due to their abnormalities and often go through many painful operations to try to normalise their appearance. The advertisers may argue that people need to have a sense of humour, but I have witnessed first-hand how upsetting this add can be to people with facio-maxillary abnormalities.’

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board (‘the Board’) considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (‘the Code’).

The Board, while appreciating the complainants’ personal points of view, determined that the advertisement’s portrayal of the people concerned did not constitute discrimination or vilification and did not breach the Code on this ground. The Board noted the obvious contextual humour in the advertisement and satisfied that the advertisement would not offend prevailing community views and standards and did not breach any other section(s) of the Code. The Board dismissed the complaint.