



## CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	141/08
2. Advertiser	IAG Insurance (SGIC) Ltd
3. Product	Insurance
4. Type of advertisement	TV
5. Nature of complaint	Violence Other – section 2.2
6. Date of determination	Monday, 19 May 2008
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The 'handshake' commercial is set in an office environment where a new, young employee “Greg” is being introduced around the office by a female colleague. The female colleague says to Tom, a middle-aged man “This is Greg, he just started today”. Tom looks around and smiles at Greg. The two men then proceed to shake each others hand. The commercial shows a long steady hand shake between Tom and Greg, each man is trying to outlast the other. Text appears on the screen 'At SGIC we're fiercely competitive'. The SCIC logo and contact details are displayed on the screen.

## THE COMPLAINT

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

*In our workplace, we try and instil the culture to eliminate workplace bullying. This ad is a portrayal of workplace bullying at it's worst. What sort of message is being shown here - my workmates recognise this as bullying as feel that this culture shoould not be promoted or condoned on television.*

## THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complaint/s regarding this advertisement included the following:

*We understand that the complaint has been lodged in the same terms by the same complainant for each of the television commercials. The basis of the complaint is alleged to be violence and workplace bullying contrary to section 2.2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics.*

*SGIC is a trading name for Insurance Australia Ltd which is part of Insurance Australia Group (“IAG”). IAG and SGIC are equal opportunity employers and we are committed to safety in the workplace. We have codes of conduct in place to ensure that our workplaces are free of bullying and harassment. SGIC does not condone violence, workplace bulling or harassment and would not voluntarily choose to feature such conduct in television commercials intended to represent our corporate culture.*

### ***“At SGIC, we’re fiercely competitive” television commercials***

*Each of the three SGIC television commercials titled “Fish (Marlin)”, “Birthday (Keys)” and “Handshake are part of a series of commercials which feature SGIC employees participating in workplace rivalry. These commercials are part of a series intended to display, in a lighthearted and humorous way, friendly workplace rivalry and demonstrate the competitive attitude of SGIC employees.*

*Each of the commercials end with the tagline “At SGIC, we’re fiercely competitive”. The tagline is a dual reference to the competitive and spirited attitude of SGIC employees and also refers to SGIC’s competitive insurance rates.*

*Our intention with each of these commercials is to use common workplace situations (employee office memorabilia, employee birthdays and new employee introductions) to show in an entertaining and exaggerated way, that SGIC employees are competitive. In no way did we intend, nor do we believe, that the commercials promote or encourage bullying in the workplace. The actions of the SGIC employees are merely an exaggerated version of friendly rivalry and ‘one-up-man-ship’.*

### **“Handshake”**

*The “Handshake” television commercial depicts a typical office scene where a new young employee “Greg” is being introduced around the office on his first day by a co-worker. The co-worker says “this is Greg, he just started today” when introducing Greg to SGIC employee “Tom” from the motor insurance team who looks like he has worked in the office for years. Tom extends his hand to say hello and Greg takes the concept of a firm hand shake to the next level. The commercial shows a long steady hand shake between Tom and Greg, with each man seemingly trying to outlast the other. The commercial is intended to display, in a lighthearted and humorous way, friendly workplace rivalry and demonstrate the competitive attitude of SGIC employees. It ends with the tagline “At SGIC, we’re fiercely competitive”.*

*The handshake is long and firm but is not violent or aggressive. It is a deliberately over the top rendition of a firm handshake that ends up a bit like an “arm-wrestle”. The conduct depicted in the television commercial is not bullying. Workplace bullying is repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards a co-worker that has the effect of humiliating, intimidating, offending, degrading, insulting, undermining or threatening the victim.*

*This is friendly jockeying for position and no-one is hurt. We submit that the target audience will see the commercial as tongue-in-cheek and amusing.*

*SGIC submits that there are no grounds for finding any breach of the Advertising Standards Code.*

### **Summary**

*SGIC places a very high value on its relationships with customers and the community. SGIC is committed to ensuring that our workplace is free from bullying and harassment. SGIC did not and would not voluntarily choose to feature such conduct in our television commercials intended to represent our corporate culture to our customers and potential customers. SGIC is very conscious of the image it portrays in its advertising.*

*We trust that the Advertising Standards Bureau members will agree with our assessment that none of these television commercials breaches the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics.*

### **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 about the portrayal of workplace bullying and reviewed the advertisement under Section 2.2 of the Code which deals with violence.

The Board viewed the television commercial and found it to be a humorous and over-the-top portrayal of a fictional competitive workplace.

The Board considered the content of the advertisement to be a hyperbolic but inoffensive portrayal of the type of activities in which people engage at work.

The Board further considered the humour to be warm and not suggestive of violence and found therefore that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.2.

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