



## **CASE REPORT**

1. Complaint reference number	153/06
2. Advertiser	Ford Motor Co Aust Ltd (Focus)
3. Product	Vehicles
4. Type of advertisement	TV
5. Nature of complaint	Violence Cruelty to animals – section 2.2
6. Date of determination	Tuesday, 9 May 2006
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT**

This television advertisement features celebrity Jackie O as she leaves a pet shop with a goldfish in a glass bowl filled with water. She places the bowl on the front passenger seat of her car and proceeds to drive around winding streets and tight corners in the city without spilling a drop of water from the bowl, because of the smooth suspension of the car. At home, Jackie takes the fish bowl out of the car, and standing on the kerb, notices celebrity Andrew G driving slowly past. As she daydreams she accidentally tilts the bowl and the water, along with the fish pour into the storm water drain at her feet.

## **THE COMPLAINT**

Comments which the complainant/s made regarding this advertisement included the following:

*I find this offensive because of the lack of care towards the animals involved – it sets a bad example of how to care for pets....The stereotype “blonde bimbo” who is so simple she cannot even concentrate on the care of what should be a loved pet.*

*Poor fish didn't deserve to die after its scary ride...the fish shouldv (sic) been fine, just like to prior ads: where the dog on the roof is ok, and the ipod left on the roof is ok.*

## **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE**

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

*The advertisements depict unrealistic scenarios in order to demonstrate the Focus' smooth steering, handling, braking and style.*

*Consumers viewed the storyline as humorous and in no way seen to advocate ill treatment of animals....It is obvious that the action (ie. Unintentionally tipping the fish bowl water down the drain) is purely accidental in this scenario, with the female actor clearly shocked upon realising her actions.*

*The desired intent or storyline, which has also been communicated on Ford Focus merchandise, is that the goldfish is “freed” into the ocean, rather than being injured or killed.*

*The goldfish used in the final scene was a plastic replica of the real goldfish used earlier in the TVC. At no time during filming was the goldfish mistreated or hurt in any way.*

## **THE DETERMINATION**

The Advertising Standards Board (“Board”) considered whether this advertisement breaches section

2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (the “Code”).

In particular, the Board considered whether the advertisement presented or portrayed violence in a way that was unjustifiable in the context of the product or service advertised. The Board was not convinced by the advertiser’s response that the storyline of the advertisement is that the goldfish is ‘freed’ into the ocean rather than being injured or killed and determined that the advertiser response was patronising. That having been said, the Board did not find that the advertisement offended section 2.2 of the Code particularly given that the images made clear that Jackie O accidentally tilted the bowl which then meant that the fish poured down the stormwater drain at her feet.

Further finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on any other grounds, the Board dismissed the complaint.