



CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	156/05
2. Advertiser	Reckitt Benckiser (Aust) Pty Ltd (Harpic)
3. Product	Housegoods/services
4. Type of advertisement	TV
5. Nature of complaint	Discrimination or vilification Gender - section 2.1
6. Date of determination	Tuesday, 14 June 2005
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The first scene in this television advertisement depicts a young woman who was nurturing a baby in the family home. All of a sudden the doorbell rings. She is greeted by a group of friends who have come to congratulate her on the birth of the baby. One of the guests asks “Can I use your bathroom?” The mother is shown with a very worried look on her face so as to indicate that she is worried about the state of her bathroom. The advertisement then cuts to a scene that shows the bathroom and explains the Harpic product. The advertisement then cuts back to the mother who says with a confident look “Yeah, sure”.

THE COMPLAINT

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

“This advertisement offends on a number of levels. Firstly, that the woman is in charge and judged on her toilet cleaning – surely this does not equally represent females in society. Secondly that a new mother is judged on her toilet cleaning ability – postnatal depression affects many women and an advertisement that tries to position women as having to have all aspects of their life clean whilst coping with a newborn baby is negligent. They are indeed adding to the pressure on women to be ‘superwomen’.”

THE ADVERTISER’S RESPONSE

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

“We are not depicting the homeowner as being judged or discriminated against by those who have come to visit, we are reflecting the concern that the homeowner has in ensuring her home is presentable to her guests.”

“The Harpic product is doing the job of keeping the toilet fresh and clean without laborious effort on her part. The intention is that the product is, in fact, empowering her to maintain a clean toilet freeing her up to spend time on other things.”

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board (“Board”) considered whether this advertisement breaches section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (the “Code”).

The Board considered that the woman depicted in the advertisement was not being judged on her toilet cleaning ability and that the advertisement did not present in a negative way the role of women in society but rather reflected the concern that a homeowner would have in ensuring that a home is presentable to guests.

The Board found that the depiction did not contravene the provisions of the Code relating to portrayal of people (sex).

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