



CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	184/06
2. Advertiser	Melbourne Storm Rugby League Club
3. Product	Leisure & Sport
4. Type of advertisement	TV
5. Nature of complaint	Discrimination or vilification Religion – section 2.1
6. Date of determination	Tuesday, 9 May 2006
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement is set inside a distinctive Melbourne cathedral where the offertory plate is being passed around the congregation. As the plate reaches a nun seated at the rear of the church, she jumps up and snatches the plate, tucks it under her arm – spilling coins everywhere – and runs down the aisle towards the priest standing at the altar. As she raises a hand to block the priest and a voiceover explains “You can’t avoid Rugby League this year”. The nun then dives over the altar as if it is a rugby goal line and ends with the voiceover “Melbourne Storm – making a big impact.”

THE COMPLAINT

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

The Mass is the most sacred of...Matters religious in secular commercials should be a no no. . It should not be mocked in this way. Many would view this as downright blasphemy.

I find this advertisement EXTREMELY OFFENSIVE....I find the advertisement indecent and sacrilegious all Christian celebrations.

As a Christian the denigrating of nuns in this way is horrifying.

The last act is a desecration and is offensive to all Christians.

The advertisement clearly shows religious intolerance....The depiction of the “nun” character vaulting like a rugby player into this sacred place a sacrilegious action.

The advertisement mocks (Catholic nuns)’s behaviour at mass and shows utter contempt for these women and their most profound religious beliefs.

THE ADVERTISER’S RESPONSE

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

The scripts for the campaign were designed to depict the action, excitement and impact of Rugby League in unexpected humorous situations.

Both Melbourne Storm and Badjar are deeply sorry that any viewer would be offended by the commercials.

Both churches featured in our commercial approved the script and then gave permission for the use of their premises and received fees for doing so.

Television shows like the “Vicar of Dibley” and films such as Whoopee Goldberg’s “Sister Act”

series, rowan Atkinson's "Four Weddings and a Funeral" and Jonathan Lynn's "Nuns on the Run" draw enormous audiences because of their irreverence and humour not expected within religious structures.

We consider the humour conveyed by the advertisement is not inappropriate or offensive and we have not contravened the provisions of the code relating to discrimination (religion/vilification).

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 this advertisement breached section 2.1 of the Code in discriminating against people on the basis of their religion.

The Board noted that the churches featured in the advertisement had approved the script for the advertisement. It also noted that while the advertisement may be controversial, it did not discriminate against people on the basis of their religion. The Board found that humour had been used by the advertiser in an effective manner and that a reasonable viewer watching the advertisement would understand the advertisement as being humorous rather than having any intention to offend.

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