



CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	187/00
2. Advertiser	Unilever Australasia (Continental Cup-a-Soup Gourmet)
3. Product	Food
4. Type of advertisement	TV
5. Nature of complaint	Discrimination or vilification Other – section 2.1 Health and safety – section 2.6
6. Date of determination	Tuesday, 11 July 2000
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The television advertisement depicts a young man consulting a female psychiatrist/counsellor who, nodding off, urges him to talk about his childhood so that she can surreptitiously leave the room to enjoy a mug of (Continental Cup-a-Soup Gourmet) soup.

THE COMPLAINT

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

‘.....it clearly degrades the mental health patient and portrays professional mental health providers as uncaring and completely unprofessional in behaviour and attitude.’

‘In these supposed enlightened days where governments are now actively supporting the Australian Depression Initiative, and people are beginning to take a more tolerant view of mental illness, your company holds those with personal difficulties up to ridicule and humiliation.’

‘In order to tell very personal facts about one’s life to a friend or stranger requires a great deal of trust being placed in that person. The advertisement in question would undermine the giving of that trust. Combine that with the stigma attached to mental illness in our community also to be overcome someone could well be deterred from seeking treatment.’

THE DETERMINATION

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

The Board determined, given the contextual humour of the advertisement, that the portrayal of the psychiatrist/counsellor within it did not constitute discrimination or vilification; neither did the advertisement breach the Code on these or any other grounds. The Board, accordingly, dismissed the complaint.