



CASE REPORT

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| 1. Complaint reference number | 188/05 |
| 2. Advertiser | PZ Cussons Australia Pty Ltd (Morning Fresh) |
| 3. Product | Housegoods/services |
| 4. Type of advertisement | TV |
| 5. Nature of complaint | Discrimination or vilification Gender - section 2.1
Violence Other – section 2.2 |
| 6. Date of determination | Tuesday, 12 July 2005 |
| 7. DETERMINATION | Dismissed |

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The first scene in this television advertisement depicts a man in the kitchen of his house. He is searching under the kitchen sink for dishwashing cleaning tablets. His hands are shown to be covered in grease. He starts the dishwasher and walks away. The next scene depicts a woman (presumably his wife) open the door of the dishwasher. As she peers into the dishwasher she appears shocked by what she sees. The next scene depicts the wife walking towards her husband in the garage. The husband is shown to be working underneath a car. She says to the husband, holding a spanner in her hand, “*Honey, what’s this?*”, the husband replies that this is a “9/16 open-ended”. The woman then raises in her other hand an engine part indicating that these are the materials that the husband put into the dishwasher. The woman reaches over and strikes the husband on the head with the spanner. The husband does not recoil in pain but rather says: “*fair enough*”. The advertisement closes with an image of the Morning Fresh Tec Tabs dishwashing tablets.

THE COMPLAINT

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

“... Domestic violence of any kind to any gender cannot be tolerated! This is disgusting and may promote more violence of the kind or desensitise the sensitivities of many towards this kind of behaviour...”

“... This sets a dangerous precedent. I believe that no act of violence to either partner is acceptable. I also believe that many advertisements show males to be dim-witted and doing ridiculous things, and the female as the intelligent partner...”

“... The advertisement is offensive because it encourages a permissive attitude towards domestic violence, in particular, against men. The advertisement is irresponsible, anti-social and morally bankrupt...”

“... I object... to the gratuitous portrayal of violence in any form as a means of selling items for domestic use.”

“... This advertisement tries to create humour in “knowing each gender’s typical scenarios”. It totally lacks understanding of both genders...”

“... I find it offensive because it portrays the male in a demeaning manner – it portrays that violence to males in this manner is acceptable – it promotes the view that it is acceptable to inflict pain & humiliation on a male as long as it is done in a humorous way...”

THE ADVERTISER’S RESPONSE

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

“The commercial... is in no way intended to condone or promote physical violence [in] our community. The entire advertisement is designed with humour and exaggeration in mind.”

“... This is a deliberately exaggerated scenario which utilises irony and humour to portray a woman’s frustration and tongue-in-cheek amusement at her husband.”

“To reinforce the humour after she has tapped him with the spanner... he actually pops up and says: “Fair enough”, confirming that he knew it was a long shot to put the parts in the dishwasher...”

“The result of a violent act would leave the victim hurt, in pain or distressed in some way. This is clearly not the case with our male lead who is calm, rational and pain-free.”

THE DETERMINATION

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

The Board was of the view that the depiction in the advertisement approached the threshold of what would be deemed unacceptable in the context of prevailing community standards.

However, the Board took into consideration the male character’s response to the strike on his head. The Board noted that the character did not collapse nor did he recoil. The Board considered that the character’s reaction was quite minor and that he was not shown to be experiencing any physical pain. The Board considered that the advertiser had adopted a sufficiently slapstick approach to the advertisement and, as a result, found that the depiction did not contravene the provisions of the Code relating to the portrayal of violence.

The Board further considered that the tone of the female character’s voice when considered in the context of the advertisement and, in particular, its slapstick-style ending does not depict a contravention of the provisions of the Code relating to the portrayal of people (sex). The Board found that the depiction of the male character in the advertisement was not demeaning or derogatory in any way.

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