



## CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	199/05
2. Advertiser	Ford Motor Company Australia Ltd (Focus)
3. Product	Vehicles
4. Type of advertisement	TV
5. Nature of complaint	Discrimination or vilification Gender - section 2.1 Other - Portrayal of animals
6. Date of determination	Tuesday, 9 August 2005
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The scenes in this advertisement depict a Ford Focus travelling through city streets. As we see the car pass through the streets, we notice that a bright pink handbag has been inadvertently left on the roof of the car by the driver (Jackie O). Inside the handbag appears a small dog. As the car enters a shopping centre car park, the small dog is shown to duck its head back into the handbag so as to avoid being hit by the “low clearance” bar. When the driver comes to a halt, she reaches into the back seat to grab her handbag. A worried look comes over her face when she realises the bag is not in the back seat. The advertisement then shows a flashback of Jackie O accidentally leaving the bag on the roof of the car as she gets in. As she steps out of the car she is relieved to see that the handbag (and her dog) are still on the roof. A voiceover states: “*New German engineered 2 litre Ford Focus. Smooth as.*”

This advertisement is the first in a series of two advertisements. The second advertisement shows TV personality Andrew G drive through city streets having left his iPod on the roof of his car. Similar to the previous advertisement, as he leaves the car he realises the iPod is missing from his pocket. The flashback in the advertisement explains to viewers that he (also) accidentally left the item on the roof of the car when he is distracted by the sight of Jackie O driving by with her pink handbag still on the roof of the car.

## THE COMPLAINT

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

*“... I feel it is sexist to suggest that a woman would be stupid enough to forget that a living creature is on top of her car in a large, bright pink bag, whereas a small device (as left by the man) could be easily forgotten. Secondly, given the recent spate of animal abuse crimes it is appalling to me that animal mistreatment of this kind is being displayed in a comical light... I feel that despite the precautions taken, the animal in question must have suffered some distress... animals deserve to be respected and protected from this kind of cruelty.”*

*“Given some of the horrible animal cruelty cases in the media recently, in my mind this ad will only give some deviants new ideas...”*

## THE ADVERTISER’S RESPONSE

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

*“The advertisements developed to launch the new Ford Focus were designed to communicate the appealing value of the vehicle in a light-hearted and humorous manner. The advertisements depict an unrealistic scenario in order to demonstrate the Focus’ smooth steering, handling, braking and style... We believe that the fact that the ‘dog in the pink bag’ and the Apple iPod device do not*

*move during the two drivers' respective journeys would not be interpreted literally by viewers, and as a result, it is highly unlikely that viewers would then attempt to replicate the scenario in their own vehicles."*

*"... the script was provided to Animal Acts (a combined body working on behalf of Welfare League & the RSPCA) to obtain their approval... Explicit details to the shoot requirements were provided and approved by the RSPCA and they deemed it unnecessary for a member of the RSPCA to be present at the filming of the commercial..."*

*"In order to demonstrate the smooth attributes of the vehicle, the depiction is overstated by the dog in the handbag staying on the roof of vehicle. The scenario is highly embellished and obviously intended to be humorous, engaging and is clearly an inadvertent act..."*

## **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 advertisement did not depict cruelty to animals. It was clear from the advertisement that Jackie O had accidentally left the handbag on the roof of the car and that this action was not something that was deliberately designed to test the handling characteristics of the Ford. The Board also considered that the scenes in the advertisement were highly exaggerated and unrealistic as it would not be possible for the handbag to stay on the roof of the car.

The Board found that the depiction did not contravene the provisions of the Code relating to violence.

The Board also considered whether the advertisement discriminated against women by suggesting that a woman would be foolish enough to forget that an animal has been left on the top of her car in a large pink bag whereas a smaller device such as the iPod could be easily forgotten. The Board was of the opinion that the depictions did not contravene the provisions of the Code relating to the portrayal of people (sex).

The Board was of the view that in the context of prevailing community standards the majority of people would find this advertisement humorous rather than offensive.

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