



CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	207/08
2. Advertiser	Mr Rental
3. Product	Retail
4. Type of advertisement	TV
5. Nature of complaint	Violence Cruelty to animals – section 2.2
6. Date of determination	Wednesday, 9 July 2008
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement begins with the cartoon characters, Mrs. Rental and daughter, in the laundry standing next to the washing machine with the lid up. The daughter is holding a party dress.

Daughter: "Mum...can you please wash my favourite dress?"

Mrs Rental: "Sorry dear..the washing machine's broken."

Daughter: "Oh no!"

As she is saying this Mr Rental walks in and joins them. He looks slightly panicky. As the daughter gasps at the thought of a dirty party dress, Mum drops the bombshell.

Mrs Rental: "And that's not the worst bit. The repairman says it's going to cost hundreds of dollars to fix."

That sends Mr Rental into panic overload. It's all too much and he screams and then faints right on top of the cat.

Mr Rental: Whaaaaaaaaaaaa! (Mr Rental faints). The cat lets out a pained "Meow..."

In a calm voice Mrs Rental says to her daughter: "Of course, we could rent a new washing machine from Mr Rental and get free servicing."

Mr Rental stirs in his sleep muttering the words with a smile: "free ...free". The cat's legs can be seen protruding from underneath Mr Rental.

The advertisement cuts to a shot of an old washing machine with a super: Free servicing.

The advertisement returns to Mrs. Rental who is humming the Mr Rental tune whilst loading a brand new top loader washing machine. The cat is walking next to the open lid and as Mrs Rental closes the lid without looking she accidentally knocks the cat into the machine.

The advertisement concludes with picture of Mr Rental next to a washing machine and with text of logo and contact details:

1800 880 778. www.mrrental.com.au conditions apply NZ Version: Phone number 0800 111 313

Announcer voice concludes: Call Mr Rental and rent a Washing Machine from just \$11 per week. Mr

Rental: (screams) "Ah! Call Mr Rental!"

THE COMPLAINT

A sample of comments which the complainant/s made regarding this advertisement included the following:

What are they trying to do - Promote Cruelty to Cats? First a big fat guy falls over and squashes the poor cat with his head and we can hear the screams of the cat. Then the woman lifts the lid on machine and the cat is in the washing machine and she closes the lid with the cat's tail sticking out. Just horrific cruelty - has made me extremely up set and sad. Not necessary to show such things especially for a washing machine ad!

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

Mr Rental's creative concepts have been researched extensively through very in-depth focus group discussions, conducted by Research House, Colmar Brunton. Respondents participating in these focus group studies were recruited to match the Mr Rental target market. The Mr Rental Family, live in their own comical world, and the focus group research has shown that the humour with the cat in the ads is very well liked and was also found to be extremely entertaining. Copies of the research documents can be made available on request.

We would therefore like to re-confirm that we complete thorough research on all our creative concepts before we air them on TV.

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board ("Board") considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (the "Code").

The Board viewed the television advertisement and noted it was animated and did not feature any living creatures - human or feline.

The Board considered that the predicaments the animated cat got itself into were clearly both accidents and neither caused the cat any harm.

Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on any grounds, the Board dismissed the complaint.