

## CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	215/08
2. Advertiser	Adriatic Furniture
3. Product	House goods/services
4. Type of advertisement	TV
5. Nature of complaint	Health and safety – section 2.6
6. Date of determination	Wednesday, 9 July 2008
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement opens on an immaculately groomed and designer label dressed woman aged 50+. She is seated in an expensive lounge chair in her opulent home and is the epitome of a socialite. She speaks to camera with a refined or toffy voice.

Woman: Well, it's totally inexcusable... Well this sort of thing is just not on... It's all too distressing... The answer is to get them closed down immediately...

Cut to text on screen presented over the image of a fur coat and pearl jewellery. The voice over states: The furniture those rich people don't want you to have. Because at Adriatic we give you sophisticated pieces at unpretentious prices.

Again, text appears on a white screen as voice over states: Sophisticated pieces. Unpretentious prices.

Voice over continues: ...right across our range of lounge...(cut to lounge product shot), dining... (cut to dining product shot) and bedroom furniture (cut to bedroom product shot).

Voice over: Just like our 'Kim' extension dining setting at just \$1690 (cut to shot of 'Kim' dining set product).

Text on screen: 'Kim' extension dining setting at just \$1690

Cut to text on white screen: Adriatic Furniture. Exclusive, Yes. Expensive? No. [adriatic.com.au](http://adriatic.com.au).

Voice over concludes: Adriatic Furniture. Exclusive, Yes. Expensive? No.

Finally the scene cuts back to the woman character speaking to camera. She looks distressed and shaken: I think I need my valium.

## THE COMPLAINT

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

*I am objecting to the brunette who at the very end of the ad says she is off to take her valium. As I have seen somebody going through the effects of valium and the withdrawal effects and know of others who have also had the same problems, I actually find the offhand remark rather offensive.*

## THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

*You have advised Adriatic Furniture that a complaint has been received in regards to one particular spot that comprises a series of television advertisements being run by the company.*

*This complaint falls under Section 2 of the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics, and in particular Section 2.6 which states that "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety."*

*The series of advertisements is part of a humorous and light-hearted campaign that has been*

*running since 2007. The campaign features dramatisations of a number of typical “old money” society ladies. These “well-to-do” characters are depicted as annoyingly funny caricatures at home in an interview scenario.*

*They are seen as quite agitated as they speak of how disgusted, appalled and horrified they are at a certain situation. Utilising the line “The furniture those rich people don’t want you to have”, the situation is then revealed to be Adriatic offering exclusive furniture at inexpensive prices.*

*Leveraging the furniture chain’s “Exclusive, Yes. Expensive? No.” positioning, the scenarios are intended to be over-the-top parodies, with each spot ending with the character explaining how they are reacting to the situation. In one, she says she’s calling her lawyer, in another she’s feeling sick, in a third she’s going to write to her local member, and in the one which is the subject of the complaint, she believes she may need her valium.*

*The complainant states she has “seen somebody going through the effects of valium and the withdrawal effects” and as awful as this may have been, this is not at all the usual course of events for people using this particular drug safely around the world.*

*Contrary to the complainant’s own experience, valium is a legal prescription drug not normally associated with any form of addiction. It is an everyday safe pharmaceutical used in the management of anxiety disorders and to simply relieve certain types of muscle pain.*

*We do not indicate any form of abuse of valium in our television commercial, but rather believe that our character taking it as prescribed would not be seen as contrary to prevailing community standards on health and safety.*

*The reference to it in the Adriatic Furniture advertisement is there to complete the picture of our “over the top” character, and illustrate how upset she is with Adriatic selling such impressive furniture and such low prices - even to the point that it’s causing her the anxiety that she intends to deal with.*

*The reference is not intended to be offensive, but to paint a picture of how precious this character is in a humorous and jocular way and so complete the caricature being portrayed.*

## **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 advertisement and found it to be light-hearted and to contain tongue-in-cheek humour.

The Board noted the reference by the female character about needing her Valium and agreed that this was a well known and well used statement when referring to the need to relax.

The Board further noted that Valium is a legal medication which prescribed to help people relax and is not known for its addictive properties (as per the advertiser's response).

The Board considered that the reference to Valium was acceptable in this context as it was humorous and would be understood by the community to be light-hearted.

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