



CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	244/01
2. Advertiser	FOXTEL Management Pty Ltd (FOX Footy Channel)
3. Product	Media
4. Type of advertisement	TV
5. Nature of complaint	Discrimination or vilification Other – section 2.1
6. Date of determination	Tuesday, 9 October 2001
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The television advertisement opens on the arrival of the Pope at an unidentified airport. A caption reads: ‘One of the great religions is coming to Foxtel.’ The Pope is then shown kissing the ground, where a football has been superimposed. A caption reads: ‘The only devoted AFL channel. Your team. Every game. Every week. Amen.’ A chorus is then heard over intercut images of the Pope and cheering AFL fans, ahead of a closing caption providing a Foxtel telephone number and an announcer’s voice saying: “The footy’s coming to Foxtel.”

The print advertisement features a picture of the Pope at the foot of aircraft steps kissing a football on the ground, with an accompanying caption reading: ‘One of the great religions is coming to Foxtel.’

THE COMPLAINT

Comments which the complainants made regarding these advertisements included the following:

“I found the advertisement to be highly offensive, insensitive to the beliefs of a large number of Australians, and extremely crass in its presentation.”

“I find this depiction demeaning and mocking of religion and degrading to the person of the Pope.”

“Being members of the Catholic Faith, we find this commercial derogatory as it belittles the role of the leader of the Catholic Church...”

“In an increasingly multicultural country, we believe it is inappropriate to assume that any religion is sufficiently dominant to have its tenets subjected to ridicule.”

“...I believe that this use of a recognised Christian leader vilifies Christianity.”

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board (‘the Board’) considered whether these advertisements breach Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (‘the Code’).

The Board noted that the print and television advertisements had caused controversy but determined that, in the context of prevailing community standards, neither advertisement constituted discrimination and vilification as represented in the Code.

Acknowledging the various viewpoints expressed by complainants, the Board considered the advertisements in respect of all aspects of the Code and determined that neither was in breach of any provision. Consequently, the complaint was dismissed.