



## CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	278/09
2. Advertiser	Pharmacare
3. Product	Toiletries
4. Type of advertisement	TV
5. Nature of complaint	Discrimination or vilification Gender - section 2.1
6. Date of determination	Wednesday, 8 July 2009
7. DETERMINATION	Upheld – discontinued or modified

### DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television commercial depicts a robot collecting a number of products that represent products desirable to men and placing them into a Ute. The robot collects a surfboard, a football, a bicycle which he turns into a motorbike, and a can of drink which he turns into a keg. The final item that appears is a Barbie style doll which is depicted coming down a conveyor belt. The machine indicates that the product is 'rejected'. The robot turns the doll into an attractive woman dressed in a bikini. The Robot picks up the women, smiles and then places her into the Ute with the other objects. The objects are then transformed into cans of the product. Voice over "Brut Max performance antiperspirant 4 hour performance anti-perspirant. Brut - still brutally male."

### THE COMPLAINT

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

*Given the current emphasis on the treatment of women in the rugby league world and indeed the wider community, I feel this is a totally irresponsible and inappropriate message to be sending to young viewers at this time. I personally feel strongly against this sort of objectification of women and the ad's depiction of a stereotypical blonde bikini clad female as one of the characters possessions! Surely this is not an image we need to be subjected to in order to sell deodorant!*

*Very disrespectful to women, objectifying young women as being automatons, like robots made simply for use by men. The final line "still brutally male" is quite a violent expression, implying that after the recent furore to do with the NRL - Lynx men will continue to behave brutally towards women. Absolutely abhorrent, and not the message we want to encourage.*

*Women have enough negative media regarding body image, and I find it offensive that a plain, flat-chested woman is labelled a 'reject'.*

### THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

#### **Background for consideration**

*The theme of the TVC is intended to portray that only masculine ingredients go in to the DNA of Brut. These items are placed into a central area and 'combined' to produce Brut MAX APD. The TVC show a Surfboard and Footy ball being accepted as is (masculine items), while a push bike, can of lemonade and kids doll are modified to a motorbike, keg and beautiful woman respectively.*

*The figure in the pink dress emerging from the portal is intended to be a kids doll, reinforced by the following*

*o The relative size (doll size) to other components (door, platform robot)*

*o The various doll components are plastic /not life like - specifically components like:*

*- the dress - colour / shape- hair - "barbie" doll like- length of neck- width of ankles, and- posture*

*Please see additional information below relating to this case. This info refers specifically to the use of a female model in the TVC.*

*Ref 278/09 talks about Objectifying / Vilifying women and we believe that we have taken a number of precautions to avoid this. These are:*

*o Prior to final production, our agency Loud worked with FreeTV providing an animatic and 3 movie files to gauge their approval of the final TVC. This is because we air this commercial in NRL and AFL broadcasts. Copies of this correspondence and these files are attached. Please shout if you need more info.*

*o Also, when making the commercial we made sure that*

*- Tara , our model was portrayed as comfortable and happy, and a real person. - The Robot acted gently, engaging and not threatening or menacing*

*We believe we have achieved this*

*o Further, all scenes of our models body are long shots while the close-up focus on her face and (warm) interaction with the robot.*

## **THE DETERMINATION**

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

The Board noted the complainants' concerns that the advertisement objectified women, presented flat chested women as 'rejected' and expressed concern about a depiction of violence in the phrase 'brutally male'.

The Board noted that the name of the product is 'Brut' and that the Board has no role in determining the acceptability of product names. The Board also noted that this product has been on the market for many years.

The Board noted that some complaints focused on the broadcast of this advertisement during football and that complainants considered that it was inappropriate for this type of advertisement, suggesting masculinity and aggression, to be broadcast during football during recent controversy over the behaviour of some football players. The Board considered that this placement may be considered unfortunate by some but that this placement is obviously relevant to the advertisers' target audience (young men).

The Board viewed the advertisement. The Board noted that there is no image of a 'flat chested woman'. The rejected object is clearly a toy and in the Board's view the rejection is of the toy doll not of a particular type of woman.

The Board considered that the advertisement is clearly designed to position the product as a men's product and to distance itself from less stereotypically masculine 'metrosexual' products. While the tone of the advertisement is loud and features products stereotypically associated with men, this is clearly done so in the context of establishing the product as a particular type of man's product. In the Board's opinion the scenes and reference to 'brutally male' are not menacing or threatening.

The Board considered that the advertisement's reference to 'brutally male' is a play on the product's name and is not suggestive of violence towards women or suggestive that all men are violent or aggressive. The Board considered that there was no suggestion of condoning any violent behaviour.

The Board considered that the advertisement did not vilify or discriminate against men and did not

contravene section 2.1 of the Code. The Board also considered that the advertisement did not depict, condone or encourage violence and did not breach section 2.2 of the Code.

The Board noted the depiction of the woman in the advertisement. The Board considered that the advertisement objectifies the woman and represents her as a desired possession of men. The transformation from a doll to this particular buxom, very attractive woman dressed in a bikini also objectifies a particular type of women and perpetuates a stereotype of 'desirable' women. The Board considered that the placement of the woman in the Ute along with the other 'desirable' possessions and their subsequent transformation into cans of the product clearly represented woman as possessions and not as people. The majority of the Board considered that this depiction objectified women to the extent that it does amount to discrimination against women and is a breach of section 2.1 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement breached the Code the Board upheld complaints.

### **ADVERTISERS'S RESPONSE TO THE DETERMINATION**

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the determination regarding this advertisement included the following:

*I am happy to confirm to yourselves that we will be airing a new Brut commercial this weekend, we have changed the part of the commercial deemed to be offensive by the ASB ruling namely that the girl is seen as a possession by being on the back of the ute, she no longer appears on the back of the ute in the revised commercial and we will be airing this commercial.*