



## **CASE REPORT**

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. Complaint reference number | 298/06  |
| 2. Advertiser                 | Procter & Gamble Australia Pty Ltd (Metamucil - loofah) |
| 3. Product                    | Health Products   |
| 4. Type of advertisement      | TV  |
| 5. Nature of complaint        | Other - Causes alarm and distress                       |
| 6. Date of determination      | Tuesday, 8 August 2006                                  |
| 7. DETERMINATION              | Dismissed   |

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT**

This television advertisement opens in a boardroom where a meeting is taking place - one man arrives late and is seen to have a piece of tape protruding from his mouth. A female delegate attracts his attention as she tries to gesture that he has something in his mouth. The man realises that he has forgotten to remove an object from his mouth and starts to pull on the tape, which we see is attached to a loofah placed down his throat – he slowly removes the loofah with gagging and vomiting noises. A male voiceover advises “Fortunately there are easier ways to clean your insides and keep your digestive system health. Try taking Metamucil every day and let 100% natural fibre help do the cleaning for you. Metamucil – the sensible daily cleanser – for your insides.”

## **THE COMPLAINT**

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

*.....gagging/vomiting noises...*

*I found that this advertisement is in extremely poor taste and completely offensive and upsetting to children. The noises are unnecessarily graphic and the shape of the sea sponge is sexually suggestive.*

## **THE ADVERTISER’S RESPONSE**

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

*We submit that the TVC is meant to be humorous and light-hearted and is “appropriate” in the circumstances given that it was given a “W” rating.*

*There is no intention of sexual innuendo and besides, a child would certainly not associate a loofah in a sexual context.*

*The advertisement is not directed towards children, however if the advertisement was viewed by a child we do not believe the gagging/vomiting noises would be offensive or upsetting to children.*

*We also believe the advertisement meets prevailing community standards on health and safety.*

## **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 complainant’s concern that the advertisement was sexually suggestive. The Board considered the advertisement and did not agree that the advertisement was in any way sexually

suggestive. On this basis the Board considered that section 2.3 of the Code did not apply.

The Board considered whether the advertisement depicted material contrary to prevailing community standards on health and safety. The Board considered that the depiction of a person ingesting a loofah/sponge is so exaggerated that it is unlikely to be seen as desirable behaviour that should be copied. On this basis the Board considered that the advertisement did not breach section 2.6 of the Code.

The Board noted the complainant's concern about the graphic nature of the advertisement being upsetting to children. The Board noted that the advertisement was shown after 9pm. The Board considered that, while the advertisement was tasteless, it would not be generally upsetting to children who viewed programs that were suitable to be shown at 9pm at night.

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