



CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	345/09
2. Advertiser	Freedom Furniture
3. Product	Household goods
4. Type of advertisement	TV
5. Nature of complaint	Discrimination or vilification Sexual preference – section 2.1
6. Date of determination	Wednesday, 23 September 2009
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

A little girl is sitting at a large family table with her grandmother, the little girl is drawing a picture. She says to her grandmother that her father designed the table and her grandmother comments that the little girl's father always was good at art. The little girl responds that mum thinks dad is gay.

THE COMPLAINT

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

Surely the Grandmother can praise "her son", the child's father without the child having to answer in that fashion.

*What has "Being Gay" got to do with the quality or not of Freedom Furniture?
I object to seeing a young child speaking in this fashion.*

Freedom Furniture ad totally inappropriate, in fact I found it to be both denigrating and highly offensive and I certainly will not be buying from Freedom now or in the future. I think they have made a mistake using the ad agency and the ad; it certainly does not do any favours for the business.

It's supposedly about a table ... there was a grandmother and her granddaughter discussing how her son had designed the table etc

I think this is a completely inappropriate thing to have a child say about her own parent, especially when the child is only about eight or nine.

I object because to the stereotype of creative people must be gay. We hear that bullying at school is at all time high and this kind of advertising does not help. A teenager who is straight and creative is already branded 'gay'. And this type of advertising only adds fuel to the fire. It is offensive to both straight and gay people.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The following is a response to the complaints received by the ASB regarding our recent tv commercial 'Nan' for Freedom. The ad is for a range of customisable furniture which you design yourself.

The two complaints we are responding to fall under Section 2.1 of the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics specifically, 'discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community ...'

On behalf of Freedom, I would like the Board to consider the information below in its

consideration of the complaint. I would like to confirm that Freedom does not consider the advertisement to be discriminatory or vilifying to any section of the community and was made with the intention of being a lighthearted and humorous way of expressing the product benefit of this range of furniture as part of a broader brand campaign.

- The story plays on a situation that most parents can empathise with. A toddler's super absorbent ears and mind take in everything you dare to mutter or say in jest to each other around the home only to regurgitate it, out of context, in other company. A real 'out of the mouths of babes', innocent moment that results in the mum and nan being speechless not knowing whether to ignore it or laugh.

- We believe that under prevailing community standards, most people could be expected to find humour in this advertisement. It's intention is not in any way to portray being gay or being creative as negative, it simply plays on a non discriminatory stereotype which is widely used in the real world by adults and children alike in all manner of company, gay, straight, creative or not. The Board met on a similar complaint within the same category in 2002.

1. Complaint reference number 87/02
2. Advertiser IKEA
3. Product Homegoods/services
4. Type of advertisement TV
5. Nature of complaint Discrimination or vilification Other - section 2.1
6. Date of determination Tuesday, 9 April 2002
7. DETERMINATION Dismissed

This commercial is one of a set of three which use different, recognisable moments in life to bring the product benefit to life in an engaging way. The other two television commercials focus on a cat who is too comfortable lying on the Freedom sofa to chase a mouse and a woman throwing her partners possessions down the stairs including a very well constructed sofa that survives the fall. The set of ads and underlying tone of the brand campaign is to entertain and engage our target audience.

- The complainant also objects to perpetuation of stereotypes in general and a child being allowed to perpetuate stereotypes by repeating her mothers words. We would argue that the stereotype being portrayed is in no way negative and believe that the portrayal it is not offensive to the majority of gay or straight people (see attached forums and blogs in response to the advertising). The child is innocently parroting her mothers words as children do.

Although it's not ideal to receive any complaints, the overall response to the ads from the general public in store, online and via the Freedom customer service centre has been very positive and we hope that the Board agrees with us that this is a harmless, humorous depiction of a product benefit. CAD Clearance details:

The ad received a W rating in Australia and G rating in New Zealand.

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 concerns that the advertisement was stereotyping all creative people as being gay and was inappropriate for a young child to say about their own parent.

The Board viewed the advertisement.

The Board noted the advertiser's response and were of the opinion that most people in the community would accept that in these times, a reference to being "gay" was not demeaning or vilifying and that the comment made by the young girl to her grandmother was intended to be humorous and lighthearted.

The Board also considered whether the advertisement presented a stereotype of 'gay' people as being creative and considered that whilst it may be stereotypical, there were no demeaning depictions about any sector of the community, gay, creative or otherwise.

The Board found that the depiction did not contravene the provisions of the Code relating to the portrayal of people (sexual preference).

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