



## CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	355/08
2. Advertiser	Ricoh Australia Pty Ltd
3. Product	Office products
4. Type of advertisement	TV
5. Nature of complaint	Discrimination or vilification Gender - section 2.1
6. Date of determination	Wednesday, 8 October 2008
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement depicts a new male staffer in an office lining up behind other male/female staff for hot water for his tea. He notices the queue is moving so slowly because everyone is dunking the same teabag into their cups and despite a note advising a maximum of 3 dunks, the front runner is repeatedly dunking. The scene shifts through a window to a Ricoh photocopier where a woman quickly prints a document as a voice over explains "There's efficiency - and there's Ricoh efficiency."

## THE COMPLAINT

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

*The ricoh ad showing a queue of tired, defeated men lining up at an inferior machine to dunk the same teabag in their cup of hot water. In contrast, a lone female is shown deftly and successfully using a Ricoh machine, while a smooth voice-over declares "There's efficiency, then there's Ricoh efficiency."*

*Same old recipe people. Why a line of only men for the inferior machine? Were these gender roles reversed, with a line of only women, there is no doubt females would have every right to shout "sexist" and lodge a formal complaint. I'd help them lodge it.*

*Their complaint would be upheld after a fair hearing. However, because it is men shown in a bad light, nobody reacts.*

*Some perverse ideology dictates that women on TV must always be shown positively, while men on TV can be treated like crap, with no right to complain. That is degrading nonsense, and I want this complaint upheld please.*

*Sorry to break it to you but both genders should be accorded respect. Is that too hard? Would it have killed the ad makers to have included a female in that queue???? I want justice here, not the customary turning of blind eyes just because it is men who suffer.*

## THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

*The Ricoh advertisement referred to contrasts a 'penny wise, pound foolish' approach to cost efficiency in a somber, constricted office, against a highly efficient, modern office across across the road that has invested in a Ricoh multifunctional printer embedded with business applications.*

*The inefficient office (Office A) is represented by a queue of staff fighting over the over use of a single suspended teabag next to a hot water unit with a sign "maximum three dunks". The queue consists of three men and one woman when it is joined by a new male starter for the company trying to find out what is going on. He is not yet part of the office's dour culture and his quizzical*

*looks represent the viewer's point-of-view before our point-of-view switches to the efficient office (Office B) across the road where a female employee in a smart corporate style dress swipes her security proxy card at the printer to quickly release and pick up a job and walk away. The office is alone apart from the female employee.*

*The voice over across the end of the cost-cutting Office A segment states 'There's efficiency'. When this office is contrasted with the approach of the modern Office B, the voice over continues '....and there's Ricoh efficiency'.*

*In answer to the complaint that you have received citing section 2.1 of the AANA Code of Ethics - Discrimination or vilification - gender:*

*1. The initial queue in Office A is not male only and does contain one woman. 2. Not all the men in the queue are "tired" and "defeated. The protagonist of Office A who joins the queue is decently dressed and upbeat. He is a new starter who quickly realises that he has joined the wrong company, which is then our link to the efficiently run Office B across the road -the type of office that he probably would have preferred to have joined. 3. There is only one person shown in Office B. It is unreasonable for the audience to assume that the whole office would consist of perky, positive females only and rather that she is but one employee of a mixed gender office.*

*With the complainant misrepresenting the true narrative of the commercial and unreasonably misreading its communication intent, I would request that the complaint be rejected.*

## **THE DETERMINATION**

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

The Board considered the application of Section 2.1 of the Code, relating to discrimination and vilification. The Board noted there was also a woman in the queue waiting for the inferior machine.

The Board agreed with the advertiser’s response that the presentation of a single female employee in the efficient office should not be interpreted to mean that only females are employed in the efficient office or that only females are efficient. The Board therefore found no breach of Section 2.1.

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