



## CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	358/07
2. Advertiser	Carpet Court (Carpet Cleaning Kit)
3. Product	Housegoods/services
4. Type of advertisement	TV
5. Nature of complaint	Discrimination or vilification Gender - section 2.1
6. Date of determination	Tuesday, 13 November 2007
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement features the Carpet Court jester in medieval stocks, being hit by a tomato and explaining "At Carpet Court we know what it's like - you get beautiful new carpet and before you know it, someone's made a mess..." A beautiful woman wearing a low-cut bodice kneels to clean up the mess, as the jester continues "But don't worry, every purchase over \$1000 receives a free Carpet Cleaning Kit." The woman leaves and the jester thanks her, adding "So you'll be ready for whatever punishment it takes." The jester is then continually pelted in the face with tomatoes and the woman returns saddened to see the mess, but as the jester expects her to clean his face, she kneels to give her attention to the carpet instead. A voiceover announces "Carpet Court. We work hard to make it easy."

There is also a shorter version of this advertisement.

## THE COMPLAINT

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

*I object to the overt sexism portrayed in this advert. It is clearly intended to be humorous, but the underlying subtext conveys the offensive and cliched message that women are only useful to clean and be ogled while doing so. It is a sad fact of life that there are many people in society who believe this message, and it is truly shameful on the part of Carpet Court that they are using an advert which perpetuates the disgusting social culture of sexual discrimination.*

## THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

*Be assured we take these matters very seriously, and guard the reputation of our members' businesses and our brand with great vigour. Accordingly, we are meticulous in our processes, and in this case, of ensuring our advertising is reflective of the general standard acceptable to the Australian public.*

*We can only hypothesise that a G rating was deemed appropriate for this advertisement due to the humorous nature of our Court Jester character whose "tongue in cheek" delivery of our selling messages has given the brand great impact and standout value since its introduction early in 2004. It would also suggest that the advertisement was judged to be reflective of general tastes and values held by the wider Australian community.*

*Whilst in a very small amount of cases there maybe a small minority of the general public who take exception with specific elements of our approach, we contend that the great majority of the*

*Australian public see the “tongue in cheek” and comedic style of our character for what he is, and take no offence whatsoever; in so doing endorsing the decision of CAD that the Advertisement (in its entirety) is suitable for viewing by a General audience.*

## **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 denigrated and discriminated against women. The Board noted that the advertisements from this advertiser usually include the Carpet Court Jester and often include jokes and references to medieval times. In this advertisement the Board noted that the jester is shown in the stocks and has food thrown at him (a medieval punishment). The Board noted that the depiction of the woman cleaning up the food from the carpet beneath the jester is dressed also in medieval garb which is often depicted as having low cut fronts. The Board considered that the depiction of the woman cleaning up and in a low cut dress was consistent with the medieval theme of the advertisement and was not a reflection on contemporary women. The Board considered that the advertisement did not breach section 2.1 of the Code.

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