



## CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	389/09
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, 9 September 2009
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television commercial depicts a robot kicking a football. 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 and nods in approval. The other objects (motorbike, keg) 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:

*This advertisement does nothing to support the current government strategies to prevent violence of women (scene: the robot can pick the woman as an object he can 'collect') Also, the final scene that states 'Still brutally male', promotes the use of aggression and violence for men towards the items he has collected (in this case, includes a woman). In addition, this does not support the programs in place to build self esteem and positive body image of women (scene: the robot can pick and choose the parts of the female doll he likes or would like to enhance, then produces a thin blond woman in a bikini, this is emphasised by the computer scene where he can 'reject' the parts of her he does not want).*

*My 3 year old son watches this ad with great interest because he likes robots. But i feel it is programming young minds into thinking that all men want and think this way. That women are another object they can own. That all men desire semi naked blonds with big boobs. That women enjoy being treated like that and that they need to be like that to be desire-able. Then the line at the end says "still brutally male". So if your a man but you don't think like this there is something wrong with you...not a real man. It was on during the football, whose image is in tatters because of their attitude and actions towards and against women. Conflicting ideals for young impressionable male minds. It is a sexist and chauvinistic ad, degrading to women AND men.*

*The advertisement objectifies women. The advertisement seems to indicate that real women can or should be 'rejected' or modified to suit male needs. The ad links 'brutality' with domination of women, implying sexual violence or domination; 'brutally male'. The ad implies that male relationships with women are centered around control and violence.*

*Considering the ad objectifies women and then states being brutal is acceptable. I object! We need to stop violence against women.*

## THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complaint/s regarding this advertisement included the following: *Pharmacare Laboratories and Brut have complied with The ASB's previous ruling. To summarise: The Board has already determined the following in our advert: 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".... "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 broadcast of the advert during football broadcasts "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)." Flat chested women - "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 advert did not condone violent behaviour "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." Woman seen as a possession and not as a person was upheld - "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." Pharmacare Laboratories (Brut), subsequently changed the Brut advert to comply with this ASB ruling by removing the woman from the ute, so as not to show her as a possession of the Robot, and she is now only depicted as being held in a respectful manner, the way in which she is being held depicts utmost respect and care for her, the robot carries her as one would carry one's bride, and the advert now shows that the two of them will enjoy the possessions in the ute together, as partners.*

## **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 and the depiction of violence would send a negative message to boys in the sense that in order to be a man they must be cruel and violent.

The Board noted that an earlier version of this advertisement had recently been considered by the Board and that the advertiser had been requested to modify the advertisement to remove the offensive content.

The Board were sympathetic to the concerns of the complainants and agreed that some members of the community may find the "brutally male message" to be distasteful and a negative way of portraying how one should be "masculine". However, the Board considered that the advertisement was not overtly aggressive or violent towards the woman in the advertisement and that no excessive force was used in the imagery.

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 'metro sexual' 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 advertisement then shows the robot and the woman observing the other objects - although objectifying the woman, the Board considered that this did not amount to discrimination or vilification.

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.

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