



CASE REPORT

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. Complaint reference number | 393/08 |
| 2. Advertiser | Cancer Council NSW |
| 3. Product | Community Awareness |
| 4. Type of advertisement | TV |
| 5. Nature of complaint | Discrimination or vilification Gender - section 2.1
Violence Domestic violence – section 2.2 |
| 6. Date of determination | Wednesday, 8 October 2008 |
| 7. DETERMINATION | Dismissed |

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement opens on a group of girls arriving at a house for a girls' party. The hostess takes one girl's coat and throws it into a hall cupboard where a young man is bound and gagged. Text on screen reads "The girls are coming. girlsnightin.com.au."

THE COMPLAINT

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

Well just imagine the same ad advertising the boys night in and a woman being bound and gagged in a cupboard, it wouldn't even make it on the air. In summary I find this ad offensive as if the gendered were reversed the ad would be banned.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

Girls Night In is a fundraising campaign to raise money for women's cancers. The concept is that women get their girlfriends together for a night in sometime in October and donate what they would have spent on a night out to the Cancer Council. The funds raised are then used to fund research and support services for women's cancers.

The Girls Night In event was conceived by a panel of women in 2004 and this year will be the 4th year that the event has run nationally. Our market research shows that women enjoy having time with their girlfriends without their male counterparts and that in fact a Girls Night In is a natural social phenomenon.

In addition to this, by encouraging an all women's event we are able to communicate important health and preventative messaging about all women's cancers that wouldn't be received in the same way if there was mixed company.

However, we do find that many men attend Girls Night In events and based on feedback have a great time.

This year's Girls Night In advertising is focused around the tag line "The girls are coming" and there are 5 different TV executions, 4 print executions and a variety of online executions. The campaign focuses on humorous and quirky behaviours that women might undertake to get ready for a Girls Night In. The intention behind them is to create the excitement of getting the girls together in a light-hearted and humorous way.

The part of our campaign that seems to have attracted these complaints is the TV & print execution called Cloakroom. In this execution you see that the host of this Girls Night In has locked away her partner in the hall cupboard so she can partake in her girls' only event (the print execution uses the image of the man in the cupboard). The man in the advertisement is lightly bound with dressing gown cords and a tea towel. The facial expression of the man in the cupboard shows that he is in no way being harmed and in a way playing along with being locked away. The TV version of execution is being shown in rotation with the other 4 versions of 15 sec TVC's and the main 30 TVC which gives a better explanation of the Girls Night In concept. The image was used in an advertisement in Who magazine and in several online executions. This image was used in rotation with the 3 other alternative images.

All of the advertisements for this year's campaign were subject to focus testing and the Cloakroom execution actually rated as the most preferred and most humorous execution within the target market. We did not get any feedback with regards to the campaign being discriminatory from the focus testing. I have attached an excerpt from the research paper with the relevant information with regards to these advertisements.

Please be assured that the Cancer Council is an equal opportunity organisation and does not support discrimination of any sort. Whilst, we take all complaints very seriously and acknowledge that we have offended a small segment of the population with this campaign, we would like to hope that the general audience understand this campaign is targeted towards women and is about the importance of a female support network when touched by women's cancers. Our intent was merely to portray this in a humorous and light hearted manner and there certainly was never any intention for it to be construed as discrimination, violence or vilification.

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 Sections 2.1, relating to discrimination and 2.2, relating to violence.

The Board considered that, while the depiction of the bound man in the advertisement may offend some members of the community, its tone was light-hearted. The Board found the depiction was not discriminatory to men generally and was intended to illustrate the message of a girls' only night in. The Board considered that the depiction was intended to be humorous and did not present or portray violence, according to prevailing community standards of what constitutes "violence". A clear majority of the Board considered there was no breach of Sections 2.1 or 2.2 of the Code.

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