

## CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	490/06
2. Advertiser	Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Poland)
3. Product	Finance/Investment
4. Type of advertisement	TV
5. Nature of complaint	Discrimination or vilification Nationality – section 2.1
6. Date of determination	Tuesday, 12 December 2006
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement features a man on a phone trying to book a holiday in Tahiti using his reward points, while his wife keeps popping into the room modelling tropical-style clothing. As the destination and dates requested are repeatedly denied, he hangs up and asks his wife "How do you feel about Poland in 2008?" A male voiceover asks "The Commonwealth Bank understands your frustration. That's why we've introduced Travel Plus". The scene changes to a later date and we see the man looking tanned and relaxed, putting on the fridge a photo of himself and his wife on a Tahitian beach as the voiceover continues "Awards that let you go where you want, when you want. Thought you'd never see the day?"

## THE COMPLAINT

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

*It is offensive to Polish people and Poland as a country and Poland as a tourist destination. It is actually a very interesting and beautiful country to visit. Therefore not only is it insulting. It is also factually inaccurate. It is offensive to people born in Poland or people of Polish descent living in Australia.*

## THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

*In defence of this concept it was not the bank's intention to offend anyone, or to target any specific racial group.*

*The scenario was simply intended to demonstrate the frustration people experience when trying to book through existing frequent flyer programs.*

*It shows a man attempting to plan a holiday vacation for him and his partner. Only to find that due to the restrictions around Frequent Flyer programs he cannot get the beach holiday he obviously desires.*

*The outcome of "well honey how do you feel about Poland in 2008" was used as a complete juxtaposition from what he intended to book.*

*It was not intended to be disparaging against Poland or Polish people. It was simply that as a destination it sits at the very opposite end of the spectrum from the typical beach holiday destination of Bali, Fiji or Tahiti he set out to get.*

*Within the Travel Plus offering Poland is in fact one of the many destinations available. So rather than mocking Poland through this new travel service we are in fact promoting it.*

## **THE DETERMINATION**

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

The Board viewed the advertisement and considered whether the advertisement breached section 2.1 of the Code, concerned with discrimination and vilification.

The Board noted the man in the advertisement suggesting Poland as an inferior option to Tahiti as a holiday destination. The Board considered the complainant's comments that the man's view, and hence the script, was offensive to people born in Poland.

The Board took the view that the comment was about Poland, not the Polish people, and was in the context of a couple searching for a beach-holiday destination, as evidenced by the woman in the commercial wearing beach-style clothes. The Board concluded that while Polish people might have been insulted by the comment about their country as a physical holiday destination, in the context of the search by this couple for a beachside holiday, the advertisement was not discriminatory or vilifying of people of Polish ethnicity.

Further finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on any other grounds, the Board dismissed the complaint.