



## **CASE REPORT**

1. Complaint reference number	497/06
2. Advertiser	Ford Motor Co Aust Pty Ltd (Tonk A Pom)
3. Product	Vehicles
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, in the style of a 70s/80 commercial opens on a young boy holding a cricket ball with an image of an England Ashes player towards the camera as a male voiceover announces "For backyard fun, play Tonk A Pom." The boy swings his bat and tells us "I tonked a Pom onto the neighbour's roof." The voiceover continues "Go to tonkapom.com.au and start tonking." The view widens to show a family backyard cricket game as the boy swings his bat then shields his eyes from the glare as he looks to the skies. Matt Hayden is then seen with an Australian flag in the background, imitating the same action as the boy, as the voiceover concludes "It's a game the whole country can enjoy."

## **THE COMPLAINT**

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

*I feel this promotion is racist and an incitement to violence...whacking a person because of their different background.*

*I find the term "Pom" to be offensive and racist.*

*Despite the obvious attempt at the atypical laddish humour so commonly enjoyed by Australians the overall inference is one of racist commentary aimed at the English.*

## **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE**

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

*We do not believe that the scenario shown in the advertisement depicts material in a way which discriminates against, or vilifies a person or a section of the community on account of race or ethnicity.*

*By way of background, Ford Australia's "Tonk A Pom" campaign was created to celebrate the rivalry of two great cricketing nations as they prepare to do battle in one of the most keenly awaited cricket series in the game's history. The term "Pom" is freely used in the cricketing world as a nickname for the English team and its players, the word "tonk" is a cricketing term for hitting the ball for four or six.*

*Prior to activating the Tonk A Pom campaign, Ford conducted research regarding the use of the word "Pom" in anticipation that there may be certain members of the community who may express concern with the term. In the context of the Code we consider that the word does not offend, insult, or humiliate a person or group as several English organizations, both here in Australia and in the*

*UK , have made use of the term “Pom” in their communications.*

*In Australia we located two expatriate websites developed by and intended for consumption by English expatriates living in Australia . Both go to the extent of using “Pom” in their URL - [www.pomsdownunder.com](http://www.pomsdownunder.com) and [www.pomsinperth.com](http://www.pomsinperth.com) .*

*In another case the British Council of Australia ran a promotion earlier in the year called “Realise your dream”. This promotion featured the headline “Poms will whinge”. It can be located at [www.realiseyourdream.org.au](http://www.realiseyourdream.org.au) .*

*Ford believes that using the word “Pom” is acceptable if it is used in the right spirit, as the examples above have highlighted. Our 'Tonk A Pom' campaign does not incite hatred towards English people, rather it captures the spirit of both Australians and English alike in friendly cricketing rivalry. Such rivalry has existed between the two countries for over 100 years on the cricket pitch.*

## **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 advertisements in question and considered whether the advertisements breached Section 2.1 of the Code dealing with discrimination and vilification.

The Board considered carefully the complainant's comments that the advertisement had racist overtones.

The Board considered the nature and usual intention of the word "Pom" when used in Australia and agreed that the term is used largely with non-hostile, playful and often affectionate intentions. The Board took account of the advertisement's context - namely cricket - and noted that there has been an historical, affectionate rivalry between the two countries and no recent history of racial antagonism.

The Board felt that in Australia the term 'Pom' is used in a manner that is not meant to be hostile or vilifying, but rather is consistent with Australian humour, particularly in the context of cricket.

On balance, with regard to prevailing community standards, the Board concluded that the use of the word "Pom" was not regarded by the wider Australian community as discriminatory or vilifying of persons of British extraction. Hence the Board found that the advertisements in question did not breach Section 2.1 of the Code.

The Board also considered the use of 'tonk' which it held to mean 'hit for a six'. Rather than encouraging violence toward the English, the Board felt the advertisement was merely celebrating the prospect of the Australian cricket team hitting the English bowlers for six during the Ashes series.

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