



## **CASE REPORT**

1. Complaint reference number	518/09
2. Advertiser	AAMI Insurance
3. Product	Insurance
4. Type of advertisement	TV
5. Nature of complaint	Discrimination or vilification Other – section 2.1
6. Date of determination	Wednesday, 25 November 2009
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT**

This television advertisement depicts a man who visits his insurance company AAMI because he has a problem with his car. A female assistant walks up to the man and gently reassures him. The female voiceover explains how there will be a complimentary taxi to get you on your way. The advertisement cuts to the AAMI assistant looking puzzled and shocked as a large man (a taxi driver) walks in the AAMI shop with his arms wide open. The taxi driver walks up to the man and gives him a huge hug which lasts for a few seconds. Everyone seems uncomfortable, except for the cab driver, who hugs the man again.

## **THE COMPLAINT**

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

*My complaint is in regard to AAMI commercial this is frequently shown on Channel 9. The sloppily dressed buffoon type who plays the part of a taxi driver and displays inappropriate (taxi driver) behaviour, is not a good representation of drivers in the Taxi Industry and cements the poor attitude that much of the public still seems to have towards taxi drivers. A great amount of extra money, time and training has been spend over the last few years to overcome this attitude and to promote the profile of the SA taxi driver. Tell AAMI to redo the ad and to get the "Taxi Driver" up to date – A full uniform, that is fitting properly is required and a "Driver" who is behaving appropriately and professionally as he has been trained to do. I am sure that by contacting any of the three taxi companies in Adelaide, AAMI can be assisted in correcting the commercial.*

*The current AAMI ad makes fun of fat people as being grotesque and that they make others feel uncomfortable. Near the end of the ad, a bloke who doesn't have a car is taken care of by AAMI when they call a taxi to pick him up. Then a large, obese taxi driver arrives and hugs the customer (for no particular reason, he's just socially backward as well as being obese). The customer and AAMI representative look highly uncomfortable at the taxi driver's lack of social skills and also the sweaty discomfort of being hugged by such a large person.*

## **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE**

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

*We strongly deny that our ad 'Dogs' contravenes section 2.1 laid out in the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics. It was certainly not our intention to discriminate against or vilify taxi drivers or 'fat people' as the first claimant suggests. The actor in the ad was selected because he looked friendly and jolly and exuded a certain personality. We had hoped to convey that he was a nice guy with the best of intentions, who was a bit overzealous in his attempts to comfort our shaken-up customer,*

*thus creating an awkward moment at the end where his hug gets a little too close for comfort.*

## **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 makes fun of fat people as being grotesque and that they make others feel uncomfortable. The Board noted the advertiser's response and viewed the advertisement.

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of section 2.1 of the Code. Section 2.1 of the Code states:

*"Advertising and Marketing Communications shall not portray people or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of race, ethnicity, nationality, sex, age, sexual preference, religion, disability or political belief."*

The Board noted that the fact that the man was large and overweight but considered that this was not implying that he was grotesque or that people feel uncomfortable around fat people. Instead, the advertisement was creating a scene whereby the large man was trying to be cuddly and affectionate to his customer. The man receiving the hug did not appear to be disgusted or offended, he appeared a little surprised and overwhelmed by the taxi driver's behaviour. The Board agreed 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.