



CASE REPORT

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. Complaint reference number | 532/08 |
| 2. Advertiser | Cartridge Works |
| 3. Product | Office goods/services |
| 4. Type of advertisement | Print |
| 5. Nature of complaint | Discrimination or vilification Gender - section 2.1
Discrimination or vilification Sexual preference – section 2.1
Discrimination or vilification Disability – section 2.1 |
| 6. Date of determination | Wednesday, 21 January 2009 |
| 7. DETERMINATION | Dismissed |

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This print advertisement for Cartridge Works is in the form of a newsletter titled 'Village Idiot' and includes several sarcastic articles by fictitious reporter Harvie Q. It also includes a classifieds section and an 'advertisement' for Cartridge Works which says, "Did you know that buying cartridges from Cartridge Works makes you 42% more attractive?".

THE COMPLAINT

When this advertisement arrived in the mail, its contents and approach, offended me with such intensity that my stomach literally churned and my body shuddered. I object to this advertisement for a number of reasons. It is not even a remotely witty or creative attempt at conveying humour. It is base, offensive and demonstrates nothing more than a profoundly puerile and bigoted attitude. It is derogatory to women, discriminates against people with disabilities and vilifies homosexual people. It is overtly sexist in its tone, makes reference to serious matters that are currently under investigation and blatantly undermines local council regulations and procedures. The content of it is in no way related to the products which it is supposed to advertise. How sexist and discriminatory comments relate to printer ink and toner cartridges, frankly escapes me. This advertisement serves to do nothing but perpetuate divisions in the community by re-enforcing stereotypes and promoting aggressive, un-informed myopic behaviour. Having it delivered as general mail also means that it has most likely been accessible to children. I am at a loss as to why someone would put time and resources into producing such a slanderous and offensive publication. I would classify this as one of the most vile and offensive printed advertisements I have seen. It could be argued that the "Village Idiot" in this circumstance, is the advertiser. Let the detail contained above and in my description of the ad demonstrate the seriousness of the intent of my complaint.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

[I] don't intend to provide any further details because the Board members should be intelligent enough to make a decision with the evidence already in "The Village Idiot.com.au". He felt he could be accused of being silly but not of discrimination against women or people with disabilities or of vilifying homosexuals.

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 was discriminatory on a number of grounds and considered the application of Section 2.1 of the Code, relating to discrimination and vilification.

The Board considered that, while some members of the community may find the advertisements humorous, many would find it in bad taste and offensive. However, the Board did not agree that the content of the advertisement amounted to discrimination towards, or vilification of, persons on the basis of gender, sexual preference, disability or on any other basis. The Board therefore found no breach of Section 2.1 of the Code.

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