



CASE REPORT

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| 1. Complaint reference number | 537/09 |
| 2. Advertiser | Bible Society of NSW |
| 3. Product | Community Awareness |
| 4. Type of advertisement | TV |
| 5. Nature of complaint | Discrimination or vilification Religion – section 2.1
Discrimination or vilification Sexual preference – section 2.1
Health and safety – section 2.6
Other - Social values |
| 6. Date of determination | Wednesday, 11 November 2009 |
| 7. DETERMINATION | Dismissed |

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement depicts a male voiceover which says: 'Hey Jesus, thanks for everything'. Images of creme caramel, a person's feet on the beach, and a tube of red paint are displayed. 'Like thanks for sunshine. But what about sunburn? How come the more you have, the more you want? We've got more friends but less friendship, more convenience, less patience. A healthy body still isn't good enough. More hope, but more uncertainty. How come the best things always have to end?'

THE COMPLAINT

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

I would like to complain about a TV ad by allaboutlife.com.au Jesus. No I am not complaining because it is religious I am complaining because I am the mother of a 14 yo girl who suffers from Anorexia a battle I would not want my worst enemy to have to live with it is beyond heart breaking. On this ad they have a teenage girl in front of a mirror with the words "when even a healthy body isn't good enough!" This is wrong on so many levels so many young girls will see this ad and god (no pun intended) knows if this will be the trigger for them to start to spiral down this devastating path. I strongly believe that the ad should be edited and this section removed.

Religious beliefs should not be advertised anywhere. There are many people like myself who object to having this type of advertising in our faces. I do not believe in any type of religion and do not believe that this type of advertising is ethical and is discriminatory against my beliefs.

The ads are forcing someone else's religious viewpoints down my throat, and I, personally, do not want them down my throat or anywhere near me, thank you very much.

Religious freedom is an accepted and expected right in our society, fair enough. I agree with that one hundred percent. But it is part of this religious freedom, or at least in my opinion, that religion is not forced upon anyone ever.

People slam the door on religious doorknockers for the same reason that people are against the Jesus ads, that being that we do not wish to have our lives invaded by something we don't agree with.

I am absolutely fine if someone believes in God and practices Christianity, I have no problem with it. Just accept that not everyone shares this belief.

The church need to heavily consider the fact that not everyone wants to be part of their religion, no matter how much they think they're "saving" people, AND people need to recognise that we have the freedom to live our lives without religious messages being forced upon us.

I find the ads quite offensive in this regard.

Since when does religion get advertised on TV? I think this is despicable! If it had been a muslim or any other religion it would be copping a lot more abuse and I doubt it would ever have been put to air in the first place.

Commercial products, travel, other tv shows, sure no problem. There is enough pressure on religious beliefs these days already, without having Christianity advertised on TV too. Especially for children watching it! There is is pressure from schools, Churches, parents, peers. People should be able to make up their own minds, without ANY influence from others.

And for the record, I AM a Christian, and still don't agree with this ad.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

We are writing in response to complaints regarding the TVC that was part of the Jesus. All about life campaign. We received legal advice regarding the campaign that approved the content we were advertising.

We never expressed the opinion that Jesus has THE answers, our advertisement says Jesus has answers and if people wish to find out more they can visit the website or attend a local community event.

We don't believe the ad was discriminating. Our intention was to raise awareness of Jesus and people have the option to choose if they would like to find out more.

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 religious advertisements are unethical and inappropriate because they are offensive to those who are not of the Christian faith, and that they are forcing their beliefs upon people. The Board also noted a complaint that the advertisement sends out the wrong message with respect to not being satisfied with a healthy body.

The Board noted the advertiser's response and viewed the advertisement.

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of sections 2.1 and 2.6 of the Code. Section 2.1 of the Code states:

"Advertising or 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 advertisement was thanking a deity, namely Jesus, for some of the wonderful and everyday events that may occur in peoples' lives and such statements might offend some people (whether of the Christian faith or not). The Board considered that people have a right to advertise a service or product and that with many services or products there will be people in the community who do not believe such advertising and prefer not to see it. The Board considered that advertising a church and a particular religion is not of itself discriminatory of people who are of a different or no faith.

In terms of the content of this particular advertisement, the Board considered that there was no material in the advertisement that discriminated against or vilified people on account of their religion and that the advertisement did not breach section 2.1 of the Code.

The Board then considered whether the advertisement was in breach of section 2.6 of the Code. Section 2.6 of the Code states:

"Advertising or marketing communications shall not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety."

The Board noted the complaint in relation to the reference to "a healthy body is still not good enough" and the image of the female looking at her body in the mirror. The Board felt that the advertisement was not suggesting that people should lose weight. Instead, the advertisement was implying how we take things for granted and that most people in the community would consider this advertisement to reflect the unnecessary suffering that some people put themselves through with respect to trying to be good enough. The Board consider that this advertisement was not in breach of the prevailing community standards and concern in relation to body image and young women. In this regard, the Board agreed that the advertisement was not in breach of section 2.6 of the Code.

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