

## Case Report

1. Case Number :	0210-23
2. Advertiser :	Clorox Australia Pty Ltd
3. Product :	House Goods Services
4. Type of Advertisement/Media :	TV - On Demand
5. Date of Decision:	27-Sep-2023
6. Decision:	Dismissed

### ISSUES RAISED

AANA Code of Ethics\2.1 Discrimination or Vilification

### DESCRIPTION OF ADVERTISEMENT

This TV on demand advertisement contains scenes of a mother doing household tasks. She says, "We squeeze as much as we can into each day and there's always more to do. But thankfully, there's our Chux DishWand! Simply flip and fill. The leak proof handle holds the detergent. And the angled scourer reaches all the tricky bits. It's so simple! No filling sinks. No gloves. And I get to spend more time -with these two! The Chux DishWand. Now anyone can help out". Her two children are then shown doing the dishes.



### THE COMPLAINT

Comments which the complainant/s made regarding this advertisement included the following:

*It is 2023, and we are still solely using women and mothers in ads to sell cleaning products, and we are clearly marketing them towards women. This ad implies that it is a woman's job to do everything and cleaning up is still her responsibility, although with their product, sometimes others can "help her out". Yes, the ad depicts a son*

*helping, but there is no "father" figure or any sort of mature male represented to challenge the harmful and extremely sexist stereotype of women's homemaker responsibilities. The use of the young son also implies that the work of changing these outdated gender roles is the responsibility of the next generation, and that our current men are simply too far gone to accept a change to the patriarchal status quo. Secondly, the ad depicts the mother figure attempting (and failing) to "do it all" - work, clean, raise the kids, exercise etc - which again implies there is some level of societal expectation that female parents divide their attention in physically/emotionally demanding ways that we would NEVER expect of male parents.*

*The company and advertiser's antiquated depiction of gender roles only makes me want to avoid their products. If the advertiser really wanted to use the tagline, "Now anyone can help out", I would suggest a mid-20s man doing the dishes, while his dog assists him - this would be funnier and would help them attract another market (MEN) to their products.*

## **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE**

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complainant/s regarding this advertisement include the following:

*Under the Code, discrimination and vilification of any individual or group of people on the basis of certain defined attributes are prohibited. Discrimination is unfair or less favourable treatment. Vilification is humiliation, intimidation, inciting of hatred, contempt or ridicule, The defined attributes include gender i.e., the attributes, roles, behaviours, activities, opportunities or restrictions that society considers appropriate for girls or boys, women or men.*

*The Practice Note includes the following guidance:*

.....

### **HUMOUR**

*A negative depiction of a group of people in society may be found to breach Section 2.1, even if humour is used. The depiction will be regarded as a breach if a negative impression is created by the imagery and language used in the advertisement of a person or group of people on the basis of a defined attribute listed above.*

*Advertisements can humorously or satirically suggest stereotypical aspects of a group of people in society provided the overall impression of the advertisement does not convey a negative impression of people of that group on the basis of one or more of the attributes listed above.*

....

### **GENDER STEREOTYPES**

*Harmful gender stereotypes are unacceptable because they perpetuate unconscious bias and rigid norms of femininity and masculinity that shape what it means to be a girl, woman, boy or man.*

*Advertisements should take care to avoid suggesting that skills, interests, roles or characteristics are:*

- *always uniquely associated with one gender (eg. family members creating a mess while a woman has sole responsibility for cleaning it up);*
- *the only options available to one gender; or*
- *never carried out or displayed by another gender,*
- *as this may amount to discrimination on the basis of gender. This includes, but is not limited to advertisements that:*
- *mock people for not conforming to gender stereotypes;*
- *portray an activity or product as being inappropriate for a girl or boy because it is stereotypically associated with another gender; or*
- *portray one sex failing at a task that is stereotypically associated another gender (eg. a man trying and failing to undertake simple parental or household tasks).*

.....

*Nothing in this rule is intended to prevent ads from featuring:*

- *one gender only;*
- *products designed or made for one gender featuring only that gender (eg tampons, breastfeeding products);*
- *gender stereotypes as a means to challenge their negative effects.*

*Against this background, the complaint is that the advertisement is based on old fashioned gender stereotypes:*

*"It is 2023, and we are still solely using women and mothers in ads to sell cleaning products, and we are clearly marketing them towards women. This ad implies that it is a woman's job to do everything and cleaning up is still her responsibility, although with their product, sometimes others can "help her out". Yes, the ad depicts a son helping, but there is no "father" figure or any sort of mature male represented to challenge the harmful and extremely sexist stereotype of women's homemaker responsibilities. The use of the young son also implies that the work of changing these outdated gender roles is the responsibility of the next generation, and that our current men are simply too far gone to accept a change to the patriarchal status quo. Secondly, the ad depicts the mother figure attempting (and failing) to "do it all" - work, clean, raise the kids, exercise etc - which again implies there is some level of societal expectation that female parents divide their attention in physically/emotionally demanding ways that we would NEVER expect of male parents."*

*While we respect the Complainant's views, we believe their assessment of the advertisement is not a rounded and fair view of the advertisement and answer the complaint as follows:*

- *The household of the advertisement is a modern household where the parent/adult carer is busy with: work outside the home, undertaking care including feeding and supervision of children in the home, assisting the children with school and homework, getting the household chores done and the parent/adult carer getting some recreational time with the children and some leisure/relaxation time without the children.*

- *This is an ordinary household with the tasks borne and emotions experienced by the parent/carer universal in nature, whatever the gender. Most households with children may have similar experiences.*
- *In the advertisement, the parent/carer is a female figure but she is not vilified or shown as discriminated against. The figure is depicted in a good natured light hearted way. She works outside the home, inside the home, enjoys time relaxing with the children and enjoys time relaxing without the children. This is probably the same for many households with children caring responsibilities. The tasks are tasks, which have to be accomplished, and household products that help with the tasks are appreciated.*
- *While we respect the complainant's view, it is we feel negative and lacking in humour to see the advertisement as the complainant has i.e., as sending a message that the woman/mum should do everything around the home. In fact, there may be many explanations for the absence of an adult male figure, short or long term. It is commonplace that busy households with children may include an adult carer of female gender or male gender or shared, with absences for work or illness and more permanent reasons. For most of the community, the advertisement would simply not be perceived as the complainant perceives it.*
- *Nor is it reasonable to take from a younger male assisting with household tasks a message that this is because adult males are hopeless and the community has given up on them helping effectively with these tasks. Rather, the message conveyed is that of a universally typical family group with participants all interacting with one another sometimes helpfully and sometimes not so helpfully.*

*In contrast to the complainant's view, we believe the community would see real life in the advertisement for families and children. While it may be true that many female mother figures take on the tasks and roles depicted, others do too. And the roles are diverse and include paid work outside the home and enjoyable personal and time with children, in addition to the more mundane household tasks.*

*With those comments, coming back to the language of the Code and Practice Note, it is clear that the Community Panel would not likely find a breach. The advertisement does not suggest that the tasks and roles are only for women. The woman's activities depicted in the advertisement are able to be undertaken by a man. The advertisement is not negative about the tasks and roles. The children are not stereotyped and interact with the mother figure. There is love and laughter in the advertisement, and support for the importance of caring and household cleaning. Importantly, the mum works outside and inside the home, and has fun on her own as well as with her children.*

*Finally, for completeness, the advertisement been running on and off since 2018. Further, the shorter versions of the campaign ads depict an adult male doing the dishes and using the advertised product.*

*The advertisement uses humour and light heartedness to depict our everyday lives, and highlight the helpful contribution of the advertised product.*

#### *Conclusion*

*Clorox again confirms its commitment to meet and reflect community standards and all Codes and standards. We believe our advertising campaign does that, and trust that the Panel is reassured and able to dismiss the complaint.*

### **THE DECISION**

The Ad Standards Community Panel (the Panel) considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics (the Code).

The Panel noted the complainant's concern that the advertisement uses gender stereotypes.

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

**Section 2.1: Advertising 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, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, disability, mental illness or political belief.**

The Panel noted the AANA Practice Note which provides guidance on the meaning of:

- Discrimination - unfair or less favourable treatment
- Vilification - humiliates, intimidates, incites hatred, contempt or ridicule
- Gender – refer to the attributes, roles, behaviours, activities, opportunities or restrictions that society considers appropriate for girls or boys, women or men. Gender is distinct from 'sex', which refers to biological differences

The Panel noted that the Practice Note also includes:

*“Harmful gender stereotypes are unacceptable because they perpetuate unconscious bias and rigid norms of femininity and masculinity that shape what it means to be a girl, woman, boy or man.*

*Advertisements should take care to avoid suggesting that skills, interests, roles or characteristics are:*

- *always uniquely associated with one gender (eg. family members creating a mess while a woman has sole responsibility for cleaning it up);*

- *the only options available to one gender; or*
- *never carried out or displayed by another gender,*

*as this may amount to discrimination on the basis of gender.”*

**Does the advertisement portray material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person on account of gender?**

The Panel noted that there is no man depicted in the advertisement, and as such no depiction of a man being unhelpful, lazy or further contributing to a mess while expecting the woman to pick up after him. The Panel noted that there are different types of family units and that the lack of a man depicted in this advertisement could indicate that this family consists of the mother and two children only rather than that he is simply nowhere to be seen in domestic duties. The Panel noted there is not a positive obligation for an advertiser to include all genders in every advertisement.

The Panel considered that a mother showing her children how to do housework is not itself a suggestion that such work belongs solely to women and the next generation and that men have no responsibility. Rather it shows everyone in the depicted family participating in chores.

The Panel considered that while the advertisement may be aimed at mothers and showing a relatable family circumstance, there is no suggestion that female roles are restricted to looking after children or cleaning, or that these roles could not be undertaken by men. The Panel considered that the advertisement was not perpetuating rigid norms of femininity, rather was depicting an everyday circumstance and an everyday family.

The Panel noted the complainant’s concern that the depiction of a mother trying, and failing, to do it all was a reflection of societal expectations that female parents divide their attention in physically/emotionally demanding ways that would not be expected of male parents. The Panel considered that the advertisement is a reflection of the kind of load any sole parent may have to undertake, and there is no suggestion that a male parent would not perform the same household tasks.

The Panel considered that the advertisement did not depict material in a manner that was discriminatory or vilifying on the basis of gender.

**Section 2.1 conclusion**

Finding that the advertisement did not portray material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of gender, the Panel determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.1 of the Code.

**Conclusion**

Finding that the advertisement did not breach any other section of the Code the Panel dismissed the complaint.