

Case Report

1. Case Number :	0238-24
2. Advertiser :	Repco (GPC Asia Pacific)
3. Product :	Automotive
4. Type of Advertisement/Media :	TV - Free to Air
5. Date of Decision:	25-Sep-2024
6. Decision:	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

AANA Code of Ethics\2.1 Discrimination or Vilification

DESCRIPTION OF ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement features a man with a glowing glove putting his hand over a child's head. The child is then transformed to wearing a backwards hat and sunglasses. A voice-over then describes specials at Repco.



THE COMPLAINT

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

New ad for Repco Supercars. Sacrilegious and offensive to Christians! Why are Christians always targeted? Why not other religions? It's s disgraceful!

Ad takes place in a church and makes mockery of important aspects of the Christian religion. Other religions would be offended if their faith was treated in this manner.

The ad I'm complaining about is offensive to God, Christian's and the church. It is set in a Christian Church and the word Hallelujah is often used which is a word only used to

worship God not for any other purpose. It is therefore blasphemous towards God and mocks God and the Christian faith. Please imagine the exact same ad set in a Muslim mosque. There would be an out cry of Muslim's. It is not ok to therefore use the Christian faith instead. Every time this ad is on I feel very uncomfortable and quickly change the channel.

It mocks Christ and christianity, singing hallelujah (which is A holy saying)

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The Bringin' the Bathurst campaign was created to celebrate Repco's love of the Bathurst 1000, and we are now in our 4th successive year in being naming rights partner of the event. The Bathurst 1000 has been around for more than 60 years now, and Repco has a long association with motorsport over its 102 years and is very passionate about it.

This year's Bringin' the Bathurst TV ad was born from the same cultural insight as previous years - that fans passionately celebrate the sport, and particularly the Bathurst 1000 – and the intention was to convey a sense of the spirit and energy of the Bathurst 1000 experience. The ad is to celebrate a commercial partnership with an iconic race, which is the biggest and most revered event in Australian Motorsport. This Repco ad is the fourth year we have run our Bringin' The Bathurst campaign, and is designed to be a continuation of the theme. The ad and it's spectacle is designed to capture the awesomeness and energy of the race, as well as a number of subtle and overt references to names, icons and brands the race is famous for. 'Brocky's Glove' is a returning feature from the 2023 campaign, which is a mythical creation, which comically shoots lightning to turn ordinary people and objects, into "Bathurst-ified" versions of themselves.

The ad has been produced with a high level of passion and energy, and we gave it a 'music-video' style to help convey the sense of energy and excitement we have previously mentioned. It has been produced with a highly fantastical nature, to attract race fans and car enthusiasts, utilising the idolisation that so many fans of Australian fans feel of Peter Brock. The ad also takes inspiration from the spiritual nature of Mount Panorama and the way Mount Panorama is described and referred to by racing fans.

We appreciate that humour is very personal and understand this humour might not be to everyone's taste, but we took great care to ensure it was not offensive by ensuring we consulted the Ad Standards guides during concept development as well as production.

Our focus from that review, was to ensure the ad doesn't ever make fun of anyone, nor make any marginalising jokes about religion or religious people.

The ad never makes fun of religion – be that a specific religion, or even religion in general. The ad is filming in a non-denomination chapel, and is extensively set dressed with automotive references and racing memorabilia to ensure the context of the environment is automotive-based, not religion-based. None of the motifs displayed in the setting are ever shown to be mocking any religion and all inspired by things one would see on the walls of a garage or shed of an automotive enthusiast.

Our ad does not portray religion in a negative manner, nor does it vilify, discriminate against or humiliate in any way. It never degrades or makes fun of religion, or anyone who is religious. The ad is humorous and fun, but never marginalises any religion or depicts it in a negative light. In fact, our lead character is enthusiastically celebrated by passionate race fans who are shown as happy, joyous and having fun at being entertained by the glove's amazing transformational powers.

The casting in the ad was also highly considered, and includes a diverse mix of people, races and demographics as is and was our commitment to cultural diversity. It never casts any stereotypes at all.

Regarding the use of the word 'Hallelujah', while it has religious origins, it is a word very commonly used in everyday context, generally used to loosely mean 'finally' or 'an expression of thanks' and Cambridge dictionary defines the word as 'an expression of great happiness, praise or thanks'. So in daily life it doesn't always have religious connotations. Our strong association and commercial partnership with Supercars and Bathurst is a major facilitator in ensuring the event continues to run and is brought to life with passion for race fans.

In conclusion, we were inspired by the magical nature of Mount Panorama, the passion and commitment fans show towards the race, and took great care and consideration to ensure we portrayed a diverse mix of people, never vilified or marginalised and people and never portrayed religion in a negative light.

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 complainants' concerns that the advertisement mocks and discriminates against religion.

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

Section 2.1: Advertising shall not portray 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 Practice Note to Section 2.1 provides the following definitions:

- *Discrimination – unfair or less favourable treatment.*
- *Vilification – humiliates, intimidates, incites hatred, contempt or ridicule.*
- *Religion – a belief or non-belief in a faith or system of worship*

The Panel noted the Practice Note to Section 2.1 states:

“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.”

The Panel acknowledged that the advertisement may be considered by many viewers to be offensive and mocking of people of various faiths, in particular Christianity. The Panel noted the definition of religion in the Code and considered that an advertisement must be discriminatory or vilifying towards the believers or followers of religions to be in breach of the Code.

The Panel considered that while the advertisement is a satirical representation of a religious figure, there is no language or imagery which humiliates, intimidates, incites hatred, contempt or ridicule towards, or depicts unfair or less favourable treatment of the believers or followers of religion.

The Panel considered that while some viewers may prefer that advertisements not appropriate religious or cultural themes at all, this in itself was not a depiction which is discriminatory or vilifying.

Section 2.1 conclusion

The Panel found 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 complaints.

