

# Case Report

**Case number:** 0274-25  
**Advertiser:** Steel Blue  
**Medium:** TV - Pay  
**Decision date:** 5-Nov-2025  
**Decision:** No breach

## ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE COMMUNITY PANEL

---

- AANA Code of Ethics - 2.4 Sex/sexuality/nudity - no breach

## AD DESCRIPTION

---

This Pay TV ad features a user testimonial from a user 'BenWahBalls1' saying 'You won't try anything else. Your feet will thank you!'



## SUMMARY

---

### Complaints

Complaints were received on the grounds that the ad contains inappropriate sexual content, as the username featured in the ad is also the name of a sex toy.

### Advertiser response

The advertiser responded that its 'Real Comfort. Real Comments' campaign showcases authentic customer feedback by featuring real online comments, usernames, and unpolished language typical of trade workers. One ad includes a Reddit comment from user 'BenWahBalls1' whose username matches the irreverent nature of Australian trade workers.

While true that this is another name for Kegel Balls, there is no profanity or explicit references to sex or sexual activity in the ad. The ad simply reflects genuine customer voices and complies with standards. However, it will be withdrawn if deemed inappropriate.

A copy of the advertiser's full response is included as Appendix A.

## Decisions

The Panel found that the ad did not breach section 2.4 of the AANA Code of Ethics as the ad treats sex and sexuality with sensitivity to the relevant audience.

## ASSESSMENT AND DECISIONS

---

### **Section 2.4 (AANA Code of Ethics): Advertising shall treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience.**

The Practice Note states:

Section 2.4 prohibits the harmful use of sex, sexuality or nudity in advertising and requires that such content must be appropriate for the relevant audience. Images that are considered harmful and which are not permitted are those which are overtly sexual and inappropriate having regard to the relevant audience.

Full frontal nudity and explicit pornographic language are not permitted.

### Panel assessment

- **Does the advertisement contain sex?**

The Panel considered whether the advertisement contained a depiction of sex. The Panel noted the definition of sex in the Practice Note is 'sexual intercourse; person or persons engaged in sexually stimulating behaviour.'

The Panel noted that the advertisement does not include people engaged in sexual activities and does not contain sex or a reference to sexually stimulating behaviour. The Panel, therefore, considered that the ad did not contain sex.

- **Does the advertisement contain sexuality?**

The Panel noted the definition of sexuality in the Practice Note is 'the capacity to experience and express sexual desire; the recognition or emphasis of sexual matters.'

The Panel noted that the name 'BenWahBalls' closely matches the name for the 'Ben Wa Balls', which, according to online sources, are often used as sex toys or aids. The Panel considered that the similarity in name, even if not intended by the advertiser, meant that the ad contained a sexual reference. Accordingly, the Panel considered that the ad contained sexuality.

- **Does the advertisement contain nudity?**

The Panel noted that the definition of nudity in the Practice Note is 'the depiction of a person without clothing or covering; partial or suggested nudity may also be considered nudity.'

The Panel noted that the man is fully clothed, and that there was no reference to or suggestion of nudity. The Panel, therefore, considered that the ad did not contain nudity.

- **Is the issue of sexuality treated with sensitivity to the relevant audience?**

The Panel noted that the definition of sensitivity in the Practice Note is ‘understanding and awareness to the needs and emotions of others.’

The Panel noted that assessing whether sexual suggestion is ‘sensitive to the relevant audience’ requires consideration of who the relevant audience is and how they are likely to react to or feel about the advertisement.

The Panel noted that the ad was broadcast on Pay TV and played during programs which could likely have a broad audience including children.

The Panel considered that the innuendo in the username is subtle enough, and that the reference is niche enough for people who are familiar with the product to understand the ‘cheeky’ pun. However, the Panel considered that people who are not aware of the product would not notice any innuendo. The Panel considered that people who do not understand the subtle reference or innuendo would merely interpret the ad as a user testimonial about comfort. The Panel noted that nothing in the ad suggested a double entendre, and that ignorant viewers would have no reason to suspect any sexual reference.

The Panel considered that while people who are familiar with the term may be uncomfortable with its use in advertising, the manner in which it was used demonstrated sufficient sensitivity to the relevant audience.

#### **Panel decision**

The Panel found that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.4 of the Code.

#### **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

---

The Panel found that the ad did not breach any other section of the advertising codes.

## APPENDIX A: ADVERTISER RESPONSE IN FULL

---

With the new “Real Comfort. Real Comments” campaign, Steel Blue aims to present a realistic view of our product benefits by replacing the usual marketing hyperbole with what our customers are actually saying about us, how they say it. This is being accomplished by repurposing real comments received through social media, review websites and our promotions.

This includes the comment “You won’t try anything else once you’ve gotten a pair. Your feet will thank you” left by Reddit user “BenWahBalls1” on the r/brisbane board in response the thread “Need steel caps that don’t hurt my feet”.

Part of the appeal of our ads is using the unpolished language that tradies use, which includes using their real internet usernames. That said, we were not aware that “BenWahBalls” was also used as the name of a sexual aid. In truth, we believed that the user’s name was Ben Wah and “Balls” was the cheeky suffix added that reflects the easy going, irreverent nature of Australian trade workers.

But regardless of the etymology of the username I’d argue this should not be categorised as offensive or sexualised content on the basis:

- We are in no way using sexuality as a selling tool. We are simply using the real Reddit username associated with the comment.
- I’d also argue that “Ben Wa Balls” is an extremely obscure term that is not commonly known to be associated with sex. While a Google search has revealed that this is indeed another name for kegel balls, no one at Steel Blue, our Ad Agency, or our network of Distributors was aware of the connection.
- Of the minority in the general public who may be familiar with the sex toy, I’m surprised any would be offended at its existence. In my view, simply saying the name, which may or may not be related to a sex toy, is not profane and makes no explicit reference to any sexual activity.
- It’s also worth noting that Reddit’s terms prevent the use of profanity and have had no issues with the use of the username.

Also, to clarify the visuals of the advert, we do not imply that the person on screen is "sitting on the toilet". We are showing a trade worker behind a dust screen to parody an "anonymous interview" setting. This is communicating the anonymous nature of the internet comments.

Of course, if your investigation finds that the advertisement is not appropriate, we will certainly take swift action to remove it from broadcast. As an Australian owned and operated manufacturer, ensuring that we are compliant with all advertising standards and guidelines is something that we take very seriously. As stated at the start of the response. Our intention with these ads is to be as real as possible to ensure we do not mislead or exaggerate. While natural “tradie talk” isn’t intended to appeal to everyone, we also want to ensure that we are not being indecent in any way.