

Case Report

Case number: 0320-25
Advertiser: Estee Lauder Group of Companies
Medium: Billboard
Decision date: 14-Jan-2026
Decision: Breach
Action: Ad modified

ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE COMMUNITY PANEL

- AANA Code of Ethics - 2.5 Language - breach

AD DESCRIPTION

This in store poster ad features a woman's face wearing bright red lipstick with the words 'TOM FORD FUCKING FABULOUS DISCOVER THE NEW TRANSFORMATIVE LIP'.



SUMMARY

Complaint

A complaint was received on the grounds that this wording is not appropriate in a general retail environment, and only serves to tear a culture apart. The complainant noted that he was accustomed to hearing such language on building sites, but it was not suitable for in-store advertising.

Advertiser response

The advertiser responded that the Tom Ford brand is deliberately provocative and surprising. This particular range is called the 'Fucking Fabulous' range, which is consistent with the Australian vernacular.

This ad is only part of the product display at a very limited number of retail counters in the makeup sections of stores that carry this brand. This approach is suitable for the target market and general consumers who frequent these areas of the stores.

The Advertiser's response is included as Appendix A.

Decisions

The Panel found that the ad was in breach of section 2.5 of the AANA Code of Ethics, as the ad featured language that was inappropriate for the circumstances.

ASSESSMENT AND DECISIONS

Section 2.5 (AANA Code of Ethics): Advertising shall only use language which is appropriate in the circumstances (including appropriate for the relevant audience and medium). Strong or obscene language shall be avoided.

The Practice Note states:

Section 2.5 prohibits the use of strong or obscene language and requires that the language used in advertising must be appropriate for the circumstances. Words and phrases which are innocuous and in widespread and common use in the Australian vernacular are permitted provided they are used in a manner consistent with their colloquial usage, for example with gentle humour, and not used in a demeaning or aggressive manner

The 'f' and 'c' words are generally viewed as harmful, unacceptable and not permitted. Nonverbal representations of the 'f' word are also generally not permitted. Words and acronyms that play on the 'f' word, e.g. WTF and LMFAO, but do not use the actual word are normally considered acceptable if used in a light hearted and humorous way, are in subtitle rather than spoken word and are appropriate to the situation. Advertisements which use the 'f' word in full will be seen to constitute strong and offensive language, even when the audience is restricted. Advertising which uses the 'f' word where it has been insufficiently censored so that it can be easily understood by audiences, will be seen to constitute strong language, especially when seen by a broad audience.

Panel assessment

The Panel noted that this is the name of a Tom Ford range of cosmetic products, and the Panel emphasised that its decision has no bearing on the product name. The Panel's task, and the ultimate consequence of its decision relates to the advertising used to promote this product range.

The Panel noted that the ad features the words 'FUCKING FABULOUS' with no attempt to soften them, such as using special characters to replace some of the letters or somehow obscuring

the word 'FUCKING'. The Panel also considered that there was nothing light hearted or humorous about the ad that could be considered an acceptable way to communicate the brand name.

The Panel considered that this ad was not broadcast to the general public as, for example, television ads. However, the Panel considered that people who visit David Jones stores would represent various different sectors of the community, and not all would be comfortable being confronted with the word in this manner.

The Panel considered an earlier decision under the reference [0080-22](#) where an ad featuring the 'c-word' was not found to have breached the code. However, the Panel noted that, unlike this previous case, the current ad was not on a Tom Ford Facebook or Instagram post where viewers would be people who deliberately chose to follow this brand and its provocative style. It was displayed in-store for all passers-by to notice regardless of whether they find the word acceptable. By doing so, the ad confronts viewers with a word that is generally regarded as unacceptable by prevailing community standards.

Panel decision

The Panel found that the ad breached section 2.5 of the AANA Code of Ethics.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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

ACTION

In line with the Panel's decision, we will take steps to modify the advertising.

APPENDIX A: ADVERTISER RESPONSE IN FULL

Our brand, Tom Ford, uses global signage and display materials that are deliberately designed to be eye-catching and, to some individuals, a bit surprising.

The brand has chosen a name for a range of products that is intentionally provocative—Fucking Fabulous.

We consider this term to be a somewhat normal part of the Australian vernacular. The signage in question is the brand's chosen method to draw attention to this product range.

We do not agree with the complaint, as the term is not broadcast in any way; it is only part of the product display at a very limited number of retail counters in the makeup sections of stores that carry this brand. The brand believes that this approach is suitable for the target market and general consumers who frequent these areas of the stores.