

Case Report

Case number: 0173-26
Advertiser: Sumo Power Pty Ltd
Medium: Radio/Audio Streaming
Decision date: 8-Jul-2026
Decision: No breach

ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE COMMUNITY PANEL

- AANA Code of Ethics - 2.1 Discrimination or Vilification - no breach

AD DESCRIPTION

This radio ad states, 'Want to know if your energy provider's call centre is actually local? Try this test. Ask them what a snag is. If they say a minor inconvenience; yeah, nah. At Sumo, we're 100% Aussie owned and our team of locals actually get it. No jargon. No robots. Just locals providing real service, fair pricing, and support when you need it. Sumo. Energy as local as the esky at a family barbeque. Cold drinks and all.'

SUMMARY

Complaint

A complaint was received on the grounds that the ad was racist, because it mocks call centre staff who are not familiar with idiomatic Australian expressions.

Advertiser response

The advertiser responded that it deliberately keeps its customer service team in Australia rather than offshore. This is a higher-cost operating model, but it is an important part of its customer service proposition and a legitimate point of difference for our business. The reference to 'snag' is a light-hearted reference to a common Australian colloquial expression. Its purpose is to illustrate local familiarity in a simple and memorable way. The humour comes from the difference between a literal interpretation and the colloquial Australian meaning. It is not intended to ridicule any person, worker, race, ethnicity or nationality. The point being made is geographic and service-related, not personal.

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

Decision

The Panel found that the ad did not breach section 2.1 of the AANA Code of Ethics as the ad did not contain anything that discriminated against or vilified a person or group on the basis of race or ethnicity.

ASSESSMENT AND DECISIONS

Section 2.1 (AANA Code of Ethics): 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 Practice Note defines ‘discrimination’ and ‘vilification’ as:

Discrimination: unfair or less favourable treatment

Vilification: Humiliates, intimidates, incites hatred, contempt or ridicule

Panel assessment

The Panel acknowledged that negative sentiments around immigration or people of other nationalities would likely be unacceptable in advertising. However, the Panel considered that this ad did not comment on any particular race or ethnicity. The Panel considered that the ad referenced a colloquial expression to demonstrate that its call centre staff are Australian, and are familiar with Australian language, references and humour.

The Panel considered that to be an Australian does not necessarily indicate any specific race or ethnicity, as Australia is a multicultural society. The Panel considered that the ability to understand a specifically nuanced Australian interpretation of the word ‘snag’ would inherently be tied to whether one was familiar with the Australian language, and not to one’s race or ethnicity.

The Panel considered that, in the context of statements such as, ‘No robots. Just locals providing real service’, the average viewer would not believe that the ad references any particular race or ethnicity in a manner that humiliates or discriminates a person or group.

Panel decision

Accordingly, the Panel found that the ad did not breach section 2.1 of the AANA Code of Ethics.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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

APPENDIX A: ADVERTISER RESPONSE IN FULL

Sumo Energy is a 100% Australian owned energy retailer. Like every retailer in our market, we make a choice about where to locate our customer service operations. Sumo has chosen to keep its customer service team in Australia rather than offshore. This is a higher-cost operating model, but it is an important part of our customer service proposition and a legitimate point of difference for our business.

The subject of the advertisement is that business practice: whether a retailer's customer service team is located in Australia or overseas. It is not directed at any person or group. The ad does not name, describe, depict or refer to any race, ethnicity or nationality. No accent is performed, no nationality is identified, and no group is characterised.

The reference to "snag" is a light-hearted reference to a common Australian colloquial expression. Its purpose is to illustrate local familiarity in a simple and memorable way. The humour comes from the difference between a literal interpretation and the colloquial Australian meaning. It is not intended to ridicule any person, worker, race, ethnicity or nationality.

The point being made is geographic and service-related, not personal. The advertisement communicates that when customers contact Sumo, they reach a team based in Australia that is familiar with local language, context and customer expectations.

Read as a whole and in its plainly comedic tone, the advertisement is a comment on where customer service is delivered, not a comment about any person.

Sumo is committed to respectful advertising. We thank the Panel for considering our response.