

Case Report

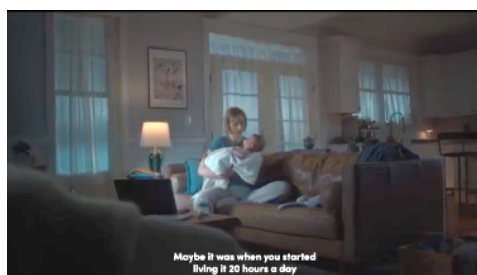
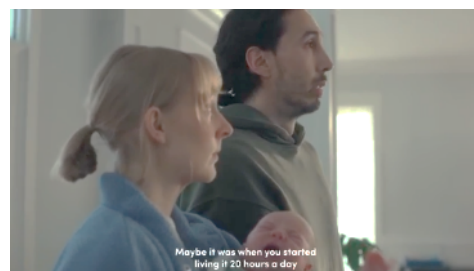
Case number: 0166-26
Advertiser: Rascals International Limited
Medium: TV - On Demand
Decision date: 8-Jul-2026
Decision: No breach

ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE COMMUNITY PANEL

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

AD DESCRIPTION

This On Demand TV ad features the journey of a man and woman who discover they are pregnant, arrive home with a new baby, and come to terms with the impact this has on their lives. Throughout the ad, a voice-over says, 'when did life get real? Maybe when that little blue line appeared', at which point the woman says, 'We're starting a family.' The voice-over continues 'Or when you first bought her home. Maybe it was when you started living it 20 hours a day' at which point the woman, who is shown lulling her baby back to sleep whispers 'Daddy is sleeping because daddy is weak.' The voice-over continues 'Or during the hundredth nappy change' at which point the dad is shocked by what he finds when changing the nappy. At the end, the voice-over states, 'Or when you finally decided to go out' at which point the woman tells the man 'I think one will do it' as he puts down a box of nappies. The voice-over ends with 'With up to 12 hours of leak protection, when life gets real, get RASCALS.'



SUMMARY

Complaint

A complaint was received on the grounds that the mother whispers ‘daddy is sleeping because daddy is weak’ to the baby. This greatly diminishes the role of fathers. The fact that it is whispered to the baby is encouraging negative stereotypes of fathers as being lazy, and borders on emotional abuse.

Advertiser response

The advertiser responded that the ad depicts two parents navigating early parenthood, with a narrative arc following them through pregnancy discovery, bringing the baby home, night-time feeding, and managing nappy challenges. The key message is: 'When life gets real, get Rascals.'

The critical scene occurs during a night-time feed. The mother, in intimate, hushed and affectionate tones whispers to the baby: 'Daddy is sleeping because daddy is weak.' The very next shot is the father changing nappies, with the voice-over referencing the ‘100th diaper change,’ which reinforces the humour and banter - he is immediately shown doing a significant amount of work. The delivery is clearly comedic and gentle.

This ad that depicts both parents actively engaged in equal parenting throughout the entire sequence, with both parents shown competently and consistently managing parenting tasks (changing nappies, responding to emergencies, demonstrating preparedness).

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

Decisions

The Panel found that the ad did not breach section 2.1 of the AANA Code of Ethics, as the ad did not depict content that would reasonably be considered discriminatory of a person or group based on gender.

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 states:

The Practice Note defines ‘Discrimination’ and ‘Vilification’ as follows:

Discrimination: unfair or less favourable treatment

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

Panel assessment

The Panel considered that the reference to someone being ‘weak’ could, in isolation, be considered as derogatory or humiliating. However, the Panel was mindful that the ad, as a whole, clearly depicts a loving couple embarking on their journey into parenthood together. The

Panel noted that the ad depicts both parents as excited, overwhelmed, exhausted, and intimately involved in the duties that go with having a newborn.

In this context, the Panel considered this comment to be more a comment in jest, which is often heard between loved ones, rather than a comment of ridicule. The Panel considered that the mother was commenting more about her inherent strength, demonstrated by being up with a baby in the middle of the night, than it was likely to be interpreted as a literal reference to the 'daddy' or about men in general.

Given this, and given that the father is shown doing his equal share in the ad, the Panel considered that members of the community are unlikely to view the ad as portraying the man, or men in general in a way that discriminates or vilifies them on the basis of their gender.

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

We refer to your letters dated 22 June 2026 to Rascals International Limited (Rascals) notifying us of complaints received in relation to Rascals' advertising – in particular, complaint reference numbers 0165-26 and 0166-26 (the Complaints).

Thank you for providing the opportunity to respond to the Complaints. Set out below is our response. At the outset, Rascals would like to acknowledge that it is committed to adhering to, and promoting advocacy of, the Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA) Code of Ethics (the Code). We agree that advertisers must act with a high level of social responsibility towards consumers.

Background

Rascals is a baby care brand that was initially founded in New Zealand and is now sold in markets globally, including Australia, USA, United Kingdom and Canada (amongst others). The advertisement referred to in the Complaints is a 30 second video that advertises diapers manufactured and sold by Rascals. A copy of this advertisement is submitted and can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/bmqW73MNsoA>.

In Australia, the advertisement was limited to the media platforms of YouTube and Amazon. The intended audience are females aged between 20 and 40 years old with children under 3 years or likely to have children in the next one year. CAD approval was not obtained as the content was delivered on Connected TV only and not Linear TV.

The advertisement forms part of Rascals' brand positioning, which emphasises humour and tongue-in-cheek relatability in communicating the realities of parenting to new parents. The brand voice is intentionally light-hearted and self-aware, employing affectionate, familiar comedy to connect with parents navigating the early parenting phase.

The Advertisement

The advertisement depicts two parents navigating early parenthood with a newborn, with a narrative arc following them through pregnancy discovery, bringing the baby home, night-time feeding, and managing nappy challenges. The key message is: 'When life gets real, get Rascals.'

The critical scene occurs during a night-time feed. The mother, in intimate, hushed and affectionate tones whispers to the baby: 'Daddy is sleeping because daddy is weak.' The very next shot is the father changing nappies, with the voice-over referencing the "100th diaper change," which reinforces the humour and banter - he is immediately shown doing a significant amount of work. The delivery is clearly comedic and gentle.

This comment is also made within an advertisement that depicts both parents actively engaged in equal parenting throughout the entire sequence, with both parents shown competently and consistently managing parenting tasks (changing nappies, responding to emergencies, demonstrating preparedness).

Alleged breach of the Code

For the reasons set out below, Rascals respectfully submits that the advertisement does not breach Section 2 of the Code.

a) Section 2.1 (Discrimination or Vilification)

Section 2.1 of the Code requires that advertisements 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 gender.

The Practice Note defines:

- Discrimination: unfair or less favourable treatment.
- Vilification: humiliates, intimidates, incites hatred, contempt or ridicule.

The Practice Note warns against gender stereotypes. Specifically, advertisements should avoid suggesting that skills, interests, roles or characteristics are: always uniquely associated with one gender; the only options available to one gender; or never carried out or displayed by another gender. In other words: don't suggest parenting skills belong only to mothers, that parenting is only for fathers, or that fathers never do parenting.

However, importantly, the Practice Note also permits humour:

"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."

This means: ads can use language that invokes negative characteristics, like calling someone 'weak' in a joking way, so long as the overall impression of the ad isn't negative about that group. This advertisement relies on this exception. While the mother calls the father "weak," this is clearly a humorous observation about one father's exhaustion from doing parenting work. Because the overall impression is one of equal, competent co-parenting (not paternal incompetence), this does not constitute discrimination or vilification.

We outline our reasoning in more detail as follows.

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

No. For the reasons set out below. .

The advertisement does not rely on a negative stereotype about paternal competence. Both parents are visually established as undertaking distinct, essential parenting labour throughout the advertisement.

The father is shown managing nappy changes (notably the "100th diaper change"), responding to emergencies, and demonstrating preparedness and initiative. The mother is shown actively feeding the baby during the critical night-time feed scene. Each parent is depicted competently executing their respective parenting tasks, establishing a visual narrative of equal,

complementary co-parenting labour, not hierarchy or one parent carrying the load while the other is passive or incapable.

The advertisement's own sequencing reinforces this: the mother's comment about the father being 'weak' is immediately followed by a shot of him changing nappies with the voice-over referencing the '100th diaper change,' which demonstrates the ad itself constructs the context for relatable banter by immediately showing his active work.

The wider context reinforces this reading. The comment is made at home, in an intimate private moment between partners. The mother delivers the comment with affectionate playfulness—hushed tones and gentle teasing between partners who clearly love each other. It is not mean-spirited or vindictive; rather, it is the kind of familiar, self-deprecating endearment that co-parents use in private moments. This is the common banter between a woman and the man she loves—the kind of playful jab that she would genuinely say to her husband in recognition of his exhaustion from shared parenting work.

The intended audience, Australian parents, will recognise this as familiar, self-deprecating co-parental banter reflecting a cultural value of warmth and familiarity, not vilification or stereotyping. One complainant suggests this is 'emotional abuse.' It is not. It's affectionate banter between partners who clearly love and respect each other.

Further, the Practice Note's central test is whether the overall impression conveys a negative impression of the group on the basis of protected attributes. Applying this test: When the advertisement is viewed as a whole, from pregnancy discovery through managing nappy challenges to the night-time feed, the overall impression is unmistakably one of equal, mutually engaged co-parenting. Both parents are depicted as competent, active, and essential to the shared parenting arc. The line about the father being 'weak' is a single moment within a narrative that establishes paternal competence and engagement. No reasonable viewer could finish watching this advertisement and conclude that fathers are weak, incapable, or unfit to parent. The overall impression is one of mutual exhaustion and respect, not paternal inadequacy.

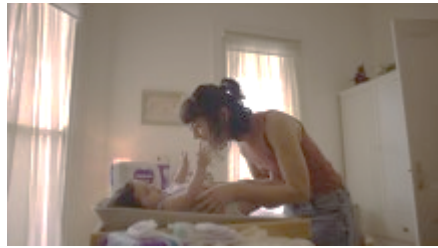
A gender stereotype suggests all fathers are weak or incapable of parenting. This advertisement does not. It describes one father being tired from actively undertaking parenting work. The fact that this is delivered as humour, and is relatable to parents, demonstrates it is not invoking a stereotype. If it were a genuine negative stereotype about fathers, it would not be relatable banter between equals. The humour works precisely because both parents are shown as equally engaged and exhausted.

The Practice Note allows ads to use humour, provided the overall message isn't negative about the group. This advertisement uses humour, a relatable observation about one father's exhaustion from doing parenting work, not to suggest fathers are incompetent, but to show the reality of shared parenting. The message is: 'Being a parent is hard work, and Rascals gets it.' Because the humour is relatable and the overall impression is one of equal, competent co-parenting, this does not breach the Code.

Analogous Previous Case

In Unicharm Australasia (0205-23, September 2023 - <https://adstandards.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/0205-23.pdf>), the Panel dismissed a complaint where a mother was

changing a diaper and the father provided advice. The mother then responded by jokingly saying to the baby: "Daddy's a silly one, isn't he?"



The Panel held that the advertisement did not suggest the father was generally incapable of parenting; rather, it depicted an interpersonal relationship between co-parents, not a comment on men generally.

"this was a depiction of an interpersonal relationship rather than a comment on men generally, is not indicative of him being incapable of child-rearing or suggesting that he was generally incompetent."

The Panel also considered that the content "did not show men to receive unfair or less favourable treatment because of their gender, and did not humiliate, intimidate or incite hatred, contempt or ridicule men because of their gender".

Vilification includes the element of "ridicule"—intent to mock or belittle. This comment, made in hushed, affectionate tones during an intimate co-parental moment, does not constitute ridicule. Ridicule requires an intent to mock or demean; this moment reflects affectionate teasing between partners who mutually respect each other. The tone, delivery, and context of the intimate moment expressly exclude any reading as ridicule or belittlement.

Rascals' situation is directly analogous. The mother's comment "daddy is weak" is a depiction of an interpersonal co-parental moment, not a statement about fathers generally. The advertisement establishes his capability through the "100th diaper change" and demonstrates he is not lazy, incapable, or absent. Like Unicharm, this is relatable co-parental banter grounded in demonstrated competence, not vilification or humiliation. The warm, affectionate tone - mother smiling, speaking with playful endearment - confirms the content does not incite contempt or ridicule of fathers because of their gender.

Summary

In summary, this advertisement does not discriminate against or vilifies the father or fathers in general, on account of gender. It does not suggest parenting skills are uniquely associated with mothers; does not suggest parenting is the only role available to fathers; and does not suggest fathers cannot or should not parent. Instead, it depicts equal, active co-parenting where both parents are shown as competent and engaged.

The single comment about exhaustion, made in affectionate tones, is a relatable observation about the universal physical toll of newborn care, not a gender stereotype. The Practice Note permits humorous suggestion of stereotypical aspects of groups provided the overall impression does not convey a negative impression. The overall impression here is unmistakably

one of mutual respect, shared exhaustion, and equal partnership. The advertisement does not breach Section 2.1 of the Code.

b) Section 2.2 (Sexual Appeal)

Not engaged. The advertisement contains no sexual appeal or imagery that would trigger the restrictions in Section 2.2

c) Section 2.3 (Violence)

Not engaged. There is no actual or suggested physical violence in the advertisement.

d) Section 2.4 (Sex, Sexuality and Nudity)

Not engaged. The advertisement contains no sex, sexuality, or nudity. It depicts everyday parenting in domestic settings.

e) Section 2.5 (Language)

Not engaged. The language used is appropriate and contains no strong or obscene words.

f) Section 2.6 (Health and Safety)

Not engaged. The advertisement depicts safe parenting practices and contains no material contrary to community standards on health and safety.

g) Section 2.7 (Distinguishable as Advertising)

It is clear to consumers that this is an advertisement for Rascals nappies. The Rascals branding and product are prominently featured throughout, and the call-to-action 'When life gets real, get Rascals' makes the advertising intent transparent.

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined above, Rascals respectfully submits that the advertisement does not breach Section 2.1 or any other section of the Code. The line 'daddy is sleeping because daddy is weak' is a comment on exhaustion shared between equal partners, not a gender stereotype about competence. It operates as relatable partner-banter grounded in visual evidence of paternal competence and engagement.

The advertisement's structure reinforces this: the 'daddy is weak' comment is immediately followed by a visual of the father undertaking the '100th diaper change,' demonstrating that the humour relies on the contrast between the playful remark and his demonstrated competence and effort. This construction confirms that the line is relatable banter grounded in visible engagement, not a gender stereotype.

The advertisement depicts no power imbalance, does not rely on negative stereotypes about fathers, and will be recognised by the target audience as relatable co-parental humour, not vilification. Rascals respectfully requests that the Ad Standards Community Panel dismiss Complaints 0165-26 and 0166-26.

Please let us know if you require any further information in relation to this response.