

COMPLAINT NUMBER	16/036
COMPLAINANT	A. Warmington
ADVERTISER	Westinghouse New Zealand
ADVERTISEMENT	Westinghouse Television
DATE OF MEETING	10 February 2016
OUTCOME	No Grounds to Proceed

Complaint: The television advertisement for Westinghouse featured a women presenter who stated: “I like to keep my private home immaculate,” in a comical way as she kicked away a child’s toy left on the floor. As she opens the cupboard to put away a child’s toy, the contents of the cupboard spilled out. As this happens the husband and children looked over and grinned. She then stated she “didn’t even have to be organized” due to the storage capabilities of her Westinghouse fridge. As she reached into an overhead cupboard for a glass, the contents of the cupboard spilled over her head at which time she said: “I think I’ll get something from the fridge.”

Complainant, A. Warmington, said: “I find the portrayal of a working mother in this advertisement by Westinghouse offensive and sexist. She is made out to be useless at domestic chores, and her characterization as ditzy, shallow and stupid implies that she is unintelligent and incapable simply because she is not conforming to traditional gender roles. I find it particularly appalling that, while she is made out to be stupid, as she struggles with groceries falling out of the fridge, the father looks on condescendingly, but does not move from his seat as he watches his wife struggle.”

The relevant provisions were Basic Principle 4 of the Code of Ethics and Basic Principles 3 and 6 of the Code for People in Advertising.

The Chairman noted the Complainant was offended by what they saw as the sexist portrayal of the woman in the advertisement.

After looking at the advertisement, the Chairman acknowledged the woman was positioned in a way that suggested she was struggling to maintain her home in the way she desired and would struggle more so, if not for the Westinghouse fridge. However, the Chairman disagreed the portrayal of the woman reached the threshold to be considered sexist.

She was of the view the portrayal of the woman was light-hearted and said the likely consumer takeout of the advertisement would be the woman was a humorous foil to highlight the fridge’s storage capability, not a statement about women in general.

While the Chairman acknowledged the offence the advertisement had caused the Complainant, she noted Basic Principle 6 of the Code for People in Advertising allowed for humour and, in light of this provision, she ruled the advertisement did not reach the threshold to breach the Advertising Codes. Therefore the Chairman ruled there was no apparent breach of the Code of Ethics or the Code for People in Advertising.

Accordingly, the Chairman ruled there were no grounds for the complaint to proceed.

Chairman's Ruling: Complaint **No Grounds to Proceed.**