

COMPLAINT NUMBER	16/410
COMPLAINANT	T Adshead
ADVERTISER	Gun City
ADVERTISEMENT	Gun City Print
DATE OF MEETING	25 November 2016
OUTCOME	No Grounds to Proceed

Advertisement: The newspaper advertisement for Gun City was headed “Christmas Sale Gun City” and had a small photo of a man wearing a Santa hat and jacket on the top left corner of the page. The rest of the advertisement consisted of images and information describing the guns for sale.

The Chair ruled there were no grounds for the complaint to proceed.

Complainant, T Adshead, said: “I find this advertising offensive and inappropriate for the following reasons: 1) the use of images of mass guns and other weapons associated with the religious celebration of Christmas. 2) the placement of this advertisement in a national newspaper where children are likely to see it. 3) the advert’s visual content associating guns with a stylized image of ‘Santa’. Although this advertisement does not promote violence or anti-social behavior it shows careless disregard for the values of the Christian faith and in general appears morally bankrupt. It is irresponsible in the extreme by both the NZ Herald and Gun City to place this advertisement for the reasons stated above.”

The relevant provisions were Code of Ethics - Basic Principle 4, Rule 4, Rule 5.

The Chair noted the Complainant’s concern that the advertisement for guns and other weapons was being associated with the religious celebration of Christmas and contained an image of Santa in a way that was offensive and inappropriate.

The Chair referred to an earlier Complaints Board Decision (16/328) about another advertisement promoting a gun sale that appeared in a newspaper. That Decision stated, in part:

“... The Complaints Board also took into account that the firearms advertised were a legal product, and said that it was not a breach of the Advertising Codes to advertise such products in a socially responsible manner. ...

The Complaints Board noted that there were strict restrictions around the purchase of most of the products, in some cases a gun licence was required and in others proof of identity and confirmation that the purchaser was aged 18 or over ... Furthermore, one could not assume that legal purchasers would be likely to misuse the products advertised.

Having made the above observations, the majority of the Complaints Board was of the view that the advertisement offered the products in a socially responsible manner...”

The Chair said the above precedent was applicable to the complaint before her and noted the Advertiser was entitled to promote its products to legal purchasers (people over 18 and in possession of a firearms licence) provided that it was done in a socially responsible manner.

While acknowledging the offence the advertisement had caused the Complainant, the Chair said the image of a man dressed in a Santa hat and jacket in this advertisement and the use of the words "Christmas Sale" did not reach the threshold to be considered to cause serious and widespread offence to most people.

Therefore, the Chair ruled the advertisement had been prepared with a due sense of social responsibility to consumers and there was no apparent breach of Basic Principle 4 or Rules 4 & 5 of the Code of Ethics.

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

Chair's Ruling: Complaint **No Grounds to Proceed**