

COMPLAINT NUMBER	17/061
COMPLAINANT	J Goodman
ADVERTISER	NZME
ADVERTISEMENT	Newstalk ZB Out of Home
DATE OF MEETING	27 February 2017
OUTCOME	No Grounds to Proceed

Advertisement: The billboard advertisement for Newstalk ZB’s “The Mike Hosking Breakfast” features a head and shoulders colour photo of Mike Hosking flanked on each side by a politician. On his right is Prime Minister, Bill English, next to the words “Status quo”. On his left is Opposition Leader, Andrew Little, with the words “New order”. The advertisement poses the question “Who will we listen to in 2017?”

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

Complainant, J Goodman, said: I regard this billboard as offensive as it advertises a (Mike Hosking’s) radio programme in a manner that carries overt and subliminal political messages about the parties’ forthcoming election campaigns. One side the word “Stability” appears against a muted but clearly discernible photo of the prime minister while on the other side the words “New Order” appear against a similar kind of photo of the opposition leader. I consider these terms to be overtly political messages in their practical effect, especially so in an election year, and as appealing visually and substantively prejudicial. I note neither party has released any election programme and that it is thus doubly impossible to characterize the nature of any such programme.. As the billboard contains a dominant photo of the announcer involved, it also seem to be a case of the announcer projecting himself as a kind of kingmaker in the entire electoral process; this too is prejudicial and a use of a perceived public image in a political cause.

The relevant provisions were Code of Ethics - Basic Principle 4, Rule 2, Rule 5.

The Chair noted the Complainant’s concerns the advertisement contains overt and subliminal political messages and portrays Mike Hosking as “a kind of kingmaker”.

The Chair noted the comments made by the Advertiser; the word “stability” is not used in the advertisement, the choices referred to are the names of music bands and the blue colour of the billboard is not related to political leanings but is the Newstalk ZB brand colour.

The Chair agreed that the advertisement is “political” to the extent that it refers to the leaders of the main parties and asks the question “Who will we listen to in 2017?”

The Chair said this question could also refer to which music, which politician or which radio station the viewers will listen to in 2017.

The Chair said there is a humorous element to the advertisement as “Status Quo”, which literally means keeping the existing state of affairs, is also the name of an English rock band founded in 1962. “New Order”, on the other hand, is also a rock band, founded in 1980.

The Chair said that in the context of 2017 being an election year and Newstalk ZB being a talkback radio station, the content of this billboard is appropriate and does not contain anything which is likely to cause serious or widespread offence.

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 and Rules 2 and 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**