

COMPLAINT NUMBER	18/254
COMPLAINANT	T Jones
ADVERTISER	Harmony
ADVERTISEMENT	Harmony Television
DATE OF MEETING	6 August 2018
OUTCOME	No Grounds to Proceed

Advertisement: The television advertisement for Harmony, a financial services company, shows images of a range of different people smiling and laughing. These images are accompanied by a choir singing the Ode to Joy. Half way through the advertisement the text “This is what being debt free feels like” appears on the screen.

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

Complainant, T Jones, said: The ad shows 7 different people laughing and in big bold white letters it says "This is what being debt free feels like"

The ad is advertising borrowing money from Harmony to consolidate your debt. That is not debt free. Looking on their website <https://www.harmony.co.nz/>

it shows interest rates ranging from 6.99% to 29.99% p.a.

That is very high interest and no one would be laughing about that interest rate

The relevant provisions were Code for Financial Advertising - Principle 1, Principle 2.

The Chair noted the Complainant's concerns the advertisement is about consolidating debt, which is not the same as being debt free, and involves paying a high interest rate for this service.

The Chair referred to a precedent decision for Complaint 17/448, which was ruled No Grounds to Proceed. That decision concerned an advertisement for Finance Now which showed people dancing after receiving loans for cars, home improvement and debt consolidation. The Chair said: “it was reasonable to expect the Advertiser to present its business in the best light possible” and “the people’s reaction to successfully obtaining a loan by dancing was light-hearted and did not make the advertisement socially irresponsible.”

The Chair said the precedent decision applied to the case before her. She said the financial product being advertised, debt consolidation, is being promoted as a step on the way to being debt free. The Chair said the people portrayed as laughing have achieved their goal to be debt free, presumably through using the debt consolidation process.

The Chair said it was reasonable in this case also to show light-hearted and joyful reactions to being debt free.

The Chair said the advertisement did not meet the threshold to breach Principle 1, Principle 2 and Guideline 1 (b) of the Code for Financial Advertising.

Therefore, the Chair said there were no grounds for the complaint to proceed.

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

According to the procedures of the Advertising Standards Complaints Board, all decisions are able to be appealed by any party to the complaint. Information on our Appeal process is on our website www.asa.co.nz. Appeals must be made in writing via email or letter within 14 days of receipt of this decision.