

COMPLAINT NUMBER	19/377
COMPLAINANT	L Smith
ADVERTISER	Living Church of God
ADVERTISEMENT	Tomorrows World, Television
DATE OF MEETING	14 October 2019
OUTCOME	No Grounds to Proceed

Advertisement: The Tomorrow's World advertising programme is produced by the Living Church of God. The advertisement examines the origin of Satan from the Living Church of God's perspective. The advertisement includes details of how to order free DVDs of the programmes.

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

Complainant, L Smith, said: This infomercial portrayed a 'Pastor' quoting scripture from a Christian Bible. The 'Pastor' warned viewers of people who came in the 'guise of the devil' and then showed a man dressed in the vestments of a Catholic priest. It also showed a malnourished person lying on a street and a hand offering food.

The media has truthfully shown that that are a 'few' Catholic priests who have acted in an evil manner. However, there are many thousands worldwide who are outstandingly good and holy priests.

Therefore to show a Catholic priest 'in the guise of the devil' is totally offensive, derogatory, defaming, shameful and a disgraceful statement against these good men.

To imply that a person who feeds the poor and starving could in any way be evil is appalling and insulting to all New Zealanders who are working in Soup Kitchens, distributing food parcels, holding school can days for the poor and donating to charities like the Kids Can, Red Cross, St. Vincent de Paul and Salvation Army (to name a few) is low and disgusting behavior.

It is also the greatest insult to the many thousands of aid workers world wide who work in dangerous situations to feed the poor and homeless.

This so called 'Pastor' then offered fee magazines and CDs.

I believe this infomercial should be withdrawn from our screens immediately.

If that infomercial had shown a Muslim instead of a Catholic I think you would have had Jacinda Adern in your office that same day and heads would have rolled. I categorize this advertisement as 'Hate Speech'.

I also believe that someone in your censor department should check just what 'evil' material this so called 'Church' is distributing.

New Zealand is a country that promotes Aroha NOT Hate. Please get rid of these haters from our screens.

The relevant provisions were Advertising Standards Code - Principle 1, Principle 2, Rule 1(c), Rule 2(e);

The Chair noted the Complainant's concern the advertisement was demonising certain religions and should be categorised as hate speech.

The Chair referred to the ASA Guidance Note on Advocacy Advertising, which includes the following definition of Advocacy Advertising: “Advocacy advertising is often characterised by parties having differing views that are expressed in robust terms. This is especially so when there is proposed legislation or a referendum on an issue. Examples include abortion, fluoridation, immunisation and legalisation of marijuana. Government advertising on a range of health and safety initiatives are also likely to be advocacy advertising

The Chair noted the requirements of Rule 2(e) of the Advertising Standards Code. This Rule requires the identity and position of the advertiser to be clear; opinion to be distinguished from factual information and factual information must be able to be substantiated. The Advocacy Principles developed by the Complaints Board in previous decisions considered under Rule 11 of the Code of Ethics remain relevant. They state:

1. That section 14 of the Bill of Rights Act 1990, in granting the right of freedom of expression, allows advertisers to impart information and opinions but that in exercising that right what was factual information and what was opinion, should be clearly distinguishable.
2. That the right of freedom of expression as stated in section 14 is not absolute as there could be an infringement of other people’s rights. Care should be taken to ensure that this does not occur.
3. That the Codes fetter the right granted by section 14 to ensure there is fair play between all parties on controversial issues. Therefore, in advocacy advertising and particularly on political matters the spirit of the Code is more important than technical breaches. People have the right to express their views and this right should not be unduly or unreasonably restricted by Rules.
4. That robust debate in a democratic society is to be encouraged by the media and advertiser and that the Codes should be interpreted liberally to ensure fair play by the contestants.
5. That it is essential in all advocacy advertisements that the identity of the advertiser is clear.

The Chair said the identity of the Advertiser was repeated numerous times throughout the advertisement and included the tomorrowworld.org website address and an address and telephone number for the DVD offer. The Chair said the Advertiser’s message was also clear. The advertisement therefore met the criteria for an advocacy advertisement.

The Chair said the content in the advertisement represented the views of the Tomorrows World organisation and was permitted under the rule for advocacy advertising. The Chair acknowledged the Complainant’s sincere concerns about the advertisement and the views expressed by the Advertiser, however such expression of opinion was allowable under the Code.

The Chair ruled the advertisement had not breached Principle 1, Principle 2 or Rule 1(c) of the Advertising Standards Code.

The Chair ruled 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.