

COMPLAINT NUMBER	20/093
ADVERTISER	Ministry of Health
ADVERTISEMENT	Ministry of Health Covid-19 Television
DATE OF MEETING	31 March 2020
OUTCOME	No Grounds to Proceed

Advertisement: The television advertisement from the New Zealand Government from the Ministry of Health features well-known New Zealanders including Ardie Savea, Hilary Barry, Dame Valerie Adams, Taika Waititi, Madeline Sami, Raybon Kan and the social media influencer “How to DAD,” Jordan Watson. Each person makes a statement to contribute to a message about how serious the COVID-19 pandemic is and the importance of everyone being calm, kind and patient and uniting against the spread of the virus.

The script of the advertisement is:

“COVID-19.

It’s like nothing we’ve ever faced.

I’m no expert, but this is a big deal.

The virus is all up in our faces now.

Things could get tough.

Our humanity will be tested.

Whānau, we have work to do.

COVID-19, ya dick.

We need to set a target and go for it.

Work hard. Smash it.

We must act.

Every single one of us.

U–nite.

Everyone needs to dig deep.

We must be calm now.

Be kind.

And be patient.

Don’t panic.

Don’t be an egg.

Listen to the experts.

When you’re asked to something–

Do it. Please.

Unless you’re being asked to buy all the toilet paper.

Don’t do that, you don’t need to buy all the toilet paper.

A bit of aroha goes a long way.

Let’s all unite against COVID-19.

Together.

United.

All of us.

We got this.”

During the ad “That Dad” says “Covid-19, ya dick”. The advertisement ends with the words “Unite against COVID-19, and the New Zealand Government logo and a website address: www.covid19.govt.nz are on-screen.

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

A Complainant said: In this Covid19 Government advertisement (which has screened many times apart from the time I noted) one of the "celebrities" calls Covid19 a "dick". This is hardly appropriate language for use on TV advertising and should not be seen when children may be viewing. My son (10yrs) saw this advertisement earlier in the day and I had to wait to hear it for myself as I couldn't believe that what he heard was correct. I find it disconcerting and unnecessary to use this kind of language in any advertising, less still from our elected officials. I would like this advertisement pulled from the air or modified to exclude this particular reference.

Eight other Complainants shared similar concerns.

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

The Chair noted the Complainants' concerns that the use of the term “ya dick” is offensive and unnecessary in an important and widely broadcast advertisement from the New Zealand Government about the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chair confirmed the advertisement is an advocacy advertisement from the New Zealand Government in the nature of a public service announcement. The Chair said it aims to engage with a wide range of New Zealanders about the seriousness of the current pandemic and the importance of fighting its impact on our country.

The Chair noted the requirements of Rule 2(e) of the Advertising Standards Code, that the identity of the advertiser is clear; opinion needs to be distinguished from factual information and factual information must be able to be substantiated.

The Chair said the identity of the Advertiser, the New Zealand Government, was clear.

The Chair said the intent of the message was also clear – to encourage all New Zealanders to unite against the spread of COVID-19.

The Chair ruled the Advertiser had met the requirements of an advocacy advertisement and a more liberal interpretation of the Advertising Standards Code is required.

The Chair noted the Complainants were generally supportive of the advertisement and its intent but considered the use of the term “ya dick” to be offensive and unnecessary.

The Chair referred to the Broadcasting Standards Authority report “Language that May Offend in Broadcasting”, published in June 2018. The term “dick” is ranked at number 25 on the list of the 31 most unacceptable words or phrases in broadcasting.

Rule 1(c) of the Advertising Standards Code required the Chair to consider whether the use of the term “ya dick” in this context was likely to cause serious or widespread offence in light of generally prevailing community standards.

The Chair took into account the unprecedented circumstances in which the advertisement is being broadcast and its purpose in engaging with the widest possible audience to unite to fight against COVID-19. The Chair said some New Zealanders will engage with the sentiment behind the statement “COVID-19, ya dick”.

While acknowledging the offence to the Complainants, and their concerns about the exposure of children to this statement in the advertisement, the Chair said the use of the term “ya dick” did not reach the threshold to cause serious or widespread offence.

The Chair acknowledged information received from the agency, Clemenger, on behalf of the Advertiser, confirming the advertisement classification now had been changed to “GXC” (General except children) which meant it will not be broadcast during programmes intended for children.

The Chair said the advertisement had been prepared with the due sense of social responsibility required and ruled it was not in breach of Principles 1 and 2 or Rules 1 (c) or 2(e) 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.