

COMPLAINT NUMBER	20/035
ADVERTISER	Mars NZL Ltd
ADVERTISEMENT	Pedigree, Television
DATE OF MEETING	16 December 2020
OUTCOME	Settled – advertisement removed

Advertisement: The television advertisement for Pedigree Parenting, a pet adoption initiative, shows a man and woman speaking at a children's playground. The man asks the woman which child is hers. The woman replies saying she is not sure where he is and that he was playing near the bushes, is popular with strangers and will follow anyone with a treat. The advertisement cuts to the woman walking away with her dog. The advertisement ends with the text "Take a baby step into parenting. Adopt a dog at pedigreeparenting.co.nz"

The Chair ruled the complaint was Settled

Complaint 1: We were just watching the Repair Shop and this ad supported by Pedigree pet foods. We believe this ad is in very bad taste considering recent news and advice on keeping children safe from predators. This ad initially raises interest in the subject of children and the internet keeping them safe from exposure to sexual crimes. Then your confronted with innuendo that the woman doesn't care what's going to happen to her child. Then its about her dog taking off into the park somewhere.

Complaint 2: I felt that it was inappropriate to lend humour to the fact that there are children who have been abducted by sick individuals and much as I can see humour in most things, I am not a believer that there is humour to be found in everything. I found it offensive, insensitive and completely not humorous. I also appreciate you contacting me so soon and value that, even if nothing is done to remove the advert, you provide a vehicle for people to air their objections.

Complaint 3: This advertisement insinuate that is a child in a playground who will go off with anyone who will offer him a treat. It is only at the end of the ad that you realise it is not a child but a dog!!! This is in very poor taste. Sadly there are many children in our society who have been subject to the abuse of sexual predators. This ad could re traumatise. As I have said this is in extremely poor taste and should be removed!

Complaint 4: Pedigree adverts encouraging adopting a dog are utilising child abuse tropes for their messaging. This arguably normalises child abuse and is potentially distressing for those affected by childhood abuse and neglect.

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

Principle 1: Social Responsibility: Advertisements must be prepared and placed with a due sense of social responsibility to consumers and to society.

Rule 1(c) Decency and Offensiveness: Advertisements must not contain anything that is indecent, or exploitative, or degrading, or likely to cause harm, or serious or widespread offence, or give rise to hostility, contempt, abuse or ridicule.

The Chair noted the Complainants' concerns the advertisement is inappropriate to use humour in relation to the subject of child abduction.

The Chair accepted the complaints to go before the Complaints Board to consider whether the Advertising Standards Code had been breached. As part of the self-regulatory process, Advertisers have the option of amending or removing their advertising to comply with the Advertising Codes.

Upon receipt of the complaints, the Advertiser removed the advertisement.

Given the Advertiser's co-operative engagement with the process and the self-regulatory action taken in removing the advertisement, the Chair said that it would serve no further purpose to place the matter before the Complaints Board.

The Chair ruled that the matter was Settled.

Chair's Ruling: Complaints **Settled – advertisement removed**

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 calendar days of receipt of this decision.