

<b>COMPLAINT NUMBER</b>	21/425
<b>ADVERTISER</b>	NOW
<b>ADVERTISEMENT</b>	NOW Billboard and Facebook
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	17 August 2021
<b>OUTCOME</b>	No Grounds to Proceed

**Advertisement:** There were three NOW advertisements, one on a billboard and two on Facebook.

1) The billboard advertisement showed a man smiling and pointing to his t-shirt which said "No gobble degook". The text above him said: "We speak your language".

2) The first Facebook advertisement showed a photo of a man wearing a t-shirt with the text "NO gobbledegook" printed on the front. The text on the photo said "We speak your language". The text above the photo said "Baffled and bewildered by all the tech jargon and gobbledegook your telco's support team are laying down?... At NOW, we speak your language".

3) The second Facebook advertisement showed a photo of a man wearing a t shirt with the text "Keeping it Kiwi" printed on the front. The text beside him said "No bots. Call, email or live chat here in NZ". The text above the photo said: "Pulling your hair out trying to talk bot-language, when all you want to talk is kiwi?"

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

**Complaint:**

We wish to make a complaint about a billboard by Now... The words we speak your language followed by "no gobbledegook" on the man's t-shirt, are offensive to English second language speakers. On the billboard there is no context for what your language means. Therefore the implication is that any other language is gobbledegook.

I realise the internet company are meaning they dont use "tech speak". But this is not explicit on the billboard and therefore the billboard is open to interpretation.

This is concerning to me particularly as xenphobia is prevalent in Aotearoa (see Christchurch massacre as an example) and this billboard could be seen as appealing to people who are fearful of those who speak other languages.

Furthermore, some people who speak English as a second language have experienced people using the word "gobbledegook" to describe their own language and this is obviously distressing to them.

(The complaint was sent on behalf of five Complainants).

**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 advertisements were offensive to those who speak English as a second language.

Now is a telecommunications and technology company that offers a technology assistance service. Rule 1(c) of the Advertising Standards Code required the Chair to consider whether the use of the phrase "no gobbledegook", in the context of an advertisement for their company, was likely to cause serious or widespread offence, in light of generally prevailing community standards. The Chair said that despite the Complainants' objections to the advertisement, it did not reach the threshold to cause serious or widespread offence for most consumers.

The Chair said while all advertisements are open to different interpretations, her role is to focus on the likely consumer takeout of the advertisement in question, in the relevant context.

The Chair said she agreed with the Complainants that when the Advertiser used the phrase "no gobbledegook" it was most likely they meant their customer service staff use language that is easy to understand, and they avoid using overly technical language.

The Chair referred to the Cambridge English Dictionary of gobbledegook, which is "language, especially used in official letters, forms, and statements, that seems difficult or to mean nothing because you do not understand it: - this computer manual is complete gobbledegook".

The Chair did not consider most consumers would think the reference in the advertisement referred to all languages other than English.

The Chair said the advertisement had been prepared with the due sense of social responsibility required and was not in breach of Principle 1 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](http://www.asa.co.nz). Appeals must be made in writing via email or letter within 14 calendar days of receipt of this decision.