

<b>COMPLAINT NUMBER</b>	21/289
<b>ADVERTISER</b>	Living Church of God
<b>ADVERTISEMENT</b>	Tomorrow's World, Television
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	6 December 2021
<b>OUTCOME</b>	No Grounds to Proceed

**Advertisement:** The Tomorrow's World advertising programme is sponsored by the Living Church of God. The infomercial discusses faith and hope in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It promotes a free resource booklet, "What is the Meaning of Life?", which can be obtained by phone or online.

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

**Complaint:** I have complained to TVNZ about this type of programming and they have informed me that it is an infomercial. It spends half an hour telling its viewers that God is the only truth and everything else is a lie. Apart from that being an incredibly bias view, This sort of programming should not be playing on a mainstream channel when there are dedicated religious channels. It is easily viewable by children and people of other and non religions. These time slots and channels should be neutral in their religious content. Im not trying to debate religion, but it should be kept off of mainstream channels during hours that are accessible to children.

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

**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.

**Principle 2: Truthful Presentation:** Advertisements must be truthful, balanced and not misleading.

**Rule 2(e) Advocacy advertising:** Advocacy advertising must clearly state the identity and position of the advertiser. Opinion in support of the advertiser's position must be clearly distinguishable from factual information. Factual information must be able to be substantiated.

#### **About Advocacy Advertising under the Advertising Standards Code**

The Chair confirmed the advertisement from the Living Church of God about Christian faith was advocacy advertising under the Advertising Standards Code.

Complaints about advocacy advertising are considered differently to complaints about advertising for products and services.

In assessing whether an advocacy advertisement complies with the Advertising Standards Code, the freedom of expression provisions under the Bill of Rights Act 1990 must also be considered.

Section 14 of the Act says: “Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and opinions of any kind in any form.” This freedom of expression supports robust debate on current issues in a democracy.

Under Rule 2(e) Advocacy advertising in the Advertising Standards Code:

- The identity of the advertiser must be clear
- Opinion must be clearly distinguishable from factual information, and
- Factual information must be able to be substantiated.

If the identity and position of the Advertiser is clear, a more liberal interpretation of the Advertising Standards Code is allowed.

### **Application of the identity requirements of the Advertising Standards Code**

The Chair confirmed the Advertiser’s identity was clear. The beginning of the advertisement stated, “The following program is sponsored by the Living Church of God”. The Advertiser’s phone number and website URL (TWTV.org/Life) also appeared on screen a number of times during the advertisement. The Chair said the advertisement complied with the identity requirements of Rule 2(e) of the Advertising Standards Code.

**The Chair** acknowledged the Complainant’s concerns that the advertisement was biased and should not be shown on a mainstream channel when it was accessible to children and people of other or no religion.

The Chair said that the Advertiser’s identity and position was clear throughout the advertisement. The content of the advertisement represented the views of the Living Church of God and was permitted under the rule for advocacy advertising in the Advertising Standards Code. She said that the advocacy rule allowed the Advertiser to express their opinion without having to provide balancing information.

The Chair confirmed that the advertisement was permitted to be shown on TV2 and played within its afforded rating. The advertisement had been given a GXC (General Except Children) rating by the Commercial Approvals Bureau, meaning that it may be broadcast at any time except during programmes intended specifically for children between the ages of 5 and 13 years old. The adjacent content was a 30-minute segment of infomercials and a LES MILLS fitness class.

The Chair said that the advertisement had been prepared with a due sense of social responsibility and was not likely to mislead audiences or cause serious or widespread offence.

The Chair said the advertisement was not in breach of Principle 1, Principle 2 or Rules 1(c) and 2(e) of the Advertising Standards Code.

The Chair ruled that 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 with notification of the intent to appeal lodged within 14 calendar days of receipt of the written decision. The substantive appeal application must be lodged with the ASA within 21 calendar days of receipt of the written decision.