

COMPLAINT NUMBER	16/419
COMPLAINANTS	A Wheatley & K Bartholomew
ADVERTISER	Bonds Industries Ltd
ADVERTISEMENT	Bonds Out of Home
DATE OF MEETING	5 December 2016
OUTCOME	No Grounds to Proceed

Advertisement: The billboard advertisements for Bonds underwear show images of a woman and a man wearing underwear. These images are very large and posted on the side of buildings in downtown Wellington that are several stories high. The advertisement is also located in bus shelters and on a billboard on State Highway 2.

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

Complainant, A Wheatley, said: “I understand that Bonds are an underwear company. I understand that their models will always wear underwear. But in an oversexualised culture, I find the advert on a large billboard in Victoria Street, Wellington Central could

*Cause developing children to be awakened to sexual feelings

*Cause desire for more images like these in each viewer of the advert

*Be a stumbling block for people who are working hard to fight pornography addictions

The location and size of the billboard means that thousands of people view it each day...”

Complainant, K Bartholomew, said: “I am writing to complain about the Bonds advertisements which are currently displayed in bus shelters and a billboard near Cook St in Auckland. The images show a girl barely dressed, it is an image that is in your face and you hardly have a choice about looking at it. I consider it to be soft porn and it is not fair for young guys and others who are trying to stare clear of getting caught in and addicted to porn...”

The relevant provisions were Code of Ethics - Basic Principle 4, Rule 4, Rule 5; Code for People in Advertising - Basic Principle 5.

The Chair noted the Complainants concerns that the images used in the advertisements were sexualized and “in your face” in a public arena.

The Chair referred to an earlier Complaints Board Decision (14/522) about billboard advertisements for underwear, which stated, in part:

“When considering the practice of women modelling the underwear, the Chairman referred to a previous Chairman’s Ruling (10/776) that concerned a similar complaint. That decision stated, in part:

“**The Chairman** noted the concerns of the Complainant, J. Hargreaves. However, she was also aware that there were many precedents for advertising underwear, and

referred to an earlier Complaints Board Decision, 05/293, in which the Board confirmed its long-held view that the use of models wearing the product to advertise lingerie was acceptable to the majority of people. Furthermore, the Chairman noted that the underwear worn in the advertisement was not particularly revealing and found that the Complainant may have taken an extreme interpretation of the image.”

The Chairman was of the view the above precedent was directly relevant to the Complainant’s issue with advertisements featuring women modelling underwear.

She then turned to consider the impact of the medium and the Complainant’s objection that the medium made it hard to avoid the image.

The Chairman acknowledged a billboard had a wide and indiscriminate reach and could be seen by children. However, she said the image itself was not graphic or salacious and there was no nudity. Therefore, the billboard could not be said to cause widespread or serious offence in light of generally prevailing community standards.”

The Chair said the above precedent was applicable to the complaint before her. While acknowledging the offence the advertisement had caused the Complainants, the Chair said the images of people modelling underwear, in the context of an advertisement for underwear, did not reach the threshold to be considered to cause serious and widespread offence to most people.

Therefore, the Chair ruled the advertisement had been prepared with a due sense of social responsibility to consumers and there was no apparent breach of Basic Principle 4 or Rules 4 & 5 of the Code of Ethics or Basic Principle 5 of the Code for People in Advertising.

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

Chair’s Ruling: Complaint **No Grounds to Proceed**