

COMPLAINT NUMBER	18/301
COMPLAINANT	T Agnew
ADVERTISER	Meridian Energy Limited
ADVERTISEMENT	Meridian Energy Television
DATE OF MEETING	17 September 2018
OUTCOME	No Grounds to Proceed

Advertisement: The television advertisement for Meridian Energy starts off with the presenter saying: “We all know that New Zealand is the best little country in the world”. As he is speaking the New Zealand national anthem is being played in the background. When he then says: “But we have a rival – Norway... because they’re way ahead in electric vehicles”, the music slows right down and then stops.

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

Complainant, T Agnew, said: The advertisement takes a recording of God Defend New Zealand and plays it at slow speed till it stops. (The intention is to suggest another country is outstripping NZ.) I understand why it was done but found that mangling one of our national anthems in this way was disrespectful and disturbing. To quote historical researcher Max Cryer, "Throughout all the victories and failures 'God Defend New Zealand' has functioned in the mysterious way that familiar music can, as an ephemeral binding substance, which becomes a rousing symbol of all-Kiwi strength when the chips are down, and a trigger to cheerful raucous enthusiasm when they aren't. " - in 'Hear Our Voices we Entreat', (2004), page 124. It is distressing to hear part of our national heritage being mutilated by an advertiser, Meridian energy, in this way.

The relevant provisions were Code of Ethics - Basic Principle 4, Rule 4, Rule 5.

The Chair noted the Complainant’s concerns that playing the national anthem slowly and then stopping it altogether was disrespectful and disturbing.

The Chair said the way the national anthem was altered was designed to create a dramatic effect, to support the point being made in the advertisement (as recognised by the Complainant).

While the Chair noted the Complainant’s concerns, she said the advertisement did not reach the threshold to be considered offensive, taking into account the context, medium, audience and product.

In light of the above, the Chair said there was no apparent breach of the Code of Ethics.

Therefore, 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. Appeals must be made in writing via email or letter within 14 days of receipt of this decision.