

COMPLAINT NUMBER	19/001
COMPLAINANT	S Hill & H Shankar
ADVERTISER	Gun City
ADVERTISEMENT	Gun City Print
DATE OF MEETING	14 January 2019
OUTCOME	No Grounds to Proceed

Advertisement: The newspaper advertisement for Gun City showed a photo of an adult male with three children. One of the children was lying on the grass using an air rifle. The text under the photo said: “Air rifles – No licence req’d over 18!”.

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

Complainant, S Hill, said: I am concerned about the advertisement from Gun City that appeared on page of the Dominion Post on Wednesday, 19 December 2018. The ad features photos of a range of firearms, and a large photo showing a young boy using an air rifle (in the company of two other children and an adult).

My concern relates to the association between children and firearms conveyed in this ad. While I don’t believe this was the advertiser’s intention, I feel this association contributes to perceptions around the normality and accessibility of firearms, which feeds into broader cultural norms that increase the risk of gun violence. This is particularly relevant in the context of (nationally) concerns around mental health (reflected in the recently-released Governmental Inquiry into Mental Health and New Zealand’s high suicide rate); and (internationally) the prominence of multiple school shootings in the past year.

The association between children, firearms and the accessibility of air rifles is particularly troubling since it suggests the ad is intended to appeal to young people. This raises the question of whether the ad is fully consistent with the intent of Rules 7 and 12 of the (outgoing) Advertising Code of Ethics, and with Rules 1(d) and (e) of the new Advertising Standards Code.

Complainant, H Shankar, said: Page 9 of The Dominion Post published on Wednesday, December 19 2018 carried an advertisement of Gun City violating the advertisement standards by displaying children shooting. Please refer attached image.

This violates the Children and Young People's advertising code.

The relevant provisions were Advertising Standards Code - Principle 1, Rule 1(d); Children and Young People Advertising Code - Principle 1, Rule 1(b).

The Chair noted the first Complainant’s concerns the advertisement contributes to perceptions around the normality and accessibility of firearms thus increasing the risk of gun violence. The Chair also noted the second Complainant’s concerns the advertisement breaches the Children and Young People's Advertising Code.

The Chair referred to a precedent decision, 17/445, which featured the same photo as that used in this advertisement. In the earlier decision the Chair said:

“...in her view the advertisement which advertised firearms and promoted target shooting was aimed at adults and appeared in the Dominion Post newspaper which has a predominantly adult readership. She noted the three children were different ages but clearly supervised by an adult male, likely to be a parent.

The Chair concluded the advertisement did not contain anything which lent support to unacceptable violent behaviour nor did it clearly offend against generally prevailing community standards.

Accordingly, the Chair ruled the advertisement was not in breach of Rules 4 and 7 of the Code of Ethics and had been prepared with a due sense of social responsibility to consumers and society required by Basic Principle 4 of the Code of Ethics.”

When considering the complaints before her, the Chair said the reasoning in the precedent decision was equally relevant to the Codes that are now in force and the current complaints. The Chair noted that the advertiser was entitled to advertise its legal product, provided it did so in a socially responsible way.

The Chair ruled there was no apparent breach of Principle 1 or Rules 1(d), 1(e) or 1(f) of the Advertising Standards Code or Principle 1, Rule 1(b) of the Children and Young People Advertising Code.

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