

COMPLAINT NUMBER	21/057
ADVERTISER	Mars NZL Ltd
ADVERTISEMENT	Pedigree, Television
DATE OF MEETING	15 February 2021
OUTCOME	No Grounds to Proceed

Advertisement: The Pedigree television advertisement for its Pedigree Parenting, pet adoption programme shows two mothers in a cafe having coffee, while one tries to wipe clean the face of her toddler who has just eaten. The mother asks, "How do you do it?" The second woman replies, "I use a hose". The camera cuts to the woman playing with her dog by squirting it with a hose.

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

Complaint: Pedigree adverts encouraging adopting a dog are utilising child abuse tropes for their messaging. This arguably normalises child abuse and is potentially distressing for those affected by childhood abuse and neglect.

I have discussed this before and the advert with the child in the park was removed. All of the adverts utilise child abuse tropes for humour. This one was a woman with an assumed child claiming she hosed it down. The end shot is a puppy. While we as a nation struggle to protect our children from distressing rates of abuse and neglect it is arguably inappropriate to "laugh" at situations which can be the lived reality for young children in New Zealand.

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

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.

Rule 1(f) Violence and anti-social behaviour: Advertisements must not, unless justifiable on educational or social grounds, contain anything that condones, or is likely to show, violent or anti-social behaviour or damage to property.

The Chair noted the Complainant's concern the advertisement was offensive because it utilised the subject of child abuse to advertise its brand.

The Chair carefully reviewed the advertisement and said the likely consumer takeout would be that many pet owners consider themselves 'parents' and the Pedigree Parenting pet adoption programme was a way to begin the parenting process.

The Chair said the advertisement was an attempt at humour by having the characters talk at cross purposes about how to clean their 'children'.

Rule 1(c) of the Advertising Standards Code required the Chair to consider whether the juxtaposition of an image of a toddler with food on its face being wiped clean with a cloth and a dog being squirted with a hose, in this context, was likely to cause serious or widespread offence, in light of generally prevailing community standards. The Chair noted the image clarifying what was meant by "I use the hose" followed quickly on from the statement, ensuring there was no lingering impression the woman was talking about hosing a child.

The Chair said while she acknowledged the genuine concerns of the Complainant, this advertisement for the Pedigree Parenting campaign did not reach the threshold to cause serious or widespread offence for most consumers.

The Chair said the advertisement had been prepared with the due sense of social responsibility required and it was not in breach of Principle 1 or Rules 1(c) and 1(f) 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. Appeals must be made in writing via email or letter within 14 calendar days of receipt of this decision.