

COMPLAINT NUMBER	21/110
ADVERTISER	Southern Clearance Centre
ADVERTISEMENT	Southern Clearance Centre, Print
DATE OF MEETING	22 March 2021
OUTCOME	No Grounds to Proceed

Advertisement: The Southern Clearance Centre print advertisement promotes their high-quality furniture and appliances at "unbelievable prices". The advertisement states "6 months into our new business... Working with family is great fun... Well, most of the time!" An image shows a woman with her hands around another woman's neck imitating a strangle hold. Both women are pulling comical faces.

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

Complaint: The attached add was located in the Southland Express newspaper in Invercargill on 11 March 2021. The add is from the Southern Clearance Centre and portrays one woman in the photograph strangling another woman. This add and the message it conveys is concerning. New Zealand has horrendous family violence statistics and strangulation is an increasingly common offence. Since strangulation was made a separate offence in 2019, police are charging on average five people a day. I am concerned that this add normalises strangulation and makes light of a very serious issue. It is evident this is a poorly thought out add with the potential for rather serious implications.

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 was concerned the advertisement was sending the wrong message about family violence and strangling which could be a criminal act.

The Chair carefully reviewed the print advertisement and said the likely consumer takeout would be it is intended to be a humorous depiction of family members about to 'throttle' each other, having survived working together for six months. The Chair noted the comical facial expressions of both the women in the advertisement did not contain any malice and the accompanying text gave the advertisement context.

Rule 1(c) of the Advertising Standards Code required the Chair to consider whether the use of humour and light-hearted farce in this context was likely to cause serious or widespread offence in light of generally prevailing community standards.

The Chair acknowledged the Complainant's concern but said in this case the threshold to cause serious or widespread offence had not been reached as there were sufficient cues in the imagery and text referring to the challenges of working with family rather than any intent to harm. The Chair did note that strangulation is a serious offence and Advertisers need to take care with this type of imagery.

The Chair said the advertisement had been prepared with the due sense of social responsibility required and said it was not in breach of Principle 1 or Rules 1(c) or 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.