

<b>COMPLAINT NUMBER</b>	21/416
<b>ADVERTISER</b>	Chorus NZ
<b>ADVERTISEMENT</b>	Chorus NZ Television
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	9 August 2021
<b>OUTCOME</b>	No Grounds to Proceed

**Advertisement:** Two television advertisements in the Chorus "Badnet" series feature a man with a poor internet connection. The images of him doing everyday tasks such as reading the paper and trimming the hedge are distorted, to illustrate the poor quality of his internet service. His neighbours watch through the window and observe "he's got badnet". They knock on his door and introduce him to a technician, who is there to install fibre. The advertisements end with the Chorus logo and the text "Fibre. It's how we internet now".

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

**Complaint:** My complaint is that the ad detailed is racist. The 'Badnet' series of ads has been broadcast in a number of formats with the same basic caste of characters and scenario. In my view the approach throughout has been basically racist with the solitary white male portrayed as a technically challenged dunce. The version complained about takes that a step further and the white dunce is patronisingly addressed by two ethnic males. A majority against a minority. This is the format commonly known as Jim Crow. Jim was perennially portrayed as a dim witted black American in the post-reconstruction South. On vaudeville stages he would be asked by whites to perform simple tasks which he was unable to do. The parallels are too striking and one can only ask if Chorus would make an ad where the 'dunce' was brown ethnic and his patronisers white? I think not!

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

**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.

**The Chair** noted the Complainant's concern the advertisement was racist.

Rule 1(c) of the Advertising Standards Code required the Chair to consider whether the use of a white male protagonist with a poor internet service, in this context, was likely to cause serious or widespread offence, in light of generally prevailing community standards. The Chair said that despite the Complainant's objection to the advertisement, it did not reach the threshold to cause serious or widespread offence for most consumers.

The Chair referred to a precedent decision, 21/276, and said it was relevant to the present complaint. That decision concerned a television advertisement for Trade Me Property which showed a woman and a man attending an open home. When the man openly voiced the questions he had about the property, the woman had the answers straightaway.

In that Decision the Complainant was concerned about the portrayal of the white male as a “thorough-going idiot”. The Chair said the advertisement was promoting the Trade Me Property website. The reason the woman knew more about the property they were visiting was because she was reading the information on her phone, thanks to the information provided by Trade Me. The Chair said that despite the Complainant’s objection to the advertisement, it did not reach the threshold to cause serious or widespread offence for most consumers.

Turning to the complaint before her the Chair said the man in the advertisement represented people with poor internet experience, and his ethnicity was not relevant.

The Chair said the advertisement did not reach the threshold to cause serious or widespread offence for most consumers and had been prepared with the due sense of social responsibility required. The Chair said it was not in breach of Principle 1 or Rule 1(c) 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](http://www.asa.co.nz). Appeals must be made in writing via email or letter within 14 calendar days of receipt of this decision.