

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

AANA EVOLVES CODE TO CLARIFY USE OF SEXUAL APPEAL IN ADVERTISING

21 September 2017 - The AANA today announced that it has amended clause 2.2 of its overarching Code of Ethics to prohibit advertising that uses sexual appeal in a manner that is either 'exploitative or degrading'. Previously the Code prohibited the use of sexual appeal that was 'exploitative and degrading'. At the same time, the AANA has amended its definition of 'exploitative' to ensure greater clarity for advertisers. The existing prohibition on the use of any sexual appeal in advertising that portrays minors remains unchanged.

The AANA said that in evaluating the application of section 2.2 of the Code of Ethics, it could see no logical reason why advertisements that the Advertising Standards Board deemed to use sexual appeal in a manner that was 'exploitative' alone should also not be prohibited under the Code of Ethics.

"We are confident that the changes we are now making to the Code of Ethics and the accompanying practice note will better align to community expectations. We want to make it absolutely clear that it is not acceptable to use sexual appeal either by depicting people as commodities or by focussing on their bodies when such a focus bears no relevance to the product or service being advertised.

"Furthermore, when the ASB conducted extensive community research recently to evaluate the extent to which Advertising Standards Board determinations aligned with broader community opinion, it emerged that clause 2.2 could be drafted in such a way to improve alignment with community standards, AANA CEO, John Broome said."

The AANA said it had taken note of community debate about the use of sexual appeal, both in popular culture and in advertising. It also consulted closely with the Advertising Standards Bureau and industry bodies like the Outdoor Media Association, which are fully supportive of the proposed amendments.

“For the vast majority of advertisers, this change will not impact their modus operandi. The reality is that most already ensure that their advertising does not use sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative or degrading”, Broome said.

The term “exploitative” will now be defined as: *“(a) taking advantage of the sexual appeal of a person, or group of people, by depicting them as commodities; or (b) focussing on their body parts where this bears no relevance to the product or service being advertised.”* To date, exploitative has been defined as: *“clearly appearing to purposefully debase or abuse a person, or group of persons, for the enjoyment of others, and lacking moral, artistic or other values.”*

The definition of “degrading” will remain unchanged as *“lowering in character or quality a person or group of people”*.

The changes detailed above will come into effect on 1 March 2018.

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About the AANA: For over 85 years the AANA has represented Australia’s largest and well-known brands across all major sectors, including FMCG, automotive, banking, finance and insurance, travel, health and beauty, media and communications. The AANA works to protect the interests of those businesses that contribute to an estimated advertising spend of more than \$14 billion a year. On behalf of our members, the AANA’s mandate is to maintain and evolve the advertising codes which underpin the system of self-regulation in Australia, safeguard the rights of its members to commercial free speech and protect consumers by ensuring marketing communication is conducted responsibly.