

"The advertiser was simply trying to acquire a profile..."

By Bruce Holloway

Following on from my rant about the Kingz "Cuello" television ad last issue, it was also the subject of a moan to the Advertising Standards Complaints Board (complaint 00/243) by K Lyndon.

The seven-page decision made a fascinating read. Said a very unamused Lyndon: *"I viewed an extremely tasteless commercial displaying a falling soccer ball getting more priority over a live little dog in the same situation. Although I was disgusted, I chose to dismiss it and hoped it would be a one off. I was then horrified to find that the next night an even more vulgar and disturbing commercial advertising the same thing... This one portrayed a man showing off his soccer skills by goal kicking the same little dog sky high."*

"It is beyond my belief how such a vulgar and irresponsible act can be made out to be a joke, and then be displayed on national television in full view of children, dog lovers (ones who may even own a

dog of the same breed!) and the psychotic. Also all other members of society who are decent enough to be offended and think of the damage it can cause."



The producers of this piece of uselessness have shown a complete lack of discernment and taste and not to mention responsibility. Please bear in mind that many of the worst serial killers and criminals started their acts with cruelty to animals, and to put these unsound ideas into the minds of those predisposed to be that

way is a sick form of encouragement."

Okay, so it's a bit over the big top. But more interesting was the Kingz response:

"In a country dominated by Rugby, Soccer is a minority sport and the Football Kingz franchise is in its infancy. With these factors in mind the club believed that a "traditional" sport promo played to a hip sound track just wouldn't cut through."

The KINGZ brand needed a campaign that was “edgy” and would get the target market talking about New Zealand’s first ever-professional football club.”

The fact that the Kingz saw soccer as a “minority” sport seems to have struck a chord with the deliberating board. Here’s the key excerpt from their ruling:

“A majority of the Board was of the opinion that this version of the advertisement was not only another instance of exaggerated hyperbole but it was also a typical example of black humour. The majority acknowledged that not all hyperbole in advertising was acceptable but it recognised, in this instance, that the advertiser was promoting a minority sport and simply trying to acquire a profile.”

So there you have it. Because soccer is a minority sport, the ad was okay. There’s something for soccer lovers to ponder, as much as dog lovers.

Because we are so insignificant, if you like, we can be afforded a little more latitude with dodgy ads. Hmm.

The written decision went on to note that an (unstated) minority of the Board held the opposite view. “In the minority opinion the advertisement was totally devoid of humour and played on people’s emotions to such an extent that it clearly breached the Code of Ethics. However in accordance with the majority decision, the Board ruled that the complaint be not upheld.”

This is a landmark decision, in a sense. Forget the ad itself, it’s hard to

imagine anywhere else in the world that a soccer club would have a controversial ad cleared on the grounds it’s helping a minority sport. Truly we operate at the final frontier in New Zealand soccer.

Meanwhile the New Zealand Business Times (March 9) has a different take on this ad.

Here’s Paul Panckhurst’s observations:

You remember the Football Kingz ads, of course: the burning building, the distress of the crowd on the street, the whining pooch that makes its leap for survival from a few floors up. The soccer ball that falls at the same time, and the passing goalie who dives heroically for the ball -- because football comes first. In an alternative version, he catches the dog, but then kicks it away.

It was one of the stand-out campaigns for DDB and the New Zealand advertising industry in 2000, but with the Axis Awards looming the question’s being asked: is it just too close to a certain piece of work from overseas?

The overseas ad is for an American football team called the Buccaneers. There’s a burning building, and trapped woman. She tosses her dog from the window, and it’s caught by a fireman below -- who does a football-style victory dance and then goes to bounce the dog off the ground, like someone celebrating a touchdown. “Some guys were just made for Buccaneers Football” is the end-line.