



CASE REPORT

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| 1. Complaint reference number | 21/09 |
| 2. Advertiser | Cancer Institute of NSW |
| 3. Product | Public Awareness |
| 4. Type of advertisement | TV |
| 5. Nature of complaint | Violence Community Service advertising – section 2.2
Other - Causes alarm and distress |
| 6. Date of determination | Wednesday, 21 January 2009 |
| 7. DETERMINATION | Dismissed |

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement from the Cancer Institute of NSW has two versions. One features a young female, the other young males. The advertisement featuring a girl opens with a girl taking off a shirt at the beach, preparing to sunbake. The advertisement featuring boys opens with a young male taking off his shirt while playing with a football with his mates. In both advertisements, after the opening sequence, a voice over states, "Tanning is skin cells in trauma" and then continues to explain how a melanoma can form and spread. Images of a melanoma growing inside a body are shown during the explanation. The advertisement ends with the voice over stating, "There's nothing healthy about a tan".

THE COMPLAINT

A sample of comments which the complainant/s made regarding this advertisement included the following:

Unpleasant for patients who have had melanoma. No relation to evidence-based prevention programs.

My six year old grand-daughter clearly did not enjoy it. I put the question without irony whether frightening six year olds is the intention? Why not show it after say 2030 hrs only?

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complaint/s regarding this advertisement included the following:

Skin cancer is preventable by protecting the skin from damaging ultraviolet radiation (UVR). Yet, Australia has the highest incidence of melanoma in the world for both males and females. Melanoma of the skin is the fourth most common cancer in NSW with 3,559 people diagnosed with the disease in 2006. The Australian health system spends more money on the diagnosis and treatment of skin cancer (non-melanoma skin cancer and melanoma) than on any other cancer .

The objectives of the campaign are to increase awareness of the dangers of melanoma and tanning by challenging the misconception that a tan looks healthy. The campaign prompts youth and young adults to reconsider their sun protection behaviour, the damage caused by unsafe exposure to the sun and their need for greater sun protection.

The television advertisement, referred to in the complaint (see Appendix A) is a 30-second W-rated commercial developed by the Cancer Institute NSW in 2007 through three rounds of formative research. The research identified a number of factors that were contributing to less than optimal sun protection, related to beliefs and perceptions about skin cancer and about protection behaviours. There was a belief that skin cancer is almost inevitable, based on perceptions of the

high incidence of skin cancer in Australia, a substantial level of close personal experience and an acceptance of the outdoor, beach and sun culture in Australia.

The formative research also confirmed the belief that skin cancer was not considered a significant threat. Research found this stemmed from common experiences and messages of skin cancer treatment involving simple surgery. It is apparent that the prevalence and perceived relative simplicity of treatment for non-cancerous lesions and for non-melanoma skin cancer has minimised the threat.

Further, a tan was considered desirable and burning an accepted part of the process of getting a tan. Sunscreen was positioned as the primary means of sun protection. This positioning, along with poor awareness of sunscreen's mechanism of action and consequent limited knowledge of the effective way to use sunscreen, contributed to the incidence of sunburn.

The television commercial developed as a result of this research is the Dark Side of Tanning. It is "top and tailed" with a tanner moment. A female version features a young woman tanning on a beach and a male version features a group of young men playing football in a park, incidentally exposing themselves to ultraviolet radiation. The commercial demonstrates how sun exposure damages the skin by using animation to go beyond what is visible to the human eye to reveal a unique insight – the damaging process occurring at a cell level. It corrects misconceptions by showing that damage to the skin can happen even before the skin starts to show signs of burning.

The Dark Side of Tanning previously ran between November 2007 and February 2008. An online tracking survey of 1,719 NSW residents aged between 13-44 years showed the campaign was successful in achieving its objectives. The campaign strongly communicated its key messages relating to the severity of melanoma and the health consequences of unsafe exposure to the sun. The ad successfully challenged pro-tanning attitudes and prompted a behavioural response in relation to increasing sun protection and reducing the likelihood to suntan. Results indicated that Dark Side of Tanning was effective:

- More than 70% of respondents felt the advertisement 'is an effective sun protection/skin cancer ad', that 'the ad made them stop and think' and that 'the ad provided new information about how sun exposure causes melanoma'.*
- As a result of seeing the campaign 2/3 thought about or did increase their level of sun protection.*
- Six per cent decline was observed in the proportion of respondents who are pro-tan from 2006/07 to 2007/08.*

I hope that the Advertising Standards Bureau will appreciate that this campaign is helping to educate young people about the dangers of overexposure to the sun. By changing their behaviour now, they can significantly decrease their risk of melanoma.

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board ("Board") considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (the "Code").

The Board noted the complainants' concerns about the message and graphic details of the advertisement and that the advertisement could be upsetting to some viewers.

The Board considered that the depiction was not a portrayal of violence, as understood by most members of the community. In any case, the Board considered that the value of the sun safety message contained in the advertisement outweighed any distress it may cause to some viewers and the depiction was therefore justified in the context of that message.

Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on other grounds, the Board dismissed the complaint.