



CASE REPORT

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| 1. Complaint reference number | 22/09 |
| 2. Advertiser | Department of Health & Ageing |
| 3. Product | Public Awareness |
| 4. Type of advertisement | Transport |
| 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 advertisement seen on public transport from the Department of Health and Ageing includes a close up image of skin which has a scar. The scar is 'stapled/stitched' together in several spots. At each of the stitches are words explaining what the skin has been exposed to such as 'Backyard cricket games', Pool party, Tennis with friends, Outdoor Concert, BBA at Sam's. Above the last stitch are the words "Surgery couldn't get all the cancer".

THE COMPLAINT

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

The advertisement on the bus is over the top, looks like the surgery has been done in someones backyard and overly graphic. It is obviously using shock and scare tactics which I find offensive to my intelligence as well as it being an eyesore and I believe ineffectual. I (and other people including children) should not be exposed to having to look at a 6 foot wide wound as a bus drives past me while I walk about. This is visual pollution. Both the Ads do not have any defining department of government that is responsible for the ad and the one on the bus just says Authorised by Capital Hill Canberra. I would like as a resolution from this complaint the the responsible department issues an advertisement that contains facts about sun exposure not just insulting imagery that appeals to the lowest of peoples intelligence.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The Australian Government believes that the skin cancer awareness campaign advertising material is consistent with the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics, particularly in relation to Section 2. In developing this campaign, due care has been taken to present the facts in a responsible and appropriate manner, having regard for the target audiences for whom the advertising is directed. The target audience for this campaign is youth and young adults aged 13-24 years. The development of the campaign was based on current evidence and best practice in relation to reaching youth with a behaviour change message.

The campaign materials are intended to increase young Australians' awareness of the seriousness of developing skin cancer through sun exposure and to promote the adoption of multiple sun protection behaviours as normal, socially acceptable, and endorsed behaviours. The issue of skin cancer is relevant to the entire community, and young people in particular as they have the worst

sun protection behaviours and the highest frequency of sunburn. In Australia skin cancer is a common cancer causing more than 1,600 deaths a year. Skin cancer can occur in people of all ages in the population with approximately 400,000 Australians diagnosed with skin cancer each year. Two of the risk factors for the development of skin cancer are: severe sunburn and exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UVR) during childhood and adolescence. The single most effective way to save lives and reduce the costs associated with skin cancer remains prevention.

The image used in this particular ad is a stock photo from a real surgery. The image was reviewed by our Campaign Reference Group and two highly regarded, prominent melanoma surgeons who all agreed the image chosen was an accurate portrayal of a melanoma wound. This particular image has also been used in print advertising as part of both summer 07/08 and this summer's campaign activity. The image used in the campaign materials is not gratuitous; it is intended to increase Australians' understanding of how severe skin cancer can be and encourage them to adopt preventative measures against skin cancer. The use of graphic images has the ability to convey a powerful health warning message to all Australians from all cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Advertisements using this particular image underwent significant testing with youth and this confirmed that the graphic imagery was necessary to convey the seriousness of the surgery and, therefore, skin cancer, and increase their perceptions that they are at risk. Bus sides were chosen as an advertising medium as they provided an opportunity to deliver the sun protection message to young people whilst they were out and about, possibly putting themselves at risk of sun exposure.

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 complainant's concern about several aspects of this advertisement, of relevance is the concern about the imagery used in the advertisement. The Board noted that the advertisement is a close up of a supposed scar and indicates several possible causes of the person's skin cancer, the removal of which caused the scar.

The Board considered that the depiction was not a portrayal of violence, as understood by most members of the community, but accepted that some members of the community would find the image distressing. 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.