



**ADVERTISING
STANDARDS
BUREAU**

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Case Report

1	Case Number	0508/11
2	Advertiser	CFA
3	Product	Community Awareness
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	18/01/2012
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.6 - Health and Safety within prevailing Community Standards

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The scene opens on a black screen where viewers cannot see anything. But they can hear a range of panicked voices, a family scrambling to prepare themselves for the horror of the approaching bushfire. The father is telling himself that they have cleaned up, that they're prepared. But this is drowned out by the mother's scared voice saying 'We shouldn't be here'. As the chaos continues, smoke appears on screen and then fades in and out as the family furiously tries to stop the smoke getting into the house. You then hear the son yelling to his father that he forgot to put the sprinklers on. More smoke appears on screen. As son runs out the front door ignoring his mother pleas to not go outside, all sound cuts out with a final roar of fire. The black vision on screen begins to clear and viewers are left with a startling image of a family home burnt to the ground by bushfire.

As it fades to black again, the words 'Don't risk your life on a split second decision' appear on the screen.

THE COMPLAINT

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

The advertisement implies that bushfires and escaping them are totally the responsibility of the individual - in the case of the 2009 Vic bushfire this was blatantly untrue communication and warnings were poor at best and non-existent in many cases. People with excellent

preparation died. This ad is further traumatising an already traumatised community and compounding guilt and blame that you can rest assured is still there.

Another point in with regards to evacuating early - some summers (like 2009) are hot every day; how does a family with children 'evacuate'? Where do they go? How often should they leave? These are real issues that are not easy to find answers to but need to be asked.

Many people in Victoria lost their friends, relations and animals during the Black Saturday fires. A huge number of people were severely mentally affected by the fires. People are still suffering. These people do not need to be reminded of these fires.

People at whom these ads are aimed are very aware of what precautions need to be taken in future. They do not need to be upset again nightly when these ads come on. The people who are not adversely affected by these ads are people who live in the suburbs and will never have to face the horror of bushfire.

I heard it said "that even if only one life is saved by these ads then they are worthwhile". A load of rubbish!!!!

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complainant/s regarding this advertisement include the following:

The commercial in question presents an emotive and confronting approach to bushfire safety, and showing them to an audience including bushfire-affected people was not a decision taken lightly.

The rationale behind the commercials arose from in-depth research with Victorians (including people in high-risk bushfire areas) which told us that people wanted a hard-hitting campaign with a clear call to action. There was strong feedback that a different approach from previous commercials was called for, to prompt people to take action around fire preparation.

Nearly three years on from the tragedy of the 2009 fires, we know that a high proportion of people living in high risk areas still do not have a fire plan. The fire agencies through their community education programs continue to reinforce how important it is to prepare and practice a fire plan to minimise injury and death. We are working hard to get this message across through these advertisements.

We recognise that this approach may have a strong emotional impact on some people and stir some painful memories; and a number of steps have been taken to alleviate possible distress.

The CFA website features a list of programs during which commercials will be broadcast. Television commercials airing from December 18 will include a 15 second warning, to give people a chance to change channel and avoid viewing them. The Victorian Bushfire Information Line has been briefed to ensure that operators refer people to appropriate counselling services.

It is recognised that the commercials may also affect volunteers and staff who were directly involved with the 2009 bushfires. To build understanding about the rationale of the campaign, briefings have taken place with The Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA), Victorian Bushfire Information Line, CFA volunteers and staff, and government departments whose staff were involved.

A dedicated hub to explain more about the campaign has been set up on the Fire Services Commissioner's website (www.firecommissioner.vic.gov.au/firecampaign) to explain more about the campaign. This hub features video clips of Fire Services Commissioner Craig Lapsley and Psychologist Rob Gordon talking about the campaign and its impact, and I encourage you to take a look.

I hope this explains some of the background to the advertisements and addresses some of your concerns.

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 that the advertisement wrongly implies bushfires can be avoided with preparation and that the advertisement is traumatic for those who have experienced bush fires.

The Board reviewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser's response.

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.6 of the Code. Section 2.6 of the Code states: "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety".

The Board noted that the advertisement features a darkened screen and the sounds of a family arguing about sprinklers and getting their belongings, and then we see a burnt out house and the words, "Don't risk your life on a last minute decision" appear on screen.

The Board noted that the advertisement was screened in Victoria and the complainants mentioned the after effects of the 2009 bush fire. The Board noted that many people were very badly affected by bushfires and that an advertisement such as this which suggests the death of a family is likely to be upsetting for many viewers the topic is very emotive and that some members of the community would find any mention of bush fires, including this advertisement, to be upsetting.

The Board noted that at the end of the advertisement the tagline reads, "Don't risk your life on a last minute decision" and refers to the Victorian Government website where you can go to make your action plan. The Board considered that whilst the advertisement would be upsetting for some members of the community the important community safety message needs to be broadcast and is designed to draw the attention of the viewer to the importance of being prepared and planning in case a bush fire situation was to occur.

Based on the above, the Board determined that the advertisement did not depict material contrary to prevailing community standards on health and safety and did not breach Section 2.6 of the Code.

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