



# Case Report

1	Case Number	0028/15
2	Advertiser	St John Ambulance WA
3	Product	Community Awareness
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Radio
5	Date of Determination	11/02/2015
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

## ISSUES RAISED

- 2.3 - Violence Causes alarm and distress
- 2.3 - Violence Community Awareness

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement depicts a telephone call between an adult female babysitter and a St John Ambulance triple zero communications officer. There is a child crying and the communications officer asks what has happened. The babysitter explains that the child has been burnt by hot oil whilst making chips. She confirms that she does not know first aid. The advertisement concludes with a voice over saying that an emergency triple zero call is not the best time to learn first aid.

## THE COMPLAINT

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

*The graphic description used was appalling. The woman called emergency services and said her 5 year old had poured boiling oil over her. The operator asked had she done first aid courses. After saying no the woman started saying the child,s arm was blistering and she was screaming and screaming.*

*I was appalled and disgusted.*

*I understand that the point was to shock people into getting first aid courses but this was way way over the top. I actually turned it off - it was so disturbing.*

*As a parent, I understand the horror of Burns but I don't need to hear this horrific ad every morning. Should be on when kids are not about.*

## THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

*Thank you for your correspondence of 22 January 2014 which advised that two complaints had been made to the Advertising Standards Bureau (ASB) in response to a radio advertisement produced by St John Ambulance Western Australia. We have noted the instructions contained in that correspondence and duly provide our response as follows.*

*Comments in relation to the complaint:*

*The ASB identified Section 2.3 of the AANA Code of Ethics, ““Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised” as being the specific section of the code to which the complaints related. We understand that the ASB will, however, consider our advertisement against the code in its entirety.*

*The advertisement does not deal with discrimination, sexual exploitation or sex/sexuality insensitively, nor does it use inappropriate language or depict material which we understand to be contrary to prevailing community standards on health and safety. For this reason we do not believe an interpretation of breach could reasonably be sustained for sections 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5 or 2.6 of the code, and we hope this will be apparent once the ASB has reviewed the advertisement.*

*With regards to section 2.3 of the code, we submit that this advertisement is not violent in the sense that the term is understood within the community; it does not show the outcomes or consequences of an act perpetrated by one person to another, nor does it show the physical actions, aggression or exertions of force by one person either to another person or ‘at large’. We have considered, however, whether the advertisement represents the consequences of violence (i.e. depiction of an injured person as a result of an accident) and we acknowledge that the advertisement may be confronting to some listeners, especially to those who have been in a similar emergency situation.*

*A key component of this campaign was to use a realistic scenario to demonstrate the impact of not knowing first aid in an emergency situation. The script for the advertisement was developed in consultation with St John Ambulance triple zero communications officers and is based on real-life scenarios and call scripts used by St John Ambulance. The advertisement is a realistic portrayal of the scenario and is in no way exaggerated or misleading. Taking this into account, we confidently chose to air the advertisement in January 2015.*

*To address one specific aspect of the current complaint - "my kids get upset every time they hear the beginning of it" - we accept that radio advertisements, which by their nature both fall outside the CAD and classifications process, can be heard by listeners of any age and this increases the likelihood that a greater number of people (particularly young children) might hear the advertisement and be distressed or upset by it.*

*The advertisement aired on Mix 94.5 FM for one week (11th to 17th January 2015), with a shorter 30 second version airing the following week. A total of 55 BMAD spots were booked during the two week campaign. We have analysed the media buy, and while the advertisement aired at the 8am timeslot cited in the complaint only twice during the two week campaign, our effective reach (3+) was optimised to our target audience (PPL25-54) and minimised against people under 18yrs.*

*The campaign communicates the important community message that applying first aid in an emergency has the potential to positively affect patient outcomes. We believe that this is a*

*message the community should know; and we have seen from the marked increase in first aid bookings as a result of the campaign that the community at large has accepted and can relate to that message.*

*Academic research indicates that advertisements are most effective when they are able to make a consumer believe that a negative outcome may result as a consequence of non-compliance with the advertised recommendation. The aim of this advertisement is for the viewer to hear (and be provoked into feeling) the realistic consequences of first aid incompetence and, ultimately, to change community behaviour. In this sense, what the advertisement does is hold a mirror up to the 75% of the Western Australian community who do not have the confidence to apply first aid, as indicated by an independent survey conducted by Roy Morgan in 2014, and projects a look into what their reactions and emotions might be like if they were ever faced with a similar situation.*

*Accidents often happen, and our human instinct is to react to ease the pain, manage the injuries, and intervene until expert medical attention can be provided. It is commonplace that feelings of powerlessness, distress, and anguish are evident if the first responder is not equipped with the skills or knowledge to do something to help. For this reason we believe nature of this advertisement is justified in the context of the product (first aid training) and a critical part of our campaign to educate the public about the vital importance of knowing first aid in an emergency situation.*

*Southern Cross Austereo has confirmed their ongoing support of the advertisement due to the important message it conveys to the community, and the small number of complaints they had received (5) when compared to forecast adult audience reach during the campaign period (252,000). Furthermore, wider community support can be gleaned by the quantitative results we have seen to date, which show an increase in people booking a first aid course both online and via phone. This indicates the majority of listeners understood the intention of the advertisement and were prompted to act accordingly.*

*Everything we do at St John Ambulance Western Australia is underpinned by our purpose of making first aid a part of everyone's life. It is never the intention of our advertisements to cause angst and distress, but rather, to spur the community into taking action - learning first aid. We contend that this message places the advertisement within the category of important and justifiable advertisements which the ASB has habitually held not to breach advertising codes.*

*We note that a review of previous cases indicates the ASB has dismissed complaints about advertisements similar to ours (in terms of their graphic depictions) on the basis that those advertisements delivered "extremely important" messages (0336/12, and 0088/14 as examples) and could be related to by the target audience (0170/12). We submit, respectfully, that complaints against our advertisement be dismissed for the same reasons.*

## **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 concerns that the advertisement depicts graphic screams and a scenario that is alarming and distressing to children and listeners.

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

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.3 of the Code. Section 2.3 states: "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised".

The Board noted that the advertisement is a radio advertisement that depicts a phone conversation between an adult woman and the Emergency Services. There is a child in the

background who is crying and screaming as she has been burnt by hot oil. The voiceover at the end of the advertisement refers to the importance of learning first aid before an accident happens.

The Board noted that it had recently dismissed a television advertisement for St John's Ambulance in case 0146/14 where a young boy hits his head by the side of a pool and is depicted drowning. In that case the Board noted that :

"... the advertisement is realistic in its depiction of the mother being distressed about not being able to reach or save her son and that it is alarming but is critical to the effectiveness of the advertisement.

The Board acknowledged that some members of the community would find the advertisement to be distressing however in the Board's view the impact of the advertising is important in order to deliver the important community awareness issue relating to first aid in a manner which is appropriate for the relevant audiences."

In the current radio advertisement the Board noted the important safety concern the advertiser is trying to communicate and recognised that that the conversation and the sounds of the child screaming would be distressing to some members of the community.

A minority of the Board considered that the length of the advertisement and the dramatic sounds is too confronting and would be alarming particularly for children to hear. The majority of the Board however, considered that the depiction of such a realistic and stressful situation is intended to evoke a strong reaction and that the call to action is an important one for the community to be aware of and that the length of the advertisement is needed to hold the attention of the listener.

The Board noted that the use of a child rather than an adult is realistic and considered that although this may cause distress to some members of the community in the Board's view the advertisement presents a scenario which is justifiable in the context of the important community message being advertised.

The Board noted that the voiceover at the end of the advertisement refers to "don't let this be the first time you learn first aid..." and then provides information about how to book a course. The Board considered that with information about first aid courses run by St John's and in the context of knowing what to do in an emergency situation the graphic sounds are justifiable and relevant to the advertised product.

Based on the above the Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.3 of the Code.

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