



Case Report

1	Case Number	0068/13
2	Advertiser	Cancer Institute of NSW
3	Product	Community Awareness
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Billboard
5	Date of Determination	13/03/2013
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.3 - Violence Graphic Depictions

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement shows a young girl in a hospital bed. The text reads, "Your children suffer from your smoking". This advertisement - also known as a "shopperlite" - was installed in shopping centres across NSW as part of the "Cigarettes Are Eating You and Your Kids Alive" public education campaign.

THE COMPLAINT

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

It is place directly in front of a children's ride in the shopping centre. When a child is on the ride they are unable to see anything but a sick little girl in front of them. The distance of the billboard is less than 2 metres. The billboard traumatised my 3 year old boy. He couldn't understand why the little girl was so sick and he cried and was very upset requiring lots of reassurance and still brings up the advertisement at night when he wakes.

I am a palliative care nurse, so I do understand the importance of quit smoking campaigns, but not at the price of traumatising small children. I also object to their graphic television advertising campaigns during day time TV leading to me not being able to watch any commercial TV during the waking hours of my children because of the nightmares which follow after watch such graphic content.

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 email dated 20 February 2013 regarding the Cancer Institute NSW's Cigarettes Are Eating You and Your Kids Alive public education campaign.

Cigarettes Are Eating You and Your Kids Alive was developed in 2009, and has aired previously in 2009 and 2010. The most recent run of this campaign (to which this complaint refers) was from December 2012-February 2013. The original creative for this campaign was developed by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and was subsequently adapted for use in Australia.

Tobacco is the largest cause of preventable death and disease in our community. Smoking increases the risk of many cancers and 20% of all cancer deaths in NSW are caused by smoking. The cost to the NSW community as a result of tobacco smoking in 2006-07 was estimated conservatively at \$8.4billion. However, it has been estimated that for every \$1 spent on tobacco control programs to date, \$2 has been saved on health care. Total economic returns of tobacco control programs are estimated to exceed expenditure by at least 50 to 1. While NSW has seen a significant decline in smoking prevalence, 14.8% of adults in NSW still smoke.

The main objectives of Cigarettes Are Eating You and Your Kids Alive are to increase awareness of the health consequences caused by environmental tobacco smoke (second-hand smoke), particularly to children, and to motivate smokers to quit.

The advertisement referred to in the complaint is an ambient venue advertisement, which shows a young girl in a hospital bed. It features the caption "Your Children Suffer from Your Smoking" and shows the logos for two important smoking cessation services available for smokers (www.icanquit.com.au and the NSW Quitline). This advertising element – also known as a "shopperlite" – was installed in shopping centres across NSW as part of the campaign.

While the image in this advertisement may be confronting – particularly for parents who smoke – it is not intended to cause alarm and distress. It is important to inform adult smokers of the causal relationship between their smoking and health risks for children, which include low birth weight, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), serious respiratory problems and middle ear infection. These health risks are cited in the television commercial that aired as part of this campaign, and this message is reinforced by advertising elements such as the shopperlite ads. The call to action encourages smokers to access the support services available to aid them in quitting smoking.

Trying to change behaviours where addiction is involved is an enormous challenge. We know from research that it is important to demonstrate to smokers that their smoking can have serious health consequences for themselves and others, and that there is an immediate need for them to quit. As with all Cancer Institute NSW campaigns, research insights such as this informed the initial creative approach when developing Cigarettes Are Eating You and Your Kids Alive.

Cigarettes Are Eating You and Your Kids Alive has performed strongly against evaluation objectives in the past. The campaign shows effectiveness in motivating smokers to make a quit attempt; during the 2010 campaign run 57% of smokers agreed that they want to stop smoking now or sometime in the future. Also in 2010, evaluation results showed that 79% of those who viewed the ad agreed that the campaign made them stop and think. During campaign runs in 2009 and 2010, the NSW Quitline weekly call volume increased to 150%-200% of baseline call volume, suggesting a strong response to the take-out message regarding support services.

Since 2003 NSW has experienced a 6.7% decline in smoking prevalence, representing approximately 156,000 fewer smokers. This decline in smoking can in part be attributed to increased funding of tobacco control, including tobacco control public education campaigns. To sustain this level of decline, it is necessary to continue to prompt and remind smokers of the need to quit through campaigns such as Cigarettes Are Eating You and Your Kids Alive. I sincerely hope that the Advertising Standards Bureau will appreciate that this campaign is helping to educate smokers on the dangers of smoking. By quitting now, smokers can significantly decrease their risk and their children's risk of smoking-caused diseases, and make a positive change to improve their health.

Should you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

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 features graphic imagery which is not appropriate for broadcast where children can see it.

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 of the Code 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 features a young girl asleep in a hospital bed. She has breathing apparatus to assist her and her arm appears to have been partially amputated. The text reads, "Your children suffer from your smoking."

The Board noted that in the past it has considered complaints relating to advertisements for anti-smoking campaigns, (such as 0056/13 and 0058/13) which have also contained confronting and sometimes graphic imagery. The Board has consistently stated that a higher level of graphic imagery is recognised as being justifiable in public education campaigns, because of the important public health and safety messages that they are intended to convey, and further, that such compelling detail and "shock" may be necessary to be effective in these types of advertisements.

The Board noted that in this instance, the visuals of the young child lying in a bed could be upsetting to some viewers, particularly children. However the Board noted that the image was presented in a manner which was realistic and that the message being delivered in the advertisement was extremely important to the community.

The Board noted that the advertisement was being shown in connection with an anti-smoking campaign, being aired on television as well and that this connection was important in the overall message and understanding.

The Board considered that the advertisement presents violence in a manner that is justifiable in the context of the service being advertised.

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.