



Case Report

1	Case Number	0079/11
2	Advertiser	Department of Health and Ageing
3	Product	Community Awareness
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Outdoor
5	Date of Determination	23/03/2011
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.2 - Violence Community service advertising

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

A middle-aged man holding a handkerchief containing blood and phlegm. The text on the advertisement reads '\$16 a pack isn't all smokers cough up. Coughing up blood can be the first sign of lung cancer.'

THE COMPLAINT

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

I object to this advert as my son is 5 years old and saw this ad that contained blood. I am a smoker and this scared my son to the point that he started crying as he was frightened. Small children should not be exposed to images of blood or other 'scare factor' graphic shots of people in pain/dying/dead that are designed for a more mature audience.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The Australian Government believes that the National Tobacco 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. As well as smokers, the target audience includes the general community (including smokers' families) and smokers vulnerable to relapse. The development of the campaign was based on current evidence and best practice in relation to tobacco cessation communications. The campaign also builds upon the success of the National Tobacco Campaign (NTC) 'Every cigarette is doing you damage' to further extend and reinforce messages on the negative health effects of smoking. The NTC has played a significant role in helping reduce Australia's smoking rate to an all time low and one in two smokers (48%) credit the campaign with encouraging them to quit. Australia now has some of the lowest smoking rates in the world and the campaign has also been used in approximately forty different countries. Considerable care was taken to ensure the depictions within the campaign are medically accurate and resonate with smokers. A program of market research informed the development and refinement of the campaign's creative concepts to ensure the effectiveness of the messages and their delivery.

The outdoor advertising depicts a man holding a handkerchief containing blood with the headline '\$16 a pack isn't all smokers cough up'. Coughing up blood-streaked phlegm is a common symptom of lung cancer. This can also be a symptom of other conditions.

While the image is hard hitting and confronting, it is not gratuitous; it helps show smokers the damage that they are doing to their bodies and encourages major behavioural change. Because of the addictiveness of nicotine in tobacco products, smokers will use denial or cognitive dissonance to avoid the reality of smoking harms.

The National Tobacco Campaign is relevant to the entire community. Tobacco smoking is the single largest preventable cause of death and disability in Australia. All non-smokers are potential smokers or potential victims of passive smoking. Most non-smokers are likely to be a grandparent, parent, child or sibling of a smoker or potential smoker. Tobacco smoking is the single largest preventable cause of premature death and disease in Australia, accounting for approximately 15,000 deaths per annum. Approximately 130 Australians die each year from exposure to environmental tobacco smoke, 23 of whom are 14 years or younger.

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 that the advertisement contains scary and graphic imagery which is upsetting to children.

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

The Board considered whether the advertisement complied with section 2.2 of the Code which requires that advertisements 'shall not present violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised.'

The Board noted the advertiser's response that the advertisement aims to increase awareness of the dangers of smoking.

The Board noted that some members of the community may find the image of the blood coughed up on to a tissue as graphic, but considered that the value of the cancer warning 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.

The Board noted that this is an outdoor advertisement and can therefore be seen by a wide audience, including children. However the Board considered that the content of the advertisement was relevant to the message and that consistent with previous discussions about public health and safety advertisements a higher degree of graphic detail is appropriate given the important message of this advertisement.

The Board recognised that the advertisement may be disturbing for children (particularly if they have a parent or carer who smokes) but considered that the anti-smoking message is critical to the community and children would be able to ask parents/carers about the advertisement.

The Board determined that the advertisement does not use violence inappropriately and does not breach section 2.2 of the Code.

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