



Case Report

1	Case Number	0080/16
2	Advertiser	Walking Wounded
3	Product	Community Awareness
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Poster
5	Date of Determination	09/03/2016
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.3 - Violence Violence

2.6 - Health and Safety Within prevailing Community Standards

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

Poster 1 (Indooroopilly Shopping Centre) features an Australian soldier in uniform with his name and rank in small type underneath his image – ‘Warrant Officer, David Wiseman’. The headline reads 'Ended his Service in 2005. Ended his life in 2006'. The line at the bottom of the poster features the organisation logo and campaign line - Walking Wounded. Saving Returned soldiers from Suicide.

Poster 2 (Garden City Shopping Centre) features an Australian soldier in uniform with his name and rank in small type underneath his image - ‘Warrant Officer, David Wiseman’. The headline reads 'Survived East Timor. He took his own life in Brisbane'. The line at the bottom of the poster features the organisation logo and campaign line - Walking Wounded. Saving Returned soldiers from Suicide.

THE COMPLAINT

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

The advertisements showing the names and faces of people who have committed suicide might increase the rate of suicides. The Mindframe guide, endorsed by the Australian Government, says this about reporting suicide.

"Reduce prominence. People vulnerable to suicide may be drawn to stories about suicide, so consider placing a story on the inside pages of a newspaper or further down the order of broadcast reports and removing 'suicide' from headlines and search terms."

The Australian Standards Bureau says "Depiction of suicide: The Board believes that depicting suicide is of significant concern, and images or references that are strongly suggestive of suicide are not appropriate."

Do you think that all the other agencies that have promoted mental health have not promoted suicide because they did not think of it? Walking Wounded have set up your charity around a flawed concept.

I have wondered ever since – I had experiences with very lethal veterans at some stages – so I wonder ever since what is the purpose of the promotion? To exhibit this kind of material at a place where young students, all types of people, crossing from their various family backgrounds, in different levels of mental states – more often than not overwhelmed by their own life pressures – so how does that poster belong to the public's awareness? Lay people can't help in this! How would they?

What is it solving in the lives of war veterans? Wouldn't it be more appropriate to be handled by the inner circles of professionals at veterans' counselling? – I talked to them too about this and I will return to them too, apart from this letter.

So please if it's possible let me know who put that poster up there?

I would like to share some thought on that topic with them. All very healing and positive, please do not worry about XXXX "unproductive" (especially not what makes the topic even more painful).

I am soon 62, so I have some level of "maturity", skill and sense of responsibility too...Nether-the-less I also was very stirred up by that message.

So I thought, if they (promoter) puts it out there, there will be at least one of this kind of response to it...mine now.

My father was a WWII veteran too and I can't tell you what he went through in our entire life...and there are hundreds of thousands of veterans' children still here too who are going through the same kind of hell...

I did a supreme job for 35years on this kind of "inheritance" so far and it was relentless. At least I achieved a certain level of balance, healing and well-being...but it is for life.

So please help, perhaps I can contribute to the recovery of those who are still further out there still being lost in it.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

Advertising Complaint Reference Number: 0080/16 - Walking Wounded

Please find below a response to the complaints received by your organisation in relation to the Walking Wounded campaign. This response has been provided in accordance with Section 2 of the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics for review by the Advertising Standards Board and in particular sections 2.3 and 2.6 to which the complaints refer.

BCM Partnership has prepared this response on behalf of their client Walking Wounded. The response has been prepared in consultation with input from and with the approval of Walking Wounded CEO Brian Freeman.

About Walking Wounded

Suicide has claimed more Australian soldiers' lives than any war since 1999 - 49 soldiers have been killed while on active duty and 239 veterans have taken their own lives.

Walking Wounded is a registered charity that has been established to assist in the psychological rehabilitation and recovery of returned Australian soldiers who are experiencing hardships after their time in service. The organisation's primary objective is to intervene and prevent the concerning incidences of suicide in the young veteran community through counselling and other support. Walking Wounded shows them that there is 'life after the Army'.

Executive Director and founder, Brian Freeman, served for 20 years as an infantry and Special Forces soldier and officer in the Australian Army. He emerged from this chapter of his life not only with an undeniable debt of respect for soldiers' dilemmas, but also with a deeply formed passion, belief and knowledge of how adventure could be harnessed as a healing force. Brian is supported by a team of Soldier Welfare Officers, Soldier Liaison Officers, Veteran Physical Trainers, a Nutrition Advisor and external Counselling Services and Training and Employment Specialists. The majority of Brian's team are ex-service men and women, as this common background allows both parties to build trust into relationships with former soldiers quite early. Many veterans struggled adjusting to civilian life, and without the proper support could spiral into deep depression that could cause them to take their own lives. He set up the charity to provide counselling and support to those returned soldiers and to promote a zero tolerance of veteran suicide.

Response to AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics:-

2.1 Discrimination or Vilification; 2.2 Exploitative and degrading; 2.4 Sex, sexuality and nudity

2.5 Language - - Not relevant to this advertising campaign/complaint.

2.3 Violence

Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised.

The campaign does not depict or sensationalize violence, violent behaviour or the violence of

suicide in any way. Any reference to war and suicide is discreetly and deliberately pared back to present the simple and straightforward facts only. The soldiers are not shown in a depressive or tragic state.

2.6 Health and Safety

Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety.

The Walking Wounded campaign was developed with consideration given to The Mind frame Guide referred to by one of the two complainants and as such we have been careful to ensure that any reference to suicide is not glamourised or sensationalised in any way.

The campaign was developed in close consultation with the Walking Wounded team and their advisors. This group of dedicated volunteers and professionals who work extensively with both veterans suffering with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and their families, provided important input and advice on the nuances, tone and detail of the campaign content to ensure the campaign did not sensationalise or promote/encourage suicide in any way - but also helped to ensure that it connected with veterans and the veteran community in a credible and authentic way.

The campaign has also been given the full support and endorsement of the families of the men shown who have tragically taken their lives. It has therefore been quite deliberately presented in a way that will 'speak' to returned veterans who are suffering from mental health concerns, acknowledging their service and the suffering they might be experiencing as a result, and importantly reminding them that there is help and support available. Importantly it is crucial that these people and their families know that the help will be coming from an organisation that understands their particular circumstances.

The use of real soldiers and their real stories is undoubtedly emotive but authenticity and credibility were essential to the campaign's effectiveness from the perspective of the general public and veteran community. Showing the real people behind this unacceptable statistic (239 veteran deaths) was a critical factor. We did however ensure that their images and stories have been managed with the utmost respect and restraint. The crafting of the wording and selection of photos used in the campaign has been carefully considered with a sensitive approach, and aim not to glamorise suicide, but to touch on the tragedy of suicide and raise awareness of the Walking Wounded organisation and the important work they do to help prevent any more veterans taking their own lives upon returning home.

The campaign also does not portray the issue of suicide amongst veterans as an insurmountable problem or inevitable choice. The campaign positioning of "Saving Returned Soldiers from Suicide" clearly reinforces the premise that there is hope and that help is available - suicide is not a solution, preventing suicide is the solution.

The Walking Wounded campaign's primary objective is to raise awareness in the general community of the devastating incidence of suicide amongst Australian veterans. The primary desired outcome is to generate an increase in donations to allow Walking Wounded to continue and extend their services to as many young Australian veterans and their families.

We were however very conscious that a secondary outcome of this current campaign will be

a connection with returned service men and women who may be suffering from PTSD and other mental health issues as a result of their time in service. The intention is that these young men and women, and their families and friends, who see the campaign and connect with it then reach out to Walking Wounded (or similar organisations and other health professionals) to seek the help and support they need.

Worth noting is that although the stigma surrounding mental health issues has evolved with many people more open and willing to seek assistance, those who have served in the armed forces are less inclined to seek help when they need it. All soldiers know that any type of wound or injury, physical or mental, may result in discharge as medically unfit. So for many this creates a reluctance to open up and seek help. Further complicating the issue is the fact that many soldiers disregard assistance by civilian mental health practitioners due to the lack of shared military experience.

Importantly, the outdoor campaign is supported by an extensive PR campaign along with website and social media to providing information on the support available, reinforcing the need to get help and importantly reinforcing the positive outcomes and success stories.

Since the January launch, the campaign has received overwhelming support and endorsement from both the veteran and community at large by way of donations, volunteers keen to be involved with the organisation and a vibrant and positive ongoing dialogue on social media. Most importantly, Walking Wounded has also seen an increase in veterans reaching out for help.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries or require anything further.

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’ concern that the advertisement makes reference to suicide which is contrary to Prevailing Community Standards as the use of the word suicide may increase rates of suicide.

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 there are two versions of this poster advertisement, each featuring an image of a soldier. The first image includes the text, “Ended his life in 2006” and the second image, “He took his own life in Brisbane”. Both versions have the tagline, “Saving returning soldiers from suicide”.

The Board noted that the advertisement features the word ‘suicide’ but considered that the image itself was of a soldier smiling and there was nothing violent in the image.

The Board considered that the use of the word 'suicide' is not of itself a depiction of violence and determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.3 of the Code.

The Board considered 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 there is strong community concern around the issue of suicide and the link between cyber-bullying and self-harm.

The Board noted that research has shown that mention of the word 'suicide' has been shown to be a trigger to some members of the community (<http://www.livingisforeveryone.com.au/uploads/docs/LIFE-research-web.pdf>, page 23).

The Board noted the Australian Press Council's Standards Relating to Suicide, 2011 (<http://www.presscouncil.org.au/document-search/standard-suicide-reporting/>) which provides:

"Published material relating to suicide should be accompanied by information about appropriate 24-hour crisis support services or other sources of assistance with these problems..."

The Board also noted similar rules in the FreeTV Code of Practice. The Board noted that these rules do not apply to the advertiser in question as they are not covered by the particular rules; however in the Board's view the rules represent a community standard regarding references to suicide.

The Board noted it had previously upheld a complaint about an advertisement which featured the word suicide in case 0193/15 where:

"The Board noted that the use of the term 'suicide' in the advertisement is in the context of a movie promotion and a minority of the Board considered that its use in this context and the relevance of the word to the theme of the movie was not inappropriate and did not breach Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety.

The majority of the Board however noted that as well as the word 'suicide' the other Google search references included 'party photos' and 'boyfriend' and considered that by displaying the word 'suicide' in this context it trivialises and normalises an issue which is serious.

The majority of the Board noted that whilst there is no obligation for the promoter of a movie to provide information about appropriate support services for anyone concerned about the issue of suicide in the Board's view it is not appropriate to display this word in an advertisement without providing support services information and in the absence of support information in the context of this advertisement, the concept of suicide can be seen as attractive an option as being at a party or with your boyfriend.

The majority of the Board considered that the use of the word 'suicide' in the advertisement was a depiction of material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety around mental health issues."

In the current advertisement the Board noted that the advertiser's response that their campaign is intended to raise awareness about their charity which provides support to returned servicemen. The Board noted that there are no contact details displayed in the advertisement, other than the name of the advertiser, and expressed concern over the absence of any support information. The Board acknowledged that soldiers would be familiar with the support available to them but considered that the issue of suicide affects the broader community. The Board noted that the advertisement is not clear with regards to its intended audience: information to soldiers or raising awareness to the community about the charity, and considered that the absence of any contact details for the charity increases this confusion. The Board noted it had previously upheld complaints about advertisements which raised the issue of suicide however the Board considered that despite the suicide warning the current advertisement is clear that it is about preventing suicide.

The Board considered overall that the advertisement does not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety.

The Board determined that the advertisement 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 complaints.