



Case Report

1	Case Number	0084/17
2	Advertiser	Weight Watchers
3	Product	Slimming
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV - Free to air
5	Date of Determination	08/03/2017
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.6 - Health and Safety Unsafe behaviour

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

There are 5 versions of this television advertisement for the Weight Watchers Your Way Program. Each version shows a day in the life of a range of different women and men on the Program and how it helps them live bigger lives. In one scene a woman is seen chopping salad and then using the knife to move the salad in to a bowl held by a boy next to her.

THE COMPLAINT

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

During the montage of different people conducting various healthy practices, one of the shots shows (what I assume is) a mother finishing chopping vegetables for a salad. Upon finishing, she uses a large knife to forcefully propel the vegetables into a bowl that (again I assume is) her son is holding next to the table.

I find this shot offensive as it clearly displays a sheer lack of care towards the safety of the child. It also appears that the knife is even sharp side up.

A woman flicks a knife at a child after cutting up vegetables

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

Weight Watchers Australia acknowledges the complaints made in respect of the TVC and appreciates the role played by the ASB in considering them. However, we strongly disagree that there is a breach of the AANA Code of Ethics (or any other code) contained within the advertisement. The advertisement has been appropriately rated by CAD for the free to air audience and broadcast in line with that rating. There is nothing overtly sexual, violent or otherwise problematic such that the advertisement would breach the relevant provisions of the Code of Ethics.

We do note that across each of the complaints received one issue is repeated, being the perceived flick of the knife in the proximity of a child. This most appropriately falls under section 2.6 of the Code of Ethics relating to material that is contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety.

Weight Watchers responds to the complaints as follows:

- As outlined in the description of the advertisement, the advertisement is shot in a quick-shot style, with certain scenes within the advertisement (including the scene in question), seen to be in fast motion. This may not be visible on first view, but on repeated viewings this is undeniably evident. In reality, the scene in question does not depict any 'flick' of the food toward the child, or of the knife in the child's direction. When slowed to normal speed, the movement of the chopped food from the back blade of the knife into the salad bowl is neither dangerous or placing the child in harm's way. Indeed, the child is not shown in distress, nor does he flinch when the food is placed in the bowl. This supports the clear position that there was nothing vigorous or dangerous about the conduct. In shooting this scene the sharp edge of the knife was purposefully directed away from child so that the blunt edge is leading.*
- Further to the above, the practice of children being involved in cooking, assisting parents under supervision while preparing meals, preparing meals themselves, etc is extremely commonplace and only growing in popularity. Many television shows and magazines have popularised this conduct, such that it is not at all uncommon to see children involved in preparation of food, which of course by its nature involves general proximity to gas ovens, electronic ovens and blenders, knives, mallets, etc. It is not, of itself, dangerous for a child to be shown in proximity to these devices when supervised by a parent, in advertising.*
- To clarify Weight Watchers' commitment to the safety of all actors appearing in our advertising, including children, we can confirm that our production company was clearly briefed and absolutely guarantees that the safety of all actors and participants in the filming of the advertisement was of paramount importance. We can confirm that at no time was any actor in danger, let alone injured.*
- Further, Safety Officers were present on set as part of the TVC production to ensure that all activities met with health and safety regulations.*

- *Also, a government-run child employment agency did sight and approve the script and production document including the scene in question prior to production and approved the shoot for young employees.*
- *The parents of the child actor were also on set to monitor all scenes, and at no stage raised a concern about the filming of the scene, at any stage, through any of the takes.*
- *There was adult supervision at all times and at least 4 people on set who held first aid qualifications.*
- *To confirm, the child in question was not permitted to handle the knife, which was managed by an adult at all times.*
- *At no time was the child actor in close vicinity to the knife, and a significant distance was kept. This distance of at least 24 inches is less obvious when viewed on-screen, due to the framing of the shot, the perspective of the viewed and the placement of the camera.*

On the basis of the above Weight Watchers is strongly of the view that the complaints should be dismissed, and we look forward to receiving confirmation that the ASB is of the same mind, in due course.

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board (the “Board”) considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics (the “Code”).

The Board noted the complainants’ concerns that the advertisement depicts a mother flicking a knife towards a child which is unsafe behaviour.

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

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 this television advertisement features a montage of different people doing various activities. In one scene a woman is seen chopping ingredients (a cucumber) for a salad and when she is done, she flicks the chopped cucumber with the back of a knife toward a child who is holding the salad bowl.

The Board noted the advertisement is filmed at a fast pace and that all the activities and music is upbeat and filmed very quickly. The Board noted that the scene where the woman chops the food and pushes it into the bowl is fleeting and depicts the woman as being completely in control of what she is doing. The Board noted that the woman appears to be very competent with using the knife.

The Board noted that as the woman flicks the cucumber into the bowl, the knife is turned

over and the blade is facing upwards. The boy is situated some distance away from the woman and the chopping board. The Board noted that the woman is smiling and the boy does not appear scared or concerned by the actions of the woman.

For the reasons above, in the Board's view, the action of the woman moving the food from the board to the bowl using the back of the knife is not dangerous and does not place the boy in any danger.

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.