



Case Report

1	Case Number	0147/14
2	Advertiser	Quit Victoria
3	Product	Community Awareness
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV - Free to air
5	Date of Determination	14/05/2014
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

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

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The 'Separation' television campaign featured a young boy lost and upset at a train station, with a voice over stating "If this is how your child feels after losing you for a moment, imagine if they lost you for a lifetime"

THE COMPLAINT

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

I am offended that you would put a child under such distress to advertise no smoking. How did you get the child to cry, I feel distressed as a mother to see this child crying and I certainly hope there wasn't any stress for him. Please explain how this ad was made?

The little boy appears genuinely distraught & distressed & it appears that for the purpose of the campaign (anti smoking) he may have actually been left alone & his reaction filmed. I can't watch the ad because it makes me feel terrible thinking about what have been done to the little boy to get that reaction out of him. It hadn't been on the air for quite some time & I'd really like it if it stopped being shown once & for all.

I would like to see this ad banned.

A small child has clearly been traumatised just to make an advertisement. Surely there are industry standards about how to treat child "actors" and these have been breached? The ad should be pulled.

Personal I find this extremely distressing. I am not a smoker and seem to be affected by not only there offensive smoke everytime I exit a supermarket, venues. Now I am subjected to most disturbing advertisement. I am a divorce father who rarely sees his son. I anguish to the point of tears when I am subjected to this advertisement. I wish you to remove this advertisement from the tv. Have respect for those who have lost children through divorce, death, etc. I don't really care for smokers who chose to ruin there own health.

I believe the intentional temporary abandonment is a act of child cruelty and should not be used to promote this service / for commercial gain.

My heart breaks and my friend had to comfort her child who was upset by this ad. Everyone I ask says things like oh I hate that ad. Smokers I have asked for an opinion of the impact have said it doesn't matter what the consequences of their habit bring...they just don't think it will happen to them...addictions are like that. My main objection is that this precious boy was subjected to abuse. .ask a psychologist if one incident can impact and cause further problems in a person's life! He may have been physically safe but this is unacceptable. Sadly shock advertising has become a new trend in our unrelenting society. I would not only like to see this ad removed but also ruling in your code that forbids any means other than acting to film distress in a fictional content. .no matter how noble the intent.

The child even though behind the scenes would have parents, psychologist and more EXPERTS around, looks traumatized by being left as any child would especially at such a young age. One of my children age 12 cries when this ad comes on because she can't understand why they would do that to a child just to prove that smoking is bad for you. As an adult I also hate watching this ad and not for the purpose of not smoking but because of the same reason the poor little boy. It really takes away the message that you are trying to make to us all.

I smoked for many years and my husband also just quit himself so we understand what you are trying to get across to people but unfortunately for you I think you have gone about it the wrong way.

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 letter dated the 29th April 2014, regarding the advertising campaign, 'Separation', currently being aired by Quit Victoria.

Anti-Smoking TV Advertisements

For more than 20 years, Quit Victoria's central purpose has been to inform the public of the dangers of smoking and provide smokers with the help and support they need to quit. Over that time, Quit Victoria has gained significant experience and built a strong research base in what are the most effective messages in motivating smokers to quit, many of which have been sold for use in overseas countries.

In a 2011 study conducted by the Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer at Cancer

Council Victoria, anti-smoking advertisements were listed as the second most important factor in staying quit, behind the cost of cigarettes . Anti-smoking campaigns work in three ways to reduce smoking prevalence: 1) motivate smokers to quit; 2) discourage uptake of smoking by young people; and 3) prevent relapse by those who have quit smoking. Changing behaviours where addiction is involved is challenging. The development of the key campaign message is critical to engaging smokers and research shows the most effective anti-smoking messages are those that are credible, personally relevant, provide new information, evoke a strong visceral response and use confronting messages to convince smokers of the serious effects of smoking on themselves and their children. The communications aim is always to encourage smokers to put quitting on 'today's agenda' rather than putting it off to some point in the future.

Developing the 'Separation' Campaign

The Quit advertisement 'Separation', to which this letter refers, was first launched in Victoria in 2008, and has aired three times in Victoria since then (July-August 2009, April 2011 and April-May 2014). During the first three weeks of activity in 2008, calls to the Victorian Quitline increased by 93%.

Whilst the primary target audience for this campaign is smokers with children under 12, the message also extends to parents who smoke with children of any age and smokers in general. The key message of the campaign is that deaths caused by smoking do happen to younger parents and to send an early warning to parents who smoke in an effort to avoid future suffering. The unfortunate reality is that thousands of Victorians are experiencing the loss and grief of losing a parent to smoking, such as that suggested in the advertisement.

Quit undertakes significant focus testing before and during the making of all its advertisements, which involves testing a number of concepts and ideas with groups of smokers to determine what will work best to motivate them to quit.

In this case, smokers told Quit a strong motivator to quit is seeing the possible loss and damage to those left behind, particularly children, if smoking took their life. On viewing 'Separation', smokers responded that the powerful and relevant message was "my smoking isn't just about me".

Further, smokers often self-exempt when presented with information about their risk of developing a smoking related illness, and this tendency becomes less relevant when the consequences relate to what their children might experience in this situation.

Although highly emotive, the 'Separation' concept prompted smokers to think about the emotional impact on their children of them dying of a smoking-caused illness, the consequences of which are so undesirable that it could likely overcome the self-exemptions that are typically associated with messages about death from smoking.

Final testing of 'Separation' took place with smokers who are parents to children under 12, prior to its release. Despite finding the advertisement confronting and distressing, these smokers were in unanimous agreement that Quit needed to show this campaign.

The actors in 'Separation'

The actors you see in the advertisement, Annette and Alexander, are a real-life mother and son acting team. They were both taken through the script, step-by-step before being chosen and again before filming. The director told Alexander the movements he should make during the filming, and that it was make-believe, always taking care that Alexander felt safe and secure. A child welfare representative was present on the day, and at no point did they express concern that Alexander was being made upset or uncomfortable.

I trust the Advertising Standards Bureau will appreciate that through this campaign, Quit is fulfilling its mandate to educate smokers and the general public on the dangers of smoking to avoid any further loss of life and emotional trauma to the thousands of sufferers, carers and families of those who lose their life to smoking caused diseases. By quitting now, smokers can

significantly decrease their chances of their children having to go through the loss of a parent.

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 depicts a child left alone on a train platform and that his clear distress would have been genuine which is not appropriate and is upsetting for viewers.

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 features a young boy lost and upset at a train station, with a voice over stating “If this is how your child feels after losing you for a moment, imagine if they lost you for a lifetime.”

The Board noted that it had previously dismissed complaints about this advertisement in 2008 (459/08). In that instance:

“The Board noted complainants' concerns that the advertisement's suggestion of children's parents dying from smoking was extremely distressing to both adults and children. The Board also noted concerns that the child actor depicted in the advertisement may have been mistreated during filming of the advertisement.

In relation to the treatment of the child during the creation of the advertisement, the Board noted that child employment laws apply to protect minors in this type of work. The Board noted the advertiser's response that the child's mother was with him during the advertisement and that a child welfare worker was also present. The Board considered that it is the advertiser's responsibility to ensure that there is no abuse of actors during creation of a commercial. The Board would only comment on this issue if the advertisement was suggesting (either directly or by inference) that mistreatment of children is condoned or encouraged. In this advertisement the Board considered that although the child is left by his mother, the context of this is clearly indicated and in the Board's view there is no reasonable suggestion that the advertisement condones or in any way encourages children to be left in public places without supervision.

The Board considered the advertisement was very impactful and agreed that the advertisement would be likely to upset or disturb viewers, particularly those who had been touched by tragedy resulting in the loss of a parent. However, consistent with previous decisions about advertisements directed to positive public health outcomes, the Board considered that this advertisement did not breach the Code.”

The Board noted that the current advertisement had been rated PG by CAD and that it was shown in programming appropriate for the rating.

Consistent with its previous determination the Board acknowledged that some members of

the community would find the advertisement to be upsetting however in the Board's view the advertisement handles this important community awareness issue in a manner which is not inappropriate for the relevant PG audience.

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 complaints.