



## Case Report

1	Case Number	0157/14
2	Advertiser	Queensland Health
3	Product	Community Awareness
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	14/05/2014
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

### ISSUES RAISED

- 2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Physical Characteristics
- 2.3 - Violence Causes alarm and distress

### DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

Complainant's description: A young man had been burnt by someone throwing fuel on a fire. Another man then comes on to talk about being safe around fires. The Doctor that is in the ad is talking about being safe around fires and makes a statement "scars are ugly".

### THE COMPLAINT

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

*Think I've spotted the most 'poorly worded' add ever. I get the message in the add telling people not to put petrol on fires etc, HOWEVER the 'doctor' then going on to say 'Because we all know, scars are ugly' WTF!!*

*What a dumb thing to say, if you're trying to appeal to peoples vain side this is a big FAIL! How do you think this affects people who have scars already and are trying to deal with it the best they can, Matt Golinski, Jandamurra O'Shane, Dana Vulin, Turia Pitt and the millions of others (who haven't made the spotlight) but are doing their best to regain their confidence?! How many douchebags got paid \$\$\$ to come up with that little gem of a catchphrase!*

*The 2nd man that is in the add talking about being safe makes a statement "scars are ugly". That statement is offensive. So many people have scars, wether from fire or not that type of statement is not what they need to hear.*

*There is 1 line in this commercial that concerns me greatly.*

*The doctor says, "And let's face it, scars are ugly."*

*My concern over this line is:*

*If you are a person living with scars of some kind, or who has recently been scarred this would be a terrible thing to hear.*

*Imagine the hurt this would cause a young child, who due to some tragedy, is now faced with living their whole life with a scar (or scars) and they hear a doctor on television saying that scars are ugly.*

*Imagining being the parent of a child who has been scarred. You tell that child that they are still beautiful and amazing but then 'that' line comes on tv.*

*I don't think that line is necessary to get the point of the ad across and I think it would still be really effective without it.*

*We need to choose our words carefully and I think that this line could cause a lot of hurt to people who are already struggling with their scars.*

*He states that scars are ugly. As a parent with a horrifically scarred child trying to tell her she is still beautiful and her scars are a part of her and then hearing this in the media.*

*Bullying with a scared child is already prominent without a health professional stating they are ugly.*

## **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE**

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

*The concept for the commercial originated as a collaborative research project at The University of Queensland, involving both the School of Medicine and the School of Journalism and Communication. The intent was to create a campaign targeting males aged 16+ to communicate the dangers associated with flammable liquid and fire. A review of the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital data base revealed approximately 25% of new patients admitted annually were injured in this way and comprised by far the largest group of preventable injuries.*

*The aim was to reduce the rate of hospital admissions resulting from burns caused by the use of accelerants with fires. The frequency of these incidents in Queensland indicated the potential value for an awareness/prevention campaign. The severity of the injury is such that a large majority of those burned in this way require skin grafting.*

*The speaker in the advertisement is Professor Michael Muller, one of Queensland's pre-eminent burns and trauma specialists. Every day of his working life Professor Muller is involved in the treatment of burns injuries, and in the use of treatment protocols designed to reduce scarring. His intimate knowledge of the physical and psychological impact of burns drove him to raise the funds to create the campaign.*

*To target this group with the prevention message a community service style television commercial was produced. This commercial is part of an ongoing research project that has ethics committee approval through the University of Queensland Ethics Committee. The first phase of the project was conducted in the Mary Burnett health district and has been written up in the Journal of Trauma and Acute-Care Surgery (74.2 652-657). During and following the original airing of this first phase, no complaints were received.*

*The messaging of the commercial highlighting "scars are ugly" was carefully considered during the production phase. This phrasing was selected based on patient feedback. It was*

*chosen to be confronting and strike a chord with the target audience intended for the commercial. During the research phase our academic collaborators discovered the target audience for this commercial was not fearful of death, however they were fearful of disfigurement. Within this context the production team felt the language selected would be appropriate.*

*It was never the intention of anyone associated with the production of this commercial to offend or vilify any viewers of the advertisement and we deeply regret any offense that has been taken.*

## **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 says that scars are ugly and this is discriminatory and upsetting to people with scars.

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

The Board considered whether the advertisement complied with Section 2.1 of the Code which requires that ‘advertisements shall not portray or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual preference, religion, disability, mental illness or political belief.’

The Board noted that this advertisement features a young man who has been burnt by someone throwing fuel on a fire. Dr Michael Muller (Burn Surgeon) then talks about the consequences of throwing fuel on a fire and makes the statement “burns hurt” and “let’s be honest, scars are ugly”. The catch phrase for the advertisement is “Don’t be a flaming fool”. The Board noted that the information provided in the advertisement is factual and presented in a clinical manner. The Board noted that there are different versions of the advertisement but that the message is the same. The Board noted that the issue of safety around fires is a serious one and that many people are not aware of potential for small fires to cause harm and the serious consequences surrounding throwing fuels onto a fire.

The Board noted Dr Muller’s reference to “scars are ugly” and considered that this is a reference to scars being unattractive due to the nature of how they have been obtained and probably also a direct reference to their aesthetic appearance. The Board considered that the advertisement was impactful and agreed that the advertisement could upset or disturb viewers who have scars or who have suffered injury from similar incidents. The Board considered that the statement is a statement that most people would agree with that scars are ugly and would want to be avoided but that the advertisement does not suggest that people with scars are ugly.

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

The Board acknowledged that some members of the community would find the advertisement to be upsetting and may find the reference to scars being ugly 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 audience and in a manner which does not suggest that people with scars are ugly.

The Board considered that the advertisement does not depict material which discriminates or vilifies any section of the community on account of their appearance.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.1 of the Code.

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