



**Ad Standards** Community Panel  
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**AdStandards.com.au**

Advertising Standards Bureau Limited  
ACN 084 452 666

# Case Report

1	Case Number	0235/18
2	Advertiser	Mission Australia
3	Product	Community Awareness
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV - Free to air
5	Date of Determination	09/05/2018
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

## ISSUES RAISED

- 2.3 - Violence Causes alarm and distress
- 2.3 - Violence Domestic Violence

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement features a woman running into her son's bedroom, a man yelling can be heard in the background. The woman tells her son to get his special bag, and they leave via the bedroom window. They are then shown in a car while a voiceover provides statistics on homelessness. A call to action at the end of the advertisement states 'help find them a safe home. Donate now'.

## THE COMPLAINT

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

*This is a highly dramatised and emotive depiction of a volatile domestic violence event in progress, which is presented to viewers without warning. Due to the extremely emotive level of the ads content, it has both the ability to not only trigger domestic violence situations, but also re-traumatise both adult and child victims of domestic violence.*

*The violence depicted in the advertisement is unnecessary to the message, as it was later played in a shortened version which was just as effective without the gratuitous*



*shock value.*

*It must be remembered that this is a real, life threatening situation many thousands of Australians are living through right now and continue to deal with years after the event. Their safety, both mentally and physically must be our highest priority - not providing voyeuristic shock content just to get the attention of the rest of Australia. While I'm sure Mission Australia had only the best intentions in producing this ad, it would be better played in its shortened form.*

*Very stressful terrifying brings back memories very frightening for my grand children*

## **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE**

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

*Mission Australia's TV advertisement is one creative element in our Winter 2018 appeal. It highlights the true and emotional story of a mother and her eight-year-old son fleeing their family home to escape domestic violence. It urges the community to donate to help support other families experiencing homelessness.*

*Description of advertisement: Mission Australia's TVC highlights the true and emotional story of Mission Australia clients - a mother and her eight-year-old son - fleeing their family home to escape domestic violence.*

*Last winter, 33-year-old Heather\* and her eight-year-old son Lucas\* found themselves without a safe place to call home during another drunken rage by Heather's husband Chris\*.*

*Heather felt sorry for Chris and didn't want to break up her family. She also had no idea where they could go. Chris was more out of control than usual, and Heather feared for Lucas and her own safety. In that moment, she made the brave decision to leave. With nowhere to go, they were forced to flee out the window and sleep in their car that night by the side of the road.*

*The audience are asked to make a donation to Mission Australia's winter appeal to support over 116,000 Australians like Heather and Lucas who are homeless every night.*

*\* Names have been changed to protect the identity of the people that we help.*

*In collaboration with our creative agency Mind Jam, care was taken during the concept development of this TVC to ensure we were able to delicately portray this true case study, without the overt use of violence. We chose to infer domestic violence through sound, rather than both sound and visuals.*



*The advertisement received a 'W' rating from CAD. Care has been taken in terms of scheduling placement which is appropriate to this rating. A 'W' rating enables broadcast at any time except during P and C programs, or adjacent to P or C periods. For a 'W' rating care should be exercised when placing in programs principally directed to children. Our placement during Channel 7's 'The Morning Show' is compliant with these guidelines.*

*At Mission Australia, our core values underpin all that we do. These are: Compassion Integrity, Respect, Perseverance & Celebration. We ensure that all of our campaigns and actions reflect these important values.*

*To ensure we were able to respect and support people who may be experiencing, or have experienced domestic and family violence a support phone number was included (1800 RESPECT) on this TVC. The National Sexual Assault, Family and Domestic Violence Counselling line is available 24/7 to assist people in need. We also share this same phone number on our campaign landing page should it be required:  
<https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/helpthiswinter>*

*In reference to Section 2 of the Code of Practice:*

- *2.1 - Discrimination or vilification  
In our assessment the advertisement does not portray people 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.*

*We want Australia to be free from all violence towards men, women and children. We know that domestic and family violence (DFV) does not discriminate, it can affect women, men and children of all ages of any cultural heritage and it has a terrible and lasting impact on individuals and communities.*

- *2.2 - Exploitative or degrading  
In our assessment the advertisement does not portray people or depict material in a way which is exploitative or degrading towards a person or group of people.*

- *2.3 – Violence  
Mission Australia's Winter campaign TVC suggests violence through the use of sound. We chose to share a real case study where family members are victims of domestic violence.*

*We specifically chose not to include physical signs of abuse on the mother (such as bruising created by make-up). Nor is there any perceived threat to the child from the father - this was an active decision on our behalf.*



*This advertisement was informed by research; domestic violence is one of the leading causes of homelessness in Australia with more than 114,000 people seeking help from specialist homelessness services in the past year because they were escaping domestic violence<sup>1</sup>. More than 116,000 Australians are experiencing homelessness on any given night<sup>2</sup>, and for many like Heather and Lucas, it's the only option when home is no longer a safe place to be.*

*As a significant provider of homelessness services we feel it is important for people to understand this critical issue, which requires a strong Government and community response. We consider our use of sound to be appropriate in the context of the campaign. It aims to prevent violence and educate the wider audience on the extent of the issue. The audience are asked to make a donation to Mission Australia's winter appeal to support Australians like Heather and Lucas who are homeless every night.*

*Mission Australia is one of Australia's leading not for profit organisations with more than 155 years of practical and proven experience in working with Australians in need. We rely on generous donations from our supporters to help vulnerable Australians. In 2017, we were able to assist 140,639 people in need. 88.8% of our income went straight back into delivering services that assisted vulnerable Australians.*

*Source:*

*1 AIHW (2017) Specialist Homelessness Services 2016-17*

*2 ABS (2018) Census of population and housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016*

- *2.4 - Sex, sexuality and nudity*

*There is no reference to sex, sexuality or nudity in this TVC.*

- *2.5 – Language*

*The advertisement uses language that is appropriate in the circumstances (including appropriate for the relevant audience and medium). Strong or obscene language is not used.*

- *2.6 - Health and Safety*

*In our assessment this TVC is not counter to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety. Mission Australia does not advise sleeping in a car is a safe place. In this real life situation, for this family it was the safest option available to them. This situation is not the focus of the advertisement.*

- *2.7 - Distinguishable as advertising*

*We believe this advertisement is clearly distinguishable as advertising. End frames make up 8 of the 30 seconds of this advertisement and a voice over provides*



*additional information on the scenes viewers just witnessed. These end frames educate the viewer on the magnitude of homelessness, '116,000 Australians are homeless tonight', and encourage action to support people in need 'help find them a safe home, donate now'.*

## **THE DETERMINATION**

The Ad Standards Community Panel (the "Panel") considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics (the "Code").

The Panel noted the complainant's concern that the advertisement depicts extreme violence.

The Panel viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser's response.

The Panel 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 Panel noted that the television advertisement features a woman running into her son's bedroom and locking the door. A man can be heard in the background yelling and banging on the door. The woman and boy escape out of their window and are seen sleeping in a car.

The Panel noted the complainant's concern that the advertisement is terrifying particularly for children who may view the advertisement.

The Panel noted the advertiser's response that the advertisement suggests violence but does not portray physical violence and is designed to demonstrate that domestic violence is one of the leading causes of homelessness in Australia.

The Panel considered that the sounds and theme of the advertisement was very confronting and that the advertisement did contain a high level of threat. The Panel considered that although physical violence was not depicted in the advertisement the level of menace in the advertisement was high.

The Panel noted that the advertisement had a 'W' rating from CAD which allows the advertisement to be broadcast at any time except during children's programs. The Panel considered that this meant the advertisement could be played during 'G' rated shows and family movies and considered that the level of menace would be distressing children who could see the advertisement.



The Panel noted it had considered a similar advertisement in Case 0253/17 in which:

“The Board noted that this television advertisement depicts a mother and her children sleeping in a car before being taken in by the Salvation Army. The Board noted the complainant’s concern that the advertisement was aired during Pixar’s Planes movie and is aimed at children. The Board noted that while the advertisement had been rated G by CAD and had been aired during a movie aimed at children the Board considered that this does not mean that the content of the advertisement is automatically aimed at children.

The Board acknowledged that some members of the community could find the content of the advertisement to be upsetting due to their own personal circumstances or experiences but considered that in the context of a community awareness advertisement seeking financial donations the actual content of the advertisement was not graphic and the suggestion of domestic violence was subtle enough to be unlikely to cause alarm and distress to most viewers including children”

In the current advertisement the Panel considered that the violence in the advertisement would be apparent to children, however considered that the violence was justifiable in the context of an important community awareness advertisement seeking to raise awareness of domestic violence and the service provided by Mission Australia.

Consistent with previous determinations for similar advertisements (0580/16, 0049/17, 0253/17) the Panel considered that the advertisement depicted a suggestion of violence in a manner which was justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised and 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 Panel dismissed the complaint.

