



ADVERTISING
STANDARDS
BUREAU

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Case Report

1	Case Number	0247/14
2	Advertiser	Quit Victoria
3	Product	Community Awareness
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Free TV
5	Date of Determination	23/07/2014
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.3 - Violence Causes alarm and distress
- 2.3 - Violence Community Awareness
- 2.3 - Violence Graphic Depictions
- 2.6 - Health and Safety Within prevailing Community Standards

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The ad opens on a shot of an outline of a male body with him smoking. The audio says "Every time you smoke cigarettes are eating you alive". We then see a skeleton spinning and the voice over says "Smoking eats away at nearly every vital organ and tissue of the body. The heart, the lungs, the mouth, teeth and throat, even the brain". We then see a picture of a real heart, healthy lung then a diseased lung, mouth with cancer, real teeth, a throat with growth and then a skull with a brain with the words stroke. Voice over says "Quit smoking today" We then see a shot of the body outline and then the Quitline number and logo.

THE COMPLAINT

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

Disgusting pictures of quit smoking ads shown during the day whilst our kids can see them. This caused my daughter to have nightmares.

Primarily, I don't think that people with lung cancer need to see that to remind themselves of what has happened to them. Secondly, the loved ones of people who have cancer or who have passed away from cancer do not need to see that as a continual reminder of what they are suffering through. Thirdly, it is far too graphic. There is no reason to show such graphic

images on the TV especially at dinner time when people are eating! I understand that the ads are designed to shock people into quitting, but adverts like these need to think about the entire audience and not just a certain segment.

This advertisement was showing during a pg rated program which children watch. My son (11) found the graphic imagery upsetting, as did I. These advertisements are being shown frequently before the watershed when no television program would be allowed to show similar images. The deliberate use of a foreboding voice over combined with the visual content make these adds clearly unsuitable for the times they are being used. On a personal level I am tired of "public service advertisements" setting out to deliberately shock the viewer but when they are designed specifically to horrify and then shown during popular childrens viewing times I draw the line. Nobody in my household (or the huge majority of Australian households) smokes, I do not see why my 11 year old should be subjected to this during his favourite program.

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 26th June 2014, regarding the advertising campaign, 'Cigarettes Are Eating You Alive', which was aired by Quit Victoria between the 1st and 28th June 2014.

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. Quit Victoria and its campaign partners devise campaigns that are wholly centered in evidence so that nothing portrayed or suggested is exaggerated or misleading.

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 communication's aim is always to encourage smokers to put quitting on 'today's agenda' rather than putting it off to some point in the future.

'Cigarettes Are Eating You Alive' campaign

The Quit advertisement, 'Cigarettes Are Eating You Alive', to which this letter refers, was originally developed and produced by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and tailored for Australian audiences. The advertisement has received a CAD approval rating of PG.

Since 2010, Quit Victoria has aired 'Cigarettes Are Eating You Alive' on four occasions and response to the advertisement by Victorian smokers and recent quitters to date has been very

promising. The latest airing before June 2014 was April-May 2012 when it rated extremely highly under Quit's campaign key performance indicators including relevance, believability and motivation to quit. In 2012 the advertisement achieved 80%, 96% and 73% in these categories respectively.

A key component of the campaign is the use of realistic graphic images to help raise awareness among smokers in the broader community of the seriousness of the harm caused by smoking, and to motivate and encourage smokers to quit smoking.

I appreciate the advertisement may be distressing to watch for some people, however our research confirms that in order to elicit cognitive and behavioural change amongst smokers and prevent others from starting to smoke, it is important to demonstrate that: smoking is a direct cause of diseases such as lung cancer and stroke; damage to health is cumulative; and the time to quit is now rather than sometime in the future.

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.

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 complainant's concerns that the advertisement imagery that is alarming and is likely to cause distress and fear in viewers, particularly children.

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 range of graphic images of parts of the body affected by cancer and disease.

The Board noted that the advertisement is filmed in a manner that is similar to a horror film and that while the images are quite grotesque, they remain clinical and are presented factually. The Board agreed that the advertisement included some graphic images and could likely cause alarm to some people.

The Board noted previous decisions relating to public health and safety campaigns, where it accepted that a higher level of violence can be shown where it is considered to be justifiable in the context of the important health message being conveyed to the public.

The Board noted that it had previously dismissed complaints about an advertisement for Quit Victoria (ref: 0137/14) where a bronchoscopy was being performed on a woman. In that instance: "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."

The Board noted that the current advertisement had been rated 'PG' by CAD.

A minority of the Board expressed concern that the images were too graphic and would likely cause nightmares or distress for young children.

The majority of the Board however, considered that consistent with its previous determination, the advertisement handles an important community awareness issue of the adverse health effects of smoking 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 complaint.