



ADVERTISING  
STANDARDS  
BUREAU

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## Case Report

1	Case Number	0256/14
2	Advertiser	Knauf Insulation Ltd
3	Product	House Goods Services
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Free TV
5	Date of Determination	23/07/2014
6	DETERMINATION	Upheld - Modified or Discontinued

### ISSUES RAISED

2.6 - Health and Safety Within prevailing Community Standards

### DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The ad shows people receiving and then installing Earthwool® insulation in their home.

### THE COMPLAINT

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

*It shows people installing earthwool Insulation in their roof with only gloves on. But it states on their own web sight that "Wear appropriate clothing for the job such as long sleeved top, flat rubber sole shoes, gloves conforming to Australian Standard AS2161 and ventilated non-fogging dust resistant goggles conforming to AS/NZ 1336, and a P2 dust mask." Both the man and woman are not wearing safety glasses or dust masks. I have had a serious work place injury and I feel promoting unsafe practices at home or work is the wrong message to be sending people. There is research that shows glass fibres can cause similar health problems that asbestos has caused. I think showing people handling materials safely is more important than showing people smiling for the camera.*

### THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

*Re: Health and safety concerns about Earthwool and the Earthwool TV advertisement*

*In your letter you had informed me about concerns raised in a complaint to the Advertising Standards Bureau relating to our Earthwool glasswool insulation products and our recent Earthwool TV advertisement*

*In particular, the concerns you have received relate to alleged health and safety aspects of glasswool. Specifically, the complainant states:*

*“there is research that shows that glass fibres can cause similar health problems that asbestos has caused.”*

*As a result, the Complainant expresses concerns that the Earthwool TV advertisement “shows people installing Earthwool insulation in their roof with only gloves on.”*

*I want to emphasise that Knauf Insulation is not aware of scientific evidence linking modern biosoluble glasswool with similar health problems as those associated with asbestos. In fact, the opposite is true – there has been extensive international research on the health and safety aspects of glasswool, which in 2001 resulted in biosoluble glasswool being classified by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) as “not classified as carcinogenic to humans.”*

*Earthwool is a technologically advanced type of glasswool made to internationally accepted biosolubility standards using modern technology, and is also made with proprietary ECOSE Technology that results in a softer and less dusty form of glasswool than has been available historically in Australia. I confirm that Earthwool has been assessed by our technical and regulatory team as non-hazardous according to the criteria of the Australian Safety and Compensation Council ASCC (formerly NOHSC) Approved Criteria For Classifying Hazardous Substances [NOHSC:1008] 3rd Edition.*

*As background, I highlight that glasswool has been used around the world for over 70 years and during that time the specifications of glasswool products have been extensively monitored and researched. However, in 1987 IARC classified glasswool as “possibly carcinogenic to humans”. In response, major manufacturers of glasswool introduced new biosoluble formulations of glasswool. Subsequently, after extensive testing IARC removed glasswool from its list of possible carcinogens in 2001.*

*Internationally, over \$100 million has been spent in the last 25 years involving 60,000 workers as part of long term health research programs regarding biosoluble glasswool. This included two major research studies conducted by the Institute of Respiratory Medicine at the University of Sydney. It is clear from this monitoring and research that no serious health effects have occurred to people manufacturing, using or otherwise exposed to biosoluble glasswool. I attach an Occupational Health and Safety Profile of Glasswool produced by ICANZ that provides more background on this subject.*

*In your letter you have also requested that we consider Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics. In response we highlight that the Complainant has not raised any issues relating to sections 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 or 2.5.*

*The only section of the AANA Code of Ethics that appears to be applicable to the issues*

*raised by the Complainant is Section 2.6 (Health and Safety). In terms of “Health and Safety”, it is our view that the Earthwool TV advertisement does not encourage behaviour that is unsafe or in contravention of the relevant legislation.*

*The Complainant raises concerns that the Earthwool TV advertisement:*

*“shows people installing Earthwool Insulation in their roof with only gloves on. But it states on their own web sight (sic) that “Wear appropriate clothing for the job such as long sleeved top, flat rubber sole shoes, gloves conforming to Australian Standard AS2161 and ventilated non-fogging dust resistant goggles conforming to AS/NZ 1336, and a P2 dust mask.”*

*“Both the man and woman are not wearing safety glasses or dust masks. I have had a serious work place injury and I feel promoting unsafe practices at home or work is the wrong message to be sending people.”*

*I highlight further recent developments in the manufacture of glasswool have resulted in the product becoming even softer and easier to handle (i.e. less itchy). Earthwool is noticeably softer than comparable locally made glasswool and this is a distinguishing feature emphasised in our marketing material. While the handling of glasswool may result in temporary itching in some people with sensitive skin types, many people (including professional installers) choose not to wear the recommended protective clothing and accessories.*

*In terms of eye protection, this is recommended when handling the glasswool “overhead” which is not demonstrated in the advertisement.*

*The last concern raised by the Complainant related to the wearing of dust masks. A dust mask is recommended when working in dusty or poorly ventilated areas due to other dust particles potentially present in this type of work area (usually older houses). The use of a dust mask for protection from airborne particles of the glasswool product itself is generally not necessary as fibres are clumped by the binder resin holding the fibres together.*

*We would like to assure you that Knauf Insulation takes its community safety obligations very seriously and that we continually monitor and regularly update our installation instructions, detailed instructional videos and product packaging to ensure consumers are properly informed on industry best practice when installing Earthwool products.*

*However, having considered this particular matter, we are not of the view and do not accept therefore, that the vision referred to in our promotional television advertising is in any way unsafe.*

*I hope the above is satisfactory. However, should you have any questions or comments concerning this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.*

## **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 concern that the advertisement depicts people installing the insulation product in their home without wearing safety gear and that this is unsafe.

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 the advertisement features a man arriving at the house with insulation and continues with scenes of the insulation being installed in the roof and wall cavities and various members of the family in the living areas of the home. The husband and wife are seen in the roof space installing the product. The voice over at the end of the advertisement explains the product and where it is available.

The Board noted the complainant’s concerns that advertiser’s own website states that among other safety precautions, while installing you should:

“Wear appropriate clothing for the job such as long sleeved top, flat rubber sole shoes, gloves conforming to Australian Standard AS2161 and ventilated non-fogging dust resistant goggles conforming to AS/NZ 1336, and a P2 dust mask.”

The Board noted that the advertisement did not show the couple installing the product dressed in the manner stated above but that they did have gloves on and were working together.

The Board noted the advertiser provided lengthy product specifications outlining the details of the product and technical data and evidence of the product’s safety.

The Board noted that it had previously considered an advertisement for an Insurance product (ref: 0147/13) where a home handyman was shown working on a home building sight and not wearing personal protective equipment (PPE). In this matter the Board considered that “although this may not be the preferred manner in which to carry out these tasks, it is a very common behaviour carried out by many tradesmen as well as home renovators. The Board considered that most reasonable members of the community would consider this behaviour as common practice and that as this is not the focus of the advertisement, it is unlikely to encourage or promote this type of behaviour.”

Similarly, in relation to the current advertisement, a minority of the Board considered that although the installation of the insulation batts would ideally be done with full protective clothing and goggles, the Board considered that most reasonable members of the community would consider this behaviour as common practice with a product that is not inherently unsafe, and may simply cause skin irritation, and that as this is not the focus of the advertisement, it is unlikely to encourage or promote this type of behaviour

The majority of the Board considered however, that as the website and packaging provided strong suggestions for how to suitably dress when installing the product, these recommendations are in line with what the community would consider appropriate and reasonable protective equipment for home insulation installation.

The Board considered that in light of concerns around home insulation installation and safety, the Board considered that most people in the community would think it standard practice to install the batts on their own but to wear safety equipment.

Based on the above the majority of the Board considered that the advertisement depicted material contrary to prevailing community standards on health and safety in the workplace and determined that it did breach Section 2.6 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement did breach the Code, the Board upheld the complaint.

### **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE TO DETERMINATION**

The Advertiser did not provide a response to the Board's determination.

The ASB will liaise with media partners to achieve compliance with the Board's determination.

1st September 2014: CAD confirmed that the CAD number for this advertisement has been removed therefore this advertisement will no longer air on FreeTV in its current format.