



## Case Report

1	Case Number	0264/13
2	Advertiser	Fire and Rescue NSW
3	Product	Community Awareness
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	14/08/2013
6	DETERMINATION	Upheld - Modified or Discontinued

### ISSUES RAISED

2.6 - Health and Safety Unsafe behaviour

### DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

A man wearing a black t-shirt titled 'chance' uses tongs to turn socks that are left too close to a heater. He looks over to another man who is almost asleep on the couch, and reassures him that everything is under control. The second man acknowledges the first mans reassurance, and then falls asleep. Just after he does, the socks on the heater catch on fire. Fascinated, the first man rubs his hands together. A voiceover warns people not to leave anything to 'chance', and a link to an online home fire safety audit is displayed.

### THE COMPLAINT

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

*The advert showed a man warming his socks and underwear on an electric fire. This catches fire and he is then shown warming his hands on the flames as if it is nice to have a fire on an electric heater to warm your hands on.*

*I think this is potentially lethal! It is also irresponsible to show a man quite clearly enjoying setting fire to his socks on a dangerous electric fire. I understand the reason why it is done to show how foolish acts can be dangerous but the man warming his hands with a big smile on his face gives the wrong message to persons who do not get the real message or children. My own daughter copied an ad in the UK when she was 4yrs old (in 1995) warming her backside on a fire and burnt herself so I know this happens.*

*I think this should be taken off the TV immediately and changed to something more*

*appropriate sending a CLEAR message of danger.  
Thank you.*

## **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE**

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

*Why the advertisement complies with all sections of the code*

*Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW) does not believe the ad breaches the code because it depicts material that is in the interest of community health and safety standards. FRNSW acknowledges that no-one should leave a heater with clothes on it, and no-one should fall asleep with the heater left on. The purpose of this advertisement is to communicate the dangers of these behaviours, specifically highlighting that people's every day actions are 'leaving it to chance' (who happens to be personified as the creative element in this ad). This is necessary to break through the general complacency in the community when it comes to fire safety.*

*FRNSW's ads are not targeted at children, and its media buy and also CAD rating ensures that the advertisement does not play within children's specific programming. FRNSW is targeting the parents to send a message that their inaction is actually the problem.*

*The 'Chance' character is clearly identified, and the scenario is fictitious, enhanced by the fact that he is turning the socks with a pair of tongs, which is very unrealistic. Further, the voiceover and call to action very clearly communicate that people shouldn't leave anything to chance, inferring that the actions of 'Chance' are unsafe.*

*The complainant has also stated that he/she understands why FRNSW has delivered the advertisement to show 'how foolish acts can be dangerous', which suggests that the ad successfully communicates its intended message. The real concern appears to be that people (particularly children) will take the wrong message from the ad. This is already covered off by the fact that the media schedule and CAD rating ensures the ad wont play during children's programming.*

*We believe the risk of taking this ad off the air for fear of it being misinterpreted is far greater than the risk of leaving it on air, because complacency is the key ingredient in the majority of fires that FRNSW attends and heating is one of its top fire safety issues.*

## **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 is irresponsible in its depiction of a man enjoying warming his hands against socks which are on fire over a heater as this could give the wrong message and encourage people to copy his actions.

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 that the purpose of this advertisement is to draw the attention of the viewer to the dangers of this type of behaviour, specifically focusing on the fact that it is people’s every day actions and carelessness that can lead to injury or damage.

The Board noted that there is a character wearing a black t-shirt near the heater and that his t-shirt has the word ‘Chance’ written on it. The Board noted that this character was to represent chance and that viewers should not take risks like placing socks over the heater and “leaving it to chance” as to whether this could cause a fire. The Board agreed that this portrayal was an adult concept that would not be understood by young children and that the likelihood of copycat behaviour could potentially be quite high.

The Board considered that the message that is being delivered is a very important community message that should be taken seriously. The Board noted that the overall message is presented in a way that may not be understood by children and that it would require explanation and discussion with responsible adults. The Board noted that there is no clear consequence for the actions of the man falling asleep leaving unattended clothing on top of a heater.

The Board noted the voiceover reaffirms “don’t leave anything to chance” and states a call to action for the viewer to conduct a “home fire safety audit now!” The Board considered that the advertisement is not encouraging or condoning unsafe behaviour but that it did depict material which was contrary to prevailing community standards on safety and that the W rating meant young children could view the advertisement and potentially copy the behaviour

The Board determined that the advertisement did breach Section 2.6 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement did breach the Code on the grounds mentioned above and the Board upheld the complaint.

## **ADVERTISER RESPONSE TO DETERMINATION**

We have now ceased running the advertisement, and are in the process of modifying the ending to more clearly show alarm from the character 'Chance' in order to address the issues raised by the complaint.