



**ADVERTISING  
STANDARDS  
BOARD**

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## Case Report

|   |                               |                     |
|---|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Case Number                   | 0309/15             |
| 2 | Advertiser                    | Diabetes Australia  |
| 3 | Product                       | Community Awareness |
| 4 | Type of Advertisement / media | TV - Free to air    |
| 5 | Date of Determination         | 12/08/2015          |
| 6 | DETERMINATION                 | Dismissed           |

### ISSUES RAISED

2.3 - Violence Causes alarm and distress

### DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement shows a fast-moving visual sequence of 280 people. The 280 figure represents the number of people who develop diabetes (of any type) in Australia every day. The people are of differing ages and backgrounds. Some of the images are just people's faces, some images are of people consulting with health professionals, some are doing the every day things a person with diabetes needs to do to manage their condition – such as testing blood glucose and injecting insulin. The people in the last 10 seconds of the ad have serious complications of diabetes.

### THE COMPLAINT

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

*I have a 12 year old son with type 1 diabetes. For his and the thousands of young children with this terrible disease. I find it deeply disturbing and insensitive that they have to be exposed to such graphic images of a man with glassy eyes and another in a wheelchair with no legs. It is hard enough for them to deal with the disease and multiple injections and blood glucose test daily without being exposed to these graphic images and the stress of what could happen to them later in life. I want this advert to be removed with immediate effect.*

### THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

*Diabetes is the fastest growing chronic disease in Australia. Over 1.7 million Australians are living with diabetes and a further 280 Australians develop diabetes every day. An estimated 2 million Australians are at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes and are already showing early signs of the disease. There are serious complications common to all types of diabetes including heart attack, stroke, kidney disease, limb amputation, depression, anxiety and blindness. With careful management people with diabetes can live well with their condition. Diabetes Australia research shows that three out of four Australians substantially underestimate the prevalence of diabetes and over 60% of people don't link diabetes to its major complications including heart attacks, stroke, anxiety and depression.*

*The objective of the campaign is to focus attention on the 280 people who develop diabetes every day. The target audience is the general public, not people who already have diabetes. The aim was to bring to the public's attention what people with diabetes already know and what every person living with diabetes knows – that diabetes is serious and increasing in prevalence. Diabetes Australia provides support for people with all types of diabetes and is sensitive to the issues for people with type one diabetes. The concept testing for the advertisement included groups of people who have diabetes (type one and type two). People with diabetes were very supportive of the concept.*

*The advertisement ran as a paid ad in National Diabetes Week (12 – 18 July). It is one part of a broader campaign that is the beginning of a new approach is to address the many misconceptions about diabetes held by the public and the media. In the long run, by increasing understanding across the community we will be able to build more support for people with diabetes, more programs, more services and more research.*

*Diabetes Australia does not believe that we have violated Section 2.1. We have not discriminated or vilified any groups of people that are mentioned below. The advertisement depicts the reality of life for people with diabetes – that you don't have to be old or overweight to get diabetes, that it needs to be managed 24/7 and those who do have diabetes are at risk of complications such as heart disease, kidney disease, amputation and blindness. [2.1 Advertising or Marketing Communications shall 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.]*

*Free TV rated the advertisement as W. Diabetes Australia's media buyers exercised care when placing the advertisement so that ads were not placed in cartoon and other programs promoted to children or likely to attract a substantial child audience. There is no footage, music, or narration that is sexual in nature, exploitative or degrading; there is no violence, sex, sexuality or nudity; there is no strong or abusive language and the advertisement does not depict anything contrary to prevailing standards on health and safety.*

*2.2 Advertising or marketing communications should not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative and degrading or any individual or group of people, 2.3 Advertising or marketing communications should not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised,*

*2.4 Advertising or Marketing Communications shall treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience,*

*2.5 advertising or marketing communications shall only use language which is appropriate in the circumstances including appropriate for the relevant audience and medium). Strong or*

*obscene language shall be avoided, 2.6 Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not depict material contrary to prevailing community standards on health and safety.*

## **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 features graphic imagery surrounding possible consequences of diabetes and causes alarm and distress to viewers, especially 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 this television advertisement features images of 280 people while a voiceover explains that this is how many people in Australia who are diagnosed with diabetes each day. The voiceover then goes on to outline some of the health issues associated with diabetes: high risk of heart disease, kidney failure, stroke, amputation and blindness.

The Board noted the advertisement had been rated ‘W’ by CAD which means it can be aired at any time except during, or adjacent to, Preschool and Children’s programmes. The Board noted the complainant’s concern that their child, who has diabetes, could view the advertisement and become distressed about the implications of this disease.

The Board noted the overall tone of this community awareness and considered that the information is presented in a factual manner. The Board acknowledged that the possible side-effects associated with diabetes could be upsetting to sufferers of this disease, especially young children, but considered that the advertisement is providing factual information about associated risks in an attempt to educate people about this serious disease and in the Board’s view the advertisement does not sensationalise the disease or place any undue emphasis on the potential side-effects. The Board considered that people who do suffer from diabetes would be aware of the possible risks this disease could pose to their health and that whilst younger children may not be aware of these risks the manner in which they are presented in the advertisement is not designed to cause alarm and distress but to open up a debate about the disease.

The Board considered that the content of the advertisement was relevant to the message and that consistent with previous discussions about public health and safety advertisements, although some members of the public could find the images to be graphic, a higher degree of graphic detail is appropriate given the important message of the advertisement.

The Board considered that the advertisement did not present or portray violence.

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.

