



Case Report

1	Case Number	0312/15
2	Advertiser	People's Choice Credit Union
3	Product	Finance/Investment
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV - Free to air
5	Date of Determination	12/08/2015
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.6 - Health and Safety Unsafe behaviour

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The television advertisement in question promotes a People's Choice Credit Union 'Activate' product.

The actors are all shown smiling to camera, and have long hair. As the voiceover describes the product – a transaction account for people under 25, the actors are now shown with their hair being blown around and faces slightly, and amusingly, distorted as a result of air being blown towards them.

The punchline of the ad is that for people under the age of 25, they'll be 'blown away' by the no monthly fees of the product, a point made while in the background the actors continue to be shown with smiles, laughter and their hair being blown in all directions.

THE COMPLAINT

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

The practice of allowing high velocity air against ones face or skin is a dangerous practice. Particles of debris can be forced into the skin or eyes.

This advertisement may encourage young people or children to mimic this practice, with disastrous results.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

People's Choice Credit Union acknowledges the complaint (Reference Number – 0312/15) received by the Advertising Standards Bureau in reference to its 'Blown Away' Activate product advertisement. Please accept the following official response.

The visual effect of distorting the faces of the actors is intended to be humorous, and was achieved using standard leaf blowers (a Stihl hand held leaf blower, and a Husqvarna blower) held by a production assistant, at a distance and setting which ensured the comfort of the talent. The ad was shot at a professional photography studio in Adelaide, by a filmmaker. As can be seen in the ad, the talent used were not alarmed at any stage by the effect on their faces, rather were amused at how their hair and faces were blown about. There certainly wasn't any cause for alarm due to health and safety issues, and if there was it would clearly be reflected in the actor's faces – which are instead smiling, laughing and quite jovial.

Also, it's noted that during the ad, only the actors' face and hair is shown – the leaf blowers are never in picture. In no way does the ad show the source of the effect or encourage young people or children to mimic this effect. The complaint received has concerns that children may try and mimic allowing high velocity air onto their face, but it could be argued that they are just as likely to think the effect was caused by either a fan or simply wind, or even perhaps just special effects, since the cause of the air in the ad is not disclosed, simply the effect. Therefore it is unlikely that as a result of seeing the ad that children would seek to copy the effect in full, given it is not disclosed what causes the distortion, nor do many families have access to the equipment used in the studio.

People's Choice Credit Union disagrees with the view that the ad is dangerous or encouraging dangerous behaviour. We would not put to air a commercial that, in any way, did not live up to our own high standards of ethics and values. Children, through their own play and using standard household items or while outside on a windy day or outside a car window, are likely to discover the elasticity of their skin and be amused at the effect of wind on their face. We therefore believe that the advertisement is a socially acceptable portrayal that would be considered amusing, and harmless, to the vast majority of Australians.

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 a dangerous practice of blowing high pressure air in someone’s face and that this behaviour could be copied by children.

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 this television advertisement features male and female actors smiling toward the camera and then still trying to smile as their faces are distorted as a result of air being blown toward them. The voiceover describes the features of the Credit Union and the product being offered to people under the age of 25. The voiceover refers to being “blown away” by the activate account with no monthly fees.

The Board noted the complainants concern that blowing large amounts of air into someone’s face could be dangerous as debris could be forced into the skin or eyes and young children may copy this behaviour.

The Board noted that the term “blown away” is commonly understood to mean “impressed” or “overwhelmed” and that the use of the term in this advertisement is to highlight to young adults the benefits of the product being advertised and how surprised they will be with it. The Board noted the use of the ‘wind’ was a clear link to being “blown away” colloquially and literally “blown away” by strong winds.

The Board noted that the actors do not appear stressed or concerned about the amount of air being directed at them and that they continue to try and smile and laugh at the appearance of their own faces and hair.

The Board agreed that this type of behaviour could present some minor dangers in relation to particles ending up in someone’s eye but that in the context of a controlled filming situation this was not a concern. The Board noted that the leaf blowers were not visible in the advertisement and considered that young children would not be able to make a direct relationship between the force of the air and the achievement of this by use of a garden leaf blower which they may have seen in use at home.

The Board considered that the advertisement was light hearted and of appeal to young adults looking for banking options and that although young children may view the advertisement as funny, it was not encouraging children to mimic the behaviour and was not depicting behaviour that was contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.6 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on other grounds, the Board dismissed the complaint.