



Case Report

1	Case Number	0320/10
2	Advertiser	Diabetes Australia VIC
3	Product	Community Awareness
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	11/08/2010
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.2 - Violence Other

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

A women is swimming in a pool. She stops and removes her goggles and we hear her speaking as a voiceover about healthy eating and exercise being important at her age, although she wasn't always healthy. We then see her leaving the pool and as she lifts herself out of the water we can see that her right leg has been amputated from just below the knee. Voiceover encourages people who are over 50 years old and overweight to ring 13RISK.

THE COMPLAINT

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

i am a non smoker who should not have to tolerate viewing the repercussions of smoking in such a disgusting manner. I find the advertisement repulsive and felt physically ill whilst viewing it.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

Diabetes Australia – Vic and its campaign partners put significant work into informing the public of the dangers of type 2 diabetes and how to prevent it — importantly providing high risk people with the help and support they need to successfully prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes. In doing so, we certainly did not want to cause any distress to the general public. Consequently, in the making of this television commercial and before airing it we consulted very widely and ran focus group testing to ensure the advert met our objectives and didn't have negative implications on the non target audience.

The response to date to the campaign has been overwhelmingly positive (with 13RISK calls increasing by 1,300% after the second week of the campaign airing, when compared to calls to 13RISK in the two weeks prior – see Appendix 1), but nonetheless, we take very seriously any comments of this kind made by the general public.

The television advertising to which the letter refers to was produced and aired initially in May 2009 and has had three bursts of media activity since with no complaints, just success in encouraging people to change their lifestyle for the better. As you would know, this advertisement is about preventing type 2 diabetes and not about quitting smoking as the complaint refers to.

The key component of the campaign is the use of a realistic person and images to help raise awareness among high risk people in the broader community of the seriousness of type 2 diabetes, and to motivate and encourage them to take steps to prevent or delay this chronic disease.

The insidious progression of pre-diabetes to type 2 diabetes and then on to the complication of amputation can be prevented in high risk cases by reducing body weight and increasing physical activity. The television campaign 'Don't be the type to leave it too late' aims to raise community awareness and help people address their weight and sedentary lifestyles by calling 13RISK and receiving a free type 2 diabetes information pack.

Victorians should not underestimate the seriousness of type 2 diabetes if left unmanaged. People with diabetes are at risk of developing blockage of arteries. This can lead to a heart attack or a stroke, impotence, failure of the kidneys and as this advertisement showed, limb amputation.

Type 2 diabetes is the most common cause of limb amputation in Victoria resulting in 847 lower limb amputations in 2007/08 increasing from 690 in 2001/02. In particular within the 55-59 age group which represents the demographic in the advertisement, lower limb amputations has increased since 2001/02 from 55 people to 96 over a six year period.

As you will appreciate, trying to change behaviours such as lifestyle is an enormous challenge. We know from research that it is important to vividly demonstrate that ignoring your risk of type 2 diabetes is a direct cause of many health complications that can lead to amputation. There is a need to stop people self exempting and bring about an attitudinal shift and identify with the person in the advertisement, as the impetus to take action and prevent chronic disease.

I hope very much that the Advertising Standards Bureau will appreciate that this campaign is helping to educate high risk people and the general public as to the danger of ignoring their risk of type 2 diabetes and the risk of limb amputation is very real. By acting now high risk people can significantly decrease their chances of ever having to go through the same scenes depicted in the advertisements.

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 is repulsive and that it made the complainant feel physically ill.

The Board viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser’s response.

The Board considered whether the advertisement complied with section 2.2 of the Code which requires that advertisements ‘shall not present violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised.’

The Board was sympathetic to the complainant’s concerns regarding their personal response from viewing the lady with part of her leg missing and noted that some people in the community could find this image upsetting. The Board considered that the advertisement’s depiction of the disfigurement featured was not sensationalised.

The Board considered that the main purpose of the graphic depictions in the advertisement was to educate the public of the potential repercussions of diabetes, not smoking, and that the images shown related directly to the message of the advertisement. The Board noted the advertiser’s response that before airing this advertisement they ran focus group testing to ensure the advert met their objectives and didn’t have negative implications on the non target audience. The Board also noted that the response to the advertisement had been positive with a 1,300% increase in the number of calls to the 13RISK phone line after the second week of the campaign airing.

The Board determined that the images depicted in the advertisement were relevant to the important public health and safety message that the advertisement is attempting to convey, and that the advertisement did not depict or condone violence. The Board considered that the advertisement did not breach section 2.2 of the Code.

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