



Ad Standards Community Panel
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AdStandards.com.au

Ad Standards Limited
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Case Report

1. Case Number :	0326-21
2. Advertiser :	Powershop Australia
3. Product :	House Goods Services
4. Type of Advertisement/Media :	TV - On Demand
5. Date of Determination	24-Nov-2021
6. DETERMINATION :	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

AANA Code of Ethics\2.6 Health and Safety

DESCRIPTION OF ADVERTISEMENT

This TV on Demand advertisement features a cartoon power-point character on a bright background. Words appear on the screen above the character. The words, "How to feel good about your carbon footprint with powershop" appear and the character shrugs. The words, "Sell your car." appear and the character throws car keys away. The words, "Don't use lights." appear and the background goes black. The words "Stop breathing." appear and the character holds his hands over his mouth and shakes. The words "Don't exist" appear and the character disappears into a puff of smoke. The words "or try something easier and switch to Powershop" appear and the character reappears on the bright background.

THE COMPLAINT

Comments which the complainant/s made regarding this advertisement included the following:

I think the last 2 suggestions of stopping breathing, holding your breath & suggestions to people to not exist, are not helpful for people who have mental health problems. Ads like this could encourage more suicidal attempts, as people may think the world would be better off without them. I do not have any documentation to upload.



THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The purpose of this ad was to use bold creative and humour to capture attention regarding the serious issue of climate change. We tried to achieve this by using exaggerated examples to encourage people that there are small acts that can be done, (which collectively) can have a big impact on climate change, like the ease and simplicity of switching to a greener energy retailer.

The references to "stop breathing" and "don't exist", are in our view examples of hyperbole and are in no way intended to be taken literally. They are used to demonstrate that there is simple everyday acts that we can all do (like switching to an energy retailer that offsets the carbon associated with its customers' usage), to help reduce the impacts of climate change. We don't think the advertisement is likely to cause serious or widespread offence in light of generally prevailing community standards. The advertisement was intended to be a light-hearted representation of carbon emitting activities. The overall message of the advertisement makes this clear that the suggestion we should "stop breathing" is intended to be considered comical, as the overall context is focused on unrealistic ways to reduce carbon emissions juxtaposed against the simplicity of changing to an energy retailer that carbon offsets its customer's energy usage. It does not depict material contrary to prevailing community standards on health and safety and, in particular, mental illness.

We strongly believe that our advertisement does not breach section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics, specifically in relation to health and safety.

In addition to the above, this advertisement was reviewed and approved by our marketing and in-house legal counsel and commenced on the 4th of October in digital (BVOD, display, programmatic, social channels), radio, podcast audio and digital outdoor channels. Given this complaint, we are currently not airing this ad while it is investigated.

THE DETERMINATION

The Ad Standards Community Panel (the Panel) considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics (the Code).

The Panel noted the complainant's concerns that the advertisement suggests viewers stop breathing and stop existing, which may be dangerous for people with mental health issues or encourage self-harm.

The Panel viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser's response.



Section 2.6: Advertising shall not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety.

The Panel noted the Practice Note to Section 2.6 which states:

“Advertisers should take care not to depict behaviour that children may imitate. For example, advertisements which are likely to attract the attention of children or could indicate to children that appliances or other domestic/commercial equipment are a safe place to hide, are seen to encourage unsafe behaviour.

“Advertisements which feature exaggerated or fantastical elements, which are unlikely to be seen as realistic by the relevant audience, are unlikely to be found to be encouraging or condoning unsafe behaviour.”

The Panel noted that the advertisement is animated and features an anthropomorphised power socket.

The Panel noted the advertiser’s response that the references to “stop breathing” and “don’t exist”, are examples of hyperbole and are in no way intended to be taken literally.

The Panel considered that most viewers of the advertisement would recognise the advertisement is presenting unrealistic ways in which a person could reduce their carbon footprint, before offering an achievable solution.

The Panel considered that the advertisement is highly stylised and considered that most members of the community would not interpret it to be referring to or encouraging self-harm.

Section 2.6 conclusion

The Panel considered that the advertisement did not contain material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety and determined that it did not breach Section 2.6 of the Code.

Conclusion

Finding that the advertisement did not breach any other section of the Code, the Panel dismissed the complaint.