



**Ad Standards** Community Panel  
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Ad Standards Limited  
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## Case Report

<b>1. Case Number :</b>	<b>0329-19</b>
<b>2. Advertiser :</b>	<b>SA Health</b>
<b>3. Product :</b>	<b>Community Awareness</b>
<b>4. Type of Advertisement/Media :</b>	<b>TV - Free to Air</b>
<b>5. Date of Determination</b>	<b>9-Oct-2019</b>
<b>6. DETERMINATION :</b>	<b>Dismissed</b>

### ISSUES RAISED

AANA Code of Ethics\2.3 Violence

### DESCRIPTION OF ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement depicts a man standing shirtless. It appears that hands are touching him from the inside. The advertisement promotes quitting smoking.

### THE COMPLAINT

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

*I have just seen this advertisement and found it really distressing and confronting. I think that I would not want to have my grandchildren view this and was really surprised to see it on the TV on a Sunday afternoon. It is a really graphic depiction and I was shocked, sickened and frightened by this advertisement.*

*It is scary and quite horrific*

### THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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



*I am responding to your request for information regarding the 'Don't let it in' smoking cessation advertisement, which commenced airing in South Australia on Sunday 1 September 2019 and ran until Saturday 28 September 2019.*

*'Don't let it in' was developed by Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia, SA Health in 2019 following a comprehensive research and development process. The design and messaging of the advertisement is based on the latest research in this field and aims to resonate strongly with smokers and influence the rate of smoking cessation in the community.*

*'Don't let it in' focusses on the insidious nature of physiological damage caused by smoking. The advertisement begins with a male smoker taking a puff on a cigarette. As a result of this action, hands emerge out of his chest and move around the body under his skin, firstly travelling down his arms and then to his throat and chest. The man goes to take another puff of the cigarette, but then decides against it. As a result of choosing not to smoke the cigarette, the hands disappear.*

*It uses a visual depiction of how smoking can cause damage to every part of the body while not relying on graphic footage of these harms to the human body.*

*The advertisement includes a call to action to smokers to visit [besmokefree.com.au](https://besmokefree.com.au) where they can find information and support to assist them to quit smoking. Between 1 September 2019, when the advertisement commenced, and 26 September 2019, there has been a high rate of visits to this website. Half the visitors typed in the URL in order to access the website. This indicates they were motivated to visit the site after seeing the advertisement on television. Additionally, digital advertising based on the 'Don't let it in' television creative has initiated a large number of clicks through to a specific page on [besmokefree.com.au](https://besmokefree.com.au) about the hidden dangers of smoking, demonstrating that the imagery and messaging is resonating with smokers.*

*Pre-airing online testing of the advertisement found that knowledge of the health effects of smoking improved after the advertisement was shown. The advertisement also tested very strongly for 'makes me feel uncomfortable', 'makes me feel concerned about my smoking and 'taught me something new', which research shows are important elements of mass media campaigns aimed at initiating quitting behaviour.*

*'Don't let it in' was developed for use as part of South Australia's smoking cessation social marketing campaign because negative health effects advertisements generally result in more quitting attempts than advertisements without these features. According to the evidence in this field, advertisements with more threatening themes have the greatest potential impact on adult smokers and heavily entrenched smoking behaviours. Advertisements that arouse strong negative emotions also receive greater viewer attention and are remembered more readily than those that do not. Messaging describing the serious health consequences of smoking also has the highest ratings for perceived effectiveness and memorability, including among recent quitters who felt that this type of advertising had contributed to their quit attempt.*



*Ad Standards has identified section 2.3 of the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics (Violence – causes alarm or distress) in its initial assessment of the complaint. While the choking hands depicted in the advertisement could technically be considered an act of violence, the imagery is highly stylised and aims to represent the effect of emphysema and the associated breathing difficulties caused by this disease. It is unlikely to be perceived as an actual violent act or condoning of such an act. The portrayal of hands causing harm to the body of the smoker is justifiable given that two-thirds of smokers die from smoking-related illness. The message serves to support and encourage smokers to make quit smoking attempts in order to improve their future health and wellbeing. 'Don't let it in' does not depict any person injured or in pain and does not include aggression.*

*As requested, a response to each of the other parts of Section 2 has been provided below:*

*2.1 - Discrimination or vilification – The 'Don't let it in' advertisement in no way discriminates against or vilifies smokers. Instead it aims to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals who smoke by making them aware of the harms of smoking and encouraging them to visit [besmokefree.com.au](http://besmokefree.com.au) where they can find support and advice to quit smoking.*

*2.2 – Exploitative or degrading – The 'Don't let it in' advertisement is not exploitative or degrading to smokers.*

*2.4 – Sex, sexuality and nudity – There is no sex, sexuality or nudity suggested or depicted in the 'Don't let it in' advertisement. The male featured in 'Don't let it in' has a bare chest in order for the advertisement to visually depict the harms occurring inside the body.*

*2.5 – Language – There is no profane language used in the 'Don't let it in' advertisement.*

*2.5 – Health and safety – 'Don't let it in' is a public health advertisement with the objective of motivating smokers to make a quit smoking attempt and improve their health.*

*2.7 – Clearly distinguishable advertising – 'Don't let it in' is clearly distinguishable as an advertising or marketing communication. It is clearly branded as an SA Health advertisement and also includes the logos of the Quitline and My QuitBuddy quit smoking initiatives.*

*Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the complaints received regarding 'Don't let it in'. SA Health is seeking a favourable determination in order to air this effective public health advertisement in the future.*

*1. <https://www.tobaccoinaustralia.org.au/14-4-examining-effectiveness-of-public-education-c>*

*2. Biener L, Reimer R, Wakefield M, Szczypka G, Rigotti N and Connolly G. Impact of smoking cessation aids and mass media among recent quitters. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 2006;30(3):217–24. Available from: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16476637>*



## THE DETERMINATION

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

The Panel noted the complainants' concerns that the advertisement is confronting, distressing and overly graphic.

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

The Panel 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 Panel noted that the advertisement received a J rating by ClearAds (not in children's programs) and was aired at a time appropriate to the rating (<https://www.clearads.com.au/storage/final-clearads-handbook-version-ca12.pdf>). The Panel considered that the relevant audience for this advertisement would likely be broad and include children.

The Panel noted it had previously considered a similar stop smoking advertisement featuring 'Terrie's getting ready tips' in case 0058/14, in which:

*"The Board agreed that the images displayed in the advertisement were confronting, in particular the image of the hole in her neck and then putting her hands free device into her throat. The Board considered however, that the images of the woman are relevant to the important public health and safety message that the advertisement is attempting to convey.*

*In this case and considering the M classification, the Board considered that the graphic nature of the images was justified by the important public health message...the Board considered in the current case, that the broadcast of this advertisement in a television environment was not inappropriate and was not inappropriately graphic considering the important public health message that the advertiser is endeavouring to communicate."*

The Panel noted that in the current case, hands are depicted touching a man's body from the inside, before wrapping around his neck. The Panel considered that while the advertisement is designed to be confronting, there is no overt graphic imagery or sounds.

The Panel considered that the broadcast of this advertisement in a television environment was not inappropriate and was not inappropriately graphic considering the important public health message that the advertiser is endeavouring to communicate.



The Panel 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 Panel dismissed the complaints.