



## Case Report

1	Case Number	0353/15
2	Advertiser	Beyond Blue
3	Product	Community Awareness
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Internet
5	Date of Determination	23/09/2015
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

### ISSUES RAISED

2.5 - Language Inappropriate language

### DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This internet advertisement features a man using a forklift and talking about how men's moods can be up or down, then continuing with, "So when life chucks shit like stress, anger, difficulty sleeping, drinking too much or sadness, Man Therapy is there standing by for you like a mate with a full set of spanners and enough firewood to barbeque a buffalo".

### THE COMPLAINT

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

*My 3 year old is now running around the house saying SHIT SHIT SHIT*

*Inappropriate language used for a children's program...*

*And again this morning when watching octonauts episodes, you tube through it would be appropriate to play the advert again...*

*The shows my 3 year old was watching were clearly for children. I have language and eating restrictions turned on YouTube to prevent his exposure to such language, yet he is subjected to watching this. I have already contacted YouTube via social media, but they just deleted my post from their page....*

### THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

*In response to the complaint, we address them as follows:*

*The 30-second online video is part of the second phase of beyondblue's Man Therapy campaign. In the first phase, Dr Brian Ironwood introduced men to Man Therapy, a down-to-earth look at mental health issues for all types of men. In this second phase we introduce men to Davo, a blue-collar character, who explains that men go through ups and downs as a normal part of life, and sometimes they may need tools and support to get through tough times.*

*The advertisement in question is titled 'Davo's Man Therapy' and can be found online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPzjDYiQgNA>. There are three versions of this advertisement— one version with the word 'stuff', one version with the word 'bleeped out' and one version with the word 'shit'. A clean version can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEofUVRgzbA>.*

*Advertiser's response to complaint*

*Under Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics there are the following sections, all of which are addressed below:*

- *2.1 – Discrimination or vilification*

*There is no discrimination or vilification in the advertisement.*

- *2.2 – Exploitative and degrading*

*The advertisement is not exploitative or degrading.*

- *2.3 – Violence*

*There is no violence in the advertisement.*

- *2.4 – Sex, sexuality and nudity*

*There is no nudity, sex or sexuality in the advertisement.*

- *2.5 – Language*

*During 2012/2013, beyondblue formed a partnership with the Colorado Office for Suicide Prevention, Carson J Spencer Foundation, and Cactus Marketing Communications to help develop and bring Man Therapy to Australia in the form of Dr. Brian Ironwood. As part of that partnership, one of the key recommendations to effectively communicate to men and achieve cut through was to use humour to start a conversation about mental health; use targeted media; and the internet as the primary vehicle for communication. These recommendations were also used to develop Davo's Man Therapy – the campaign was designed to be humorous to appeal to 18-54 year old blue-collar men and uses a combination*

*of media channels to reach them (including online and YouTube pre-rolls).*

*As part of this approach, during the advertisement the Davo character uses the word “shit” in the context of meaning ‘a collection of things’. This is notably in difference to the word being used as an expletive or ‘curse word,’ which would be considered obscene.*

*The advertisement is targeting a tough (figuratively and literally) demographic on an issue that is notoriously hard to communicate: male depression, anxiety and mental health in general. Men aged 18-54 are particularly hard to connect with when it comes to issues involving their feelings and mental well-being, a hurdle that we have tried to overcome by adopting language that the audience can relate to.*

*Davo, the character in the ad, was created to appeal to men in the aforementioned demographic. He’s a bit rough around the edges, but also engaging, funny, and trustworthy. His use of the word “shit” is in passing, as any bunch of blokes may do when they’re hanging out together, having a chin-wag. The use of familiar language has enabled us to effectively communicate that it is okay for men to have mental health issues, and more importantly that there are ways to learn about them and seek help if it’s needed.*

*In terms of media placement, the main video targeted males aged 25-54 so one explanation as to why it appeared during children’s video could be that the child’s dad or older brother (or any other male 25-54) was signed in at the time when the child accessed the content.*

*Since the complaint, all YouTube pre-rolls have been changed to run the censored version available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEofUVRgzbA>.and to avoid the situation happening again.*

- *2.6 – Health and safety*

*There are no health and safety issues in the advertisement.*

*In conclusion, beyondblue does not believe this advertising campaign contravenes Section 2 of the Code. Our mission is to provide national leadership to reduce the impact of depression and anxiety in the Australian community for people of every age and at every stage of life.*

## **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 uses language that is inappropriate especially for children.

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

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.5 of the Code.

Section 2.5 of the Code states: “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”.

The Board noted that this television advertisement features a man “Davo” on a forklift. He operates the forklift raising and lowering a box that has faces drawn on it. The faces change from happy to sad etc. The man describes how a “blokes” mood can be up or down. The man then says “when life chucks ‘shit’ like stress, anger, difficulty sleeping.....man therapy is there...” A call to action appears as Davo outlines how to get in touch with [mantherapy.org.au/davo](http://mantherapy.org.au/davo) at Beyond Blue for help.

The Board noted the complainant’s concern that the use of the word “shit” is inappropriate and is likely to be copied by children.

The Board noted that there is genuine community concern associated with men’s mental health issues and noted that advertisement is targeted to adult men and drawing their attention to the valuable service available to them.

The Board considered that 'shit' is a word that is in relatively common use for adults in Australia. The Board noted that the term is used by Davo – the forklift driver as he describes the collection of things or factors that can make a man feel unhappy and/or in need of some help. The Board noted the practice note to this section of the Code states that:

Words and phrases which are innocuous and in widespread and common use in the Australian vernacular are permitted (provided they are used in a manner consistent with their colloquial usage, for example with gentle humour, and not used in a demeaning or aggressive manner). Examples are “bugger”, “shit”, “pissed-off”, “crap” etc.

The Board considered that the scenario chosen to deliver the important mental health message used language that is justifiable and commonly heard in the community.

The Board considered that most members of the community would be in support of the message and would not consider the use of the word “shit” in the context of an important message promoting services to assist members of the community in dealing with anxiety, stress or other mental health concerns, as strong or obscene language. The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach section 2.5 of the Code.

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