



Case Report

1	Case Number	0418/15
2	Advertiser	Solar Engineering
3	Product	House Goods Services
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Poster
5	Date of Determination	28/10/2015
6	DETERMINATION	Upheld - Modified or Discontinued

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.6 - Health and Safety Unsafe behaviour
- 2.6 - Health and Safety Within prevailing Community Standards

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

Their advertisement is a poster alongside a pop-up stall at a shopping mall and shows an open pair of scissors cutting a power cord.

THE COMPLAINT

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

This company's advertising invites people to cut their ties to electrical energy companies by installing solar energy. Their advertisement shows a pair of scissors cutting a power cord. My patient (5yo) did exactly that at great risk of electric shock. An approach to the company failed to get any response, and our next approach is to yourselves.

The poster advertisement is displayed in public shopping centres and young children trying to emulate the advertisement are led into highly dangerous practices.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The advertiser did not provide an initial response to this matter.

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 complainants’ concerns that the advertisement features a pair of scissors about to cut a power cord which is dangerous and contrary to prevailing community standards on safe electrical practice.

The Board viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser did not provide a 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 advertisement is a standee type banner, part of a temporary counter within a shopping mall. The poster has two images. The top image is a black cord and the words “high electricity bill?” Underneath is a white cord and a pair of scissors opened around the cord. The text with the image reads “It’s time to Cut it!” The contact details for the business are on the poster.

The Board noted that the image is a still image and the scissors are not seen actually cutting the cord however they are opened around the cord as if to suggest they would be used to cut the cord. The Board noted the connection between the words “it’s time to cut it” and the image of scissors and agreed that the depiction was intended to provide a visual representation of cutting costs of electricity.

The Board acknowledged that most adult members of the community would understand the potential safety risks associated with using scissors to cut a power cord but agreed that most reasonable adults would understand that the imagery is designed to give a visual representation of “cutting costs.”

The Board noted that the product being advertised was an option for saving money in relation to electricity bills but considered that the image depicted to promote this money saving message was ambiguous and would not be clearly understood by children.

The Board noted that advertisers should take care not to show images which encourage unsafe practice and, in relation to electrical safety and general safety in the home, advertisers should be very clear in the message they are trying to convey.

The Board noted that the poster is highly visible within a shopping mall and would easily be seen by a broad audience which would include children. The Board noted that the power cord is not plugged in, and a minority of members considered that this was sufficient to not breach the Code.

However a majority of members felt that this was not a strong depiction and that overall the use of household scissors open around the cord was a realistic image making it a greater risk that the action may be copied by a child who may not understand the danger of such an action and would not check to see whether a cord is plugged in or not.

The Board considered that overall that the advertisement was not clear in the message that it was trying to convey relating to cost cutting options and that the depiction of an unsafe practice such as cutting a power cord with scissors was an inappropriate message to be sending to the community and in particular young children. The Board considered that the

image of scissors cutting a power cord was a depiction that was contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety.

The Board determined that the advertisement did depict material which would be in breach of Section 2.6 of the Code.

Further finding that the advertisement did breach the Code, the Board upheld the complaint.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE TO DETERMINATION

The advertiser advised that they have removed the poster from display.