



Case Report

1	Case Number	0448/11
2	Advertiser	Queensland Health
3	Product	Community Awareness
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	23/11/2011
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Disability

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement shows a young woman entering her workplace. It is shot in a first person point of view. As she describes her experience with mental illness, we see various reactions to her from her work colleagues. Through a VO she explains that she recently admitted to having bi-polar disorder and describes the impact of people's reaction to it. She enters the bathroom and speaks into the mirror, explaining that she can treat her mental illness, but not how people treat her because of it. A super and VO reads, "Isn't it time we changed our minds about mental illness?" A colleague enters the bathroom and says, "Hello Emily" and we see the positive impact of the friendly greeting.

The final super before the authorisation tags calls for people to pledge their support for changing minds about mental illness at changeourminds.qld.gov.au.

THE COMPLAINT

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

There are several reasons why this ad offends me. Firstly, I am a young woman suffering from chronic and severe mental illness including bipolar and do indeed identify with how difficult it is not just mentally but socially. Yet what I often notice in advertising about mental illness is that ads centre predominantly on mentally ill women rather than men with mental illness. And so I find myself asking: Why? Is there greater acceptance within the community towards men with mental illness and if so why? You see whenever this ad comes on it creates an upset in me; it triggers bad memories of having worked in office environments myself and

having not being accepted for being mentally ill at all - rather I am that person that everybody loves to gossip about loves to poke fun at and loves to exclude despite my being a good worker. And I know that nobody ever or will ever people who think and behave in a socially inappropriate fashion.

Biologically we are determined to expect symmetry - in physical appearance and in social interactions. That's why we love a beautiful face or an aptly timed word and have difficulty with ugly faces or the 'wrong' word being spoken. Look I just don't think this ad is at all realistic. Sane people who have never gone insane will never be able to sympathise with people who aren't sane. They simply don't need to - they have enough support from the community in order to live happy healthy lives.

And what makes me even angrier is that the message this ad is sending is this: women with mental illness require community acceptance in order to soothe them in their terrible affliction. Rubbish! Because we don't need false inauthentic empathy to feel better about ourselves: this just makes everything worse. What young women with bipolar need is this: ads which say to them: who cares what people think? You are not intellectually or morally inferior to others in virtue of suffering from not being able to control your behaviours or thoughts - you are strong and capable because you are living in a world that does not, cannot and will not ever grasp that which you must endure. We need an advertisement which says believe in yourselves girls despite what anyone thinks. Please.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

In 2010, the Queensland Government committed \$8.5 million to a 4 year campaign to address the burden of stigma surrounding mental illness. The first phase of the campaign includes this television commercial, billboards, bus shelter, print and online advertising. The campaign is supported by a website including a pledge feature (changeourminds.qld.gov.au) and further support will come from community based activities implemented by the Queensland Alliance for Mental Illness in 2012.

The concern raised by the complainant focuses the choice of a female hero under section 2.1 of the code.

Queensland Health formed a reference advisory group, which included mental health experts and non-government advocacy groups, to inform the development of the campaign. The development was also based on comprehensive formative market research, including focus groups in various locations across Queensland and an online survey of 500 Queenslanders. Queensland Health's research found that the women's views on mental illness were easier to change and that they would lead behaviour changing conversation. It also found that young men would be the hardest to influence. For this reason, a young woman was chosen as the hero of the television advertisement.

The choice of a woman as the advertisement's central hero is supported by the 2007 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing which notes that there are slightly higher lifetime rates of mental illness for females, with:

- *almost one in three females (32%) experiencing an anxiety disorder; and*

- *approximately one in five females (17.8%) and one in eight males (12.2%) experiencing an affective disorder, including depression.*
The ABS' Mental Health of Young People in 2007 also found that almost one third of young women had a mental health disorder, compared with around one quarter of young men. Young women were also more likely to have anxiety or affective disorders while substance use disorders were more common among young men. Please note, the ABS reports do not disaggregate results by states and there is no data specific to Queensland.
The campaign's outdoor and press advertising include a variety of men and women of different ages. Future phases of the campaign aimed at reaching the harder to influence males may include a male hero on television advertising.
In relation to the concern raised about the advertisement's messages, it is important to note that the advertisement is not targeted at those with mental illness, rather those who discriminate and stigmatise those with mental illness. This advertisement allows people to walk in the shoes of someone with a mental illness. Particular care was given to ensure that, while the advertisement demonstrates the experience of someone with mental illness (in this case, social exclusion), a positive behaviour is also modelled (through the friendly colleague in the bathroom). This approach is supported by concept testing, which found strong support for the advertisement's messages (84%).

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standard Board ('the Board') considered whether the advertisement complied with the AANA Code of Ethics ('the Code').

The Board noted the complainant's concerns that the advertisement is offensive in its message that people with mental illness require community acceptance in order to feel better about themselves, and in its portrayal of a woman rather than a man with a mental illness.

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

The Board first considered whether the advertisement complied with Section 2.1 of the Code which requires that 'advertisements shall not portray or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of race, ethnicity, nationality, sex, age, sexual preference, religion, disability or political belief.'

The Board noted that the advertisement features a woman in her workplace describing how her colleagues treat her differently since she admitted to suffering from bi-polar disorder.

The Board noted the complainant's concern that women are always portrayed as having mental illnesses, and not men. The Board considered that the depiction of a woman in this advertisement was not discriminatory as there was no suggestion in the advertisement or likely to be taken from the advertisement regarding the gender of mental illness sufferers broadly and considered that the portrayal in this instance of a woman with a mental illness did not of itself discriminate against or vilify women.

The Board noted the complainant's concerns that the message of the advertisement is offensive. The Board considered that the advertisement is making an important public health message backed up by research and that the advertisement is not likely to be considered offensive by most members of the community.

Based on the above the Board determined that, in this instance, the advertisement did not depict any material that discriminated against or vilified any person or section of society.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach section 2.1 of the Code.

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