



Ad Standards Community Panel
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Advertising Standards Bureau Limited
ACN 084 452 666

Case Report

1	Case Number	0507/18
2	Advertiser	Department of Social Services
3	Product	Community Awareness
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV - Free to air
5	Date of Determination	28/11/2018
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

- Other Social Values

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Gender

2.6 - Health and Safety Within prevailing Community Standards

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement features a boy getting into a car and his father asking him why he got detention. He explains it was for flicking up a girls skirt and his father asks "Is that all?" and scoffs. His young son speaks up from the back seat and states "Doesn't she know that's just boys being boys?" and his young daughter states "I've already accepted that as I grow up I'll probably be harassed, and even abused". The father turns to his daughter and hesitantly says "That's not what i meant".

THE COMPLAINT

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

As I have stated, the father's response is inappropriate with community standards, and flies in the face of how I was raised and how my children were raised.



Because not all men are pathetic sexist pigs and that this advertisement suggests that indeed they are.

This add is based on ideologically false presuppositions about gender inequity and is not based in any factual truth, not mention is insulting to half the population of Australia. As a man who was abused by their mother not to mention was my wife the wilful demonisation and dishonesty focused on men and boys is not just shameful but damaging. It deeply saddens me that I have to complain about a government add more so on one of this topic, but as it stands it perpetuates a lie and should be removed.

The advertisement incorrectly claims that all men are inherently sexist. It adds to the stigma that's relentlessly, belittling and degrading the integrity of young men. I know it's what you people call "equality" but it's hypocrisy.

These ads are absolutely egregious as the number of males attacked is largely unreported due to the stigma of being assaulted as is currently being shown with the Commonwealth inquiry into the decades-long sexual abuse at the hands of Catholic priests. Additionally, this is harmful not only to young men and boys but the population as a whole as it enforces for a fact that only women are victims and that men are the perpetrators, this is a statistical lie as we know that around 40% of males are victims of spousal abuse, therefore these ads are tantamount to being anti-male propaganda. Personally, I do not believe the Government should be releasing inflammatory ads that target and demean 50% of the Australian population. As I am an ordinary young man, I am the one who has to live with the consequences of the message of these ads. I know you will probably not agree with me, however, please at least consider where myself and others like me are coming from thank-you.

The ad is sexist, speculative and as usual, the ignorant adults in our government have no understanding of the effect this ad has on a child watching it. The time frame for this commercial (if nothing else) is totally inappropriate.

My 8 year old daughter turned to me after seeing this and asked me, "Daddy is that true? Will I be harassed and abused sometime soon and who is going to do this? What are they saying that for? Will it happen at school cos I'm not going to go anymore. I want to stay home where I am safe.

So now this medial government and its lack of educated constituents are affecting children so as to be scared and recluded. The ad is, as I said, is completely speculative and born without merit or fact. It needs to be removed and the person who authorised it needs to be sacked. Anyone who authorises something such as this lacks the understanding of the importance of the position and should be looking for work in another field.

Without appropriate context, the ad implicitly frames very typical and universally



researched and accepted rugged and hyper physical behaviour expressed by young males, as a precursor to adult violence against women. There exists a wealth of contemporary literature defining the relevance and necessity of recognising the critical differences between anatomical males and females, especially with regard to physical development through childhood. The ad is offensive and confusing for young men and woman, whom might both enjoy running through the school playground with energy, and occasionally and accidentally pushing over a fellow student (whether female, male, or other). Thanks

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

Description of advertisement

The advertisements show how the things we say in front of young people can be misinterpreted in ways we don't intend. There are two advertisements in the series – Detention and Museum. The Detention advertisement is set in a car, with a dad waiting to pick up his teenage son after school detention, and his young son and daughter in the back of the car. When his teenage son arrives, dad notes the reason for his detention and makes a casual comment that downplays his son's behaviour. The younger children enter the conversation with their interpretation around what has just been said. The second advertisement is set in a museum, where a young girl is knocked over by a young boy running past, and her mother rushes to pick her up. The mother looks to excuse the boy's behaviour with a casual comment and her daughter and the young boy respond with their interpretation of the comment. Both executions culminate in a clear moment of reflection for the adults and recognition of the impact of their words on the young people.

Advertisers response to complaint

The campaign – Stop it at the Start

This national campaign aims to help break the cycle of violence against women and their children by encouraging adults to reflect on their attitudes, and have conversations about respect with young people.

It is a Council of Australian Governments initiative, jointly funded by the Australian, state and territory governments.

Phase one launched in April 2016. This is the second phase of the campaign, which ran nationally from 7 October 2018. Television ceased on 10 November and is not



currently in market.

Phase two aims to move the conversation forward, with new advertising and supporting activities. It helps us ask ourselves - could we be teaching our children disrespect?

What does the campaign aim to do?

The campaign helps all adults (parents, family members, teachers, coaches, employers and other role models) to look at their own attitudes, and start a conversation about respect with the young people in their lives.

We know that children are keen observers of what adults say and do and are greatly influenced by them. When it comes to teaching respect, we all influence a child's idea of what is right and wrong.

Young people pick up simple things like our gestures, reactions and the words we choose. They might take our words at face value and interpret them in ways we didn't intend, or see it as an excuse or permission to behave in a certain way. Over time, these everyday interactions shape what children believe about how others should be treated.

Stop it at the Start highlights the role we all play in raising a generation of respectful young people, the potential for a positive change if we come together as a community.

If we make small changes – if we stop ourselves before we say something, if we question what seems like an off-the-cuff joke or a throwaway line, if we start a conversation about respect, or intervene where we see disrespectful behaviour – we can make a change for the better.

Who is the campaign targeting?

The campaign targets adult (male and female) influencers of young people aged 10-17, such as parents and family members, teachers, coaches, community leaders and employers.

It does not target children, victims, perpetrators or bystanders.

It is a primary prevention campaign that aims to break the cycle of violence by stopping it at the start.

How was the campaign developed?

The campaign approach was informed by extensive qualitative and quantitative



research across Australia by Kantar Public (formerly Taylor Nelson Sofres). The research report, Reducing violence against women and their children is available on the DSS website.

Parenting experts, and child and behavioural psychologists helped develop the range of resources and tools for parents and other influencers.

What were the main research findings?

The research found there's a link between violence towards women and attitudes of disrespect and gender inequality. But when thinking about our own reactions, we might be surprised to recognise some of the most common ways we excuse disrespectful and

aggressive behaviour. There are some automatic assumptions and responses we make, often without realising:

- We play down disrespectful or aggressive behaviour ("don't worry, it wasn't that bad").*
- We accept aggression as just part of being a boy ("boys will be boys").*
- We blame girls ("what was she wearing?").*
- We raise girls to accept disrespect ("it's okay, he probably did it because he likes you").*
- When we make these excuses, we're allowing disrespectful behaviour to become a normal part of growing up.*

The research also found that many parents and other adults are worried about whether they should get involved. They're concerned about embarrassing their child, or being in conflict with other parents.

Another important finding was that young people want consistent messages – to hear many voices across the community advocating for a cultural change.

Multiple waves of concept testing research were also undertaken as part of the creative development. This research was conducted nationally, with adults and young people, and consistently showed that the messages communicated by the advertising demonstrated:

- the link between disrespect and violence*
- the need to recognise and reconcile personal behaviour in addressing disrespect*
- the impact of individual influence on young people*
- the need for community / widespread attitudinal change and the need for collective action and responsibility*
- that disrespectful and aggressive behaviour is learned from an early age*



- *that there is a trajectory of disrespectful / aggressive behaviour*
- *that attitudes supporting gender inequality can result in disrespectful / aggressive behaviour*
- *that there is a need for intervention when disrespectful and aggressive behaviours are observed – intervening in one’s own behaviour (personal intervention), as well as the behaviour of others*
- *that this behavioural modification can be undertaken ‘in the moment’, and an individual’s behavior can be changed to achieve a positive resolution*
- *that there is a need for preventative conversations with young people.*

What resources are available?

A range of resources and tools are available on the campaign website to help influencers have conversations with young people. These were developed with the assistance of parenting experts and child and behavioural psychologists. They include:

- *The Conversation Guide, to help parents and family members talk about respect with young people about the importance of respectful relationships from an early age.*
- *The Respect Checklist, for adults to become more aware of what young people might be thinking in disrespectful or aggressive situations.*
- *The Excuse Interpreter, to discover the hidden meanings of common expressions that can excuse disrespectful behaviour.*
- *An animation that shows how as a community, we can change what young people accept as normal behaviour.*
- *Videos of Australians from different walks of life reacting to common phrases that can excuse disrespect, and sharing the advice they’d give their 15 year old selves about respect.*

Products are available for Indigenous Australians, those from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, and parents and family members who have children with disability.

While the campaign does not target victims, the website provides information about support services available as a duty of care. This includes services for women, men, families and children, as well as for people with disability and from those from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Why do we need this campaign?

Violence against women and their children is a serious issue in Australia:



- *ABS data¹ shows that:*

1 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016, Personal Safety, cat. no. 4906.0, www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4906.0/

o One in six women have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former partner since the age of 15. This figure increases to nearly one in four women when violence by boyfriends, girlfriends and dates is included.

o one in six women have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former partner.

o one in four Australian women has experienced emotional abuse from a current or former partner.

Note: figures have been rounded.

The good news is that awareness and understanding of violence against women is high, and most adults agree it's wrong². We also agree violence against women isn't just physical – it includes a range of behaviours designed to intimidate or control.

2 VicHealth 2014, Australians' attitudes towards violence against women. Findings from the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS), Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.

3 Hall and Partners | Open Mind 2015, The Line campaign – Summary of research findings, Hall & Partners | Open Mind, Sydney.

4 VicHealth 2015, Young Australians' attitudes towards violence against women, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.

5 ibid

6 Youth Action NSW & White Ribbon Australia, Young people's attitudes towards domestic and dating violence, Youth Action NSW & White Ribbon, Australia, North Sydney.

7 ibid

However, what we often don't realise is that the cycle of violence can start with the beliefs and attitudes boys and girls develop from a young age.

From early on boys and girls begin to believe there are reasons which make



disrespectful or aggressive behaviour acceptable. Girls questions whether it's their fault, and boys tell each other it was a bit of a joke. This can lead to attitudes like:

- one in four young people don't think it's serious when guys insult or verbally harass girls in the street.³*
- one in five young people believe there are times when women bear some responsibility for sexual assault.⁴*
- one in four young people don't think it's serious if a guy, who's normally gentle, sometimes slaps his girlfriend when he's drunk and they're arguing.⁵*
- over one in three young men believe that women prefer a man to be in charge of a relationship.⁶*

Since young people's attitudes and behaviours are shaped by those around them it's important to expose them to positive influences where they live, work, learn and socialise.⁷ As adults, we need to recognise and reconcile our role as important influencers of the younger generation.

Response against the Code of Ethics

The advertisement has been reviewed by Commercials Advice Pty Ltd (CAD) and provided with a W classification which by definition means that the commercial may be broadcast at any time except during P and C programs or adjacent to P or C periods. Exercise care when placing in programs principally directed to children.

These ratings are used to guide the time of play for each spot. Media has been booked to ensure the advertisement appears only in programming that is appropriate for this classification.

2.1 Discrimination or vilification

The Stop it at the Start campaign does not discriminate against or vilify a person or section of the community on account of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual preference, religion, disability, mental illness or political belief.

Throughout the extensive research that formed the evidence base for the campaign, specific attention was given to understanding the desired behavioural response - who the communication was asking to modify behaviour, and what that change was.

This research was conducted nationally, and found that the vast majority of participants identified the campaign's behavioural message as 'asking all adults (regardless of gender, cultural background, socio-economic-status) to consider their



own behaviour and the inadvertent impact this may have on the cycle of violence against women'. This was consistently mentioned by both adults and young people who participated in the research.

The research asserts the advertisements were interpreted as targeting all adults to modify their personal behavioural responses to situations that may involve disrespect or aggressive behaviour. There are two key contributors to this:

1. the use of two executions which include both male and female behaviours ie. it is not targeted by gender of influencer, and is focussed on the behaviour / response of the influencer.

2. that a clear impact of influencer behaviour on children is established through the conversation between the influencer and young people in both executions, and the resolution where the influencer has recognised the potential unintentional impact of their response and modified their own behaviour 'in the moment'.

Additionally, the Stop it at the Start tagline was interpreted by the majority as encouraging adults to 'stop' their own behaviours which may inadvertently play a role in perpetuating the cycle of violence against women. The call to action at the end of the advertisement is to the campaign website, which hosts a range of tools and resources, developed in consultation with parenting experts and child and behavioural psychologists, to help adults have conversations about respect with young people.

Gender representation

Prevalence of violence against women

This campaign aims to reduce violence against women.

- The prevalence of violence against women in our community is high:*

- o The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows women are nearly three times more likely than men to have been victims of violence (physical or sexual) at the hands of a partner since the age of 15.*

- o This data also showed one in six women has been a victim of violence perpetrated by a partner; one in five has been a victim of sexual violence (by any perpetrator); and one in four has experienced emotional abuse by a partner.*

- o In 2015-16, violence against women and their children was estimated to have cost the Australian economy between \$22 billion and \$26 billion, with victims*

a key contributor in assisting adults (males and females) and young people (males and



females) to understand that the initial influencer response was incorrect and, that behavior could be modified to change the potential impact.

Messages surrounding raised expectations to experience disrespectful behavior outside the home by young females were not present. Rather, the modified response of the influencer on conclusion of the ad (“That’s not what I meant”) indicated a moment of clarity and in-the-moment learning that showed the response could be modified to change the potential impact. Research participants understood this through the conversation that occurs between the adult influencer and young person, and the concluding modified response of the adult.

Policy background

Ensuring the safety of all Australians is a key priority for the Australian Government. Domestic and family violence and sexual assault cannot be excused or justified under any circumstances. All victims, regardless of their gender, need compassionate and highly responsive support and all perpetrators must be held accountable for their violence.

The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 (the National Plan) was developed on the basis of extensive consultations and is aimed at reducing violence against women and their children, where an act of violence is perpetrated by a man. The campaign aligns with the remit of the National Plan, and its practical initiatives to stop violence from happening in the first place, and encourage young people to build respectful relationships.

The National Plan recognises that men and boys can be victims of domestic and family violence and sexual assault. Men do experience domestic and family violence.

However, evidence shows that the majority of victims are women. Data from the 2012 Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey shows that while men are more likely to experience violence overall, this is more often at the hands of a stranger or acquaintance than their partner at home. Women, on the other hand, are more likely to experience violence from a partner or former partner.

For further information, view ANROWS key statistics on women’s experiences of domestic and family violence and sexual assault.

2.2 Exploitative and degrading

The Stop it at the Start campaign does not employ sexual appeal. Reference is made in the ‘Detention’ execution to the teenage son’s detention being as a result of ‘flicking up a girls skirt’. This is used to demonstrate a behavior that could easily be dismissed or excused by an adult as ‘not that bad’.



The use of the children to highlight the potential impact of the excuses adult influencers sometimes make for disrespectful behaviour, is used as a vehicle to show how the things we say in front of young people can be misinterpreted in ways we don't intend.

Both scenarios were thoroughly concept tested to ensure the target audience clearly understood the intent of the message. The research specifically explored each behavior and response articulated in the executions, including the reference to 'flicking up a girl's skirt' and

the young girl's response to this. Throughout the research this scenario was clearly understood, and the influencer's modified behavior noted.

The commercial does not exploit or degrade any individual or group of people.

2.3 Violence

The Stop it at the Start campaign portrays suggestive violent behaviour. This is considered appropriate in the context of the campaign. It aims to prevent violence against women and their children, by educating influencers about the connection between disrespect and violence, as well as the attitudes that excuse, condone or trivialise violence.

Results from campaign research (TNS 2015) and the National Community Attitudes Survey (VicHealth 2014) show that a significant proportion of people hold attitudes that put them at-risk of perpetrating or excusing violence. To change this, we need to demonstrate the link between attitudes of disrespect and violence against women.

2.4 Sex, sexuality and nudity

The Stop it at the Start campaign does not depict sex, sexuality or nudity.

As noted above, the research specifically explored each behavior and response articulated in the executions, including the reference to 'flicking up a girl's skirt' and the young girl's response to this. Throughout the research this scenario was clearly understood, and the influencer's modified behavior / behavioural correction noted. The influencer response clearly indicates the behavior is unacceptable.

2.5 Language

The Stop it at the Start campaign only uses language that is appropriate in the circumstances, and as indicated above, the CAD classification of W was appropriate for the audience and media placements. The language used was carefully selected to



be reflective of society's actual responses to disrespectful behaviour, based on the research conducted by Kantar Public. There is no strong or obscene language

The children's language and tone in questioning the parents was extensively tested throughout the research to ensure the correct interpretation by both adults and young people. The research confirms the final language and tone adopted (by adults and young people featured in the executions) facilitates adult influencers (male and female) to affectively engage in the topic. This affective response facilitates self-reflection and progress towards 'reconciling' their behavior.

2.6 Health and Safety

Awareness and understanding of violence against women is high amongst Australians, and most adults agree it's wrong (VicHealth 2014). The Stop it at the Start campaign is not contrary to prevailing community standards on health and safety as it aims help break the cycle of violence against women and their children by encouraging adults to reflect on their attitudes, and have conversations about respect with young people.

The Department of Social Services, its creative agency and production partners take working with children extremely seriously and ensure the utmost care on these projects.

As part of the production and filming process, all strict standards and policies set out by the State Government and the Office of Children's Guardian were adhered to. As part of this approvals process:

- Pre-employment notification was completed*
- Details of any risks that were identified for children associated with the work location, the child's role or schedule were provided*
- A detailed proposed strategy for minimising any risks to any children on set was provided.*

In addition, the following materials were supplied to ensure there was no risk to any children both physically or emotionally:

- the script, storyboard, mood board or layout to help set the context of the content being filmed*
- proposed employment schedule for children*
- safety reports or risk assessments that were specific to the children and relevant to production.*

There was also careful consultation throughout the production process with casting agents, child guardians, the children, as well as an on-set crew responsible for overseeing the welfare of the children, including a certified nurse. At no time during



the shoot were any children placed in undue harm.

In addition, all safety regulations, as would be expected in reality were met, in relation to the content of the advertisements themselves, such as all parties wearing seatbelts in the vehicle in the Detention execution.

2.7 Distinguishable as advertising

This advertisement falls within the definition of advertising under AANA codes. It is clearly distinguishable as such by the audience/viewer through the use of logo, government authorisations, disclaimer, website and end line super/voice over. It has been placed within a commercial break and recognised by CAD as an advertisement.

Conclusion

To conclude, the Department of Social Services does not believe this advertisement contravenes Section 2 of the Code.

References

Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016, Personal Safety, cat. no. 4906.0, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4906.0>

Hall and Partners | Open Mind 2015, The Line campaign – Summary of research findings, Hall & Partners | Open Mind, Sydney.

KPMG 2016, The Cost of Violence against Women and their Children in Australia, Australian Government.

Taylor Nelson Sofres, 2015, Violence against women and their children – formative research report, TNS, Sydney.

VicHealth 2014, Australians' attitudes towards violence against women. Findings from the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS), Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.

VicHealth 2015, Young Australians' attitudes towards violence against women, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.

World Health Organization 2005, WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women, World Health Organization, Geneva.

Youth Action NSW & White Ribbon Australia 2014, Young people's attitudes towards domestic and dating violence, Youth Action NSW & White Ribbon Australia, North



Sydney.

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 complainant's concerns that the advertisement suggests that only men commit acts of domestic violence and is distressing to children.

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

The Panel 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, gender, age, sexual preference, religion, disability, mental illness or political belief.'

The Panel noted the Practice Note to Section 2.1 provides the following definitions:

"Discrimination – unfair or less favourable treatment.

Vilification – humiliates, intimidates, incites hatred, contempt or ridicule."

The Panel noted the complainants' concerns that the advertisement depicts violence by men against women but that it ignores violence by women against men.

The Panel noted it had previously considered similar complaints in case 0302/13 and in case 0212/16 where:

"The Panel noted that the advertisement features a voiceover stating statistics about violence against women. The Panel noted the complainant's concerns that the advertisement does not mention violence against men.

The Panel noted the advertiser's response that White Ribbon Australia specifically target men's violence against women and that the statistics they use regarding the prevalence of violence towards women by men were obtained by the Australian Institute of Criminology.

The Panel considered that the advertisement does not suggest that domestic violence is only an issue for women and considered that by highlighting the issue of violence against women the advertisement is not negating the serious issue of violence committed against men. The Panel considered that it is not discriminatory towards



men to highlight statistical information regarding domestic violence against women.”

In the current advertisement the Panel noted that the advertisement focuses on changing disrespectful behaviour at the start, by depicting the aftermath of a young boy flicking up a girls skirt to a young boy knocking over a girl while running. The Panel noted the advertiser’s response that the advertisement reflects statistics that the majority of domestic violence is committed by men against women and considered that it was reasonable for the advertiser to target a particular demographic in order to garner the best results. Consistent with its previous determinations the Panel considered that by highlighting the issue of domestic violence against women the advertisement does not suggest that only men are responsible for domestic violence or that all men are likely to commit domestic violence or that women could not also be responsible for domestic violence.

The Panel considered that the advertisement did not portray or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of gender.

The Panel noted some complainant’s concerns that this advertisement is frightening to young girls and it tells them that they will be harassed and abused, and this is damaging to their confidence and mental health.

The Panel noted that the advertisement is presented in such a way that no violence is depicted, however noted that the language of the advertisement may be distressing to younger viewers.

However, the Panel considered that this particular concern does not raise an issue under the Code.

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

