



Case Report

1	Case Number	0523/17
2	Advertiser	Reckitt Benckiser (Aust) Pty Ltd
3	Product	House Goods Services
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV - Free to air
5	Date of Determination	22/11/2017
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Mental Illness
- 2.6 - Health and Safety Within prevailing Community Standards

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

A family is playing cricket in the yard. A boy misses a catch and the parents tell him that "he'll get the next one." The boy starts slapping himself in the face and goes inside. When he returns he sprays himself with insect repellent.

THE COMPLAINT

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

Very poor taste. The ad will be very upsetting to people with that particular disorder and their families.

Being Aspergers, and working as a Mental health nurse, I do not find it funny seeing an autistic meltdown leading to self harm. We see far to many do it for real. Why not make fun of cancer, or dementia, to sell a product. The advert is insulting to say the least

It seems to me a type of bullying to the boy to make him slap himself across the face after his parents comment. I found it confronting

Because it uses a teenager who at first seemingly has Autism and is hitting himself to advertise that he would stop hitting himself if he sprayed Aerogard, because obviously he was just getting bitten by mosquitoes. I find it offensive that the ad makes you feel sorry for the

teenager, and even goes far enough to have the mother say "you put too much pressure on him", just prior to flipping your emotions upside down to reveal that the wasn't about Autism awareness or anything similar, but simply takes advantage of the intriguing nature of such a disorder to sell a shitty mosquito spray.

This ad alludes to child self harm and mimics the actions of some children who have intellectual disabilities. This is blatantly offensive and insensitive to those who can't control similar behaviours.

This add is clearly insuating that the boy is hurting himself because he has not caught the ball. This is suggesting that the boy has mental health issues. It is appalling to say the least. As I have a niece with meantal health problems and often hits herself I am extremely upset and offended by this add. I can only imagine hoe upsetting this would be to the parents of such children. This add should be removed immediately.

There are widespread real and serious social issues caused by undue pressure exerted on children to perform to the high expectations of others. It is a contributor to youth suicide and it is disgusting that this company sees fit to trivialise the issue with sick humour to sell insect repellent.

As a mother of a 16 year old son who died of suicide I find the content of the advertisement upsetting and out of line, with so many mental health issues today I find it hard to believe that Johnson & Johnson would even consider the stupid content of the ad. To have a teenage boy depicted as a self-harmer under pressure is beyond believe, and all for a fly spray. OMG. My partner and I just looked at each other when we first saw it just shook our heads in disgust.

It's offensive because the ad is making fun of kids with special needs or with a serious disability. The teenage boy slapping himself is disgusting. I can't believe this ad passed through.

Trivialising self harm!!

The boy looks like he is having a Tourettes moment and the parents reaction gives that impression. It belittles the agony Tourettes suffers feel and I myself find it upsetting to watch

*It is degrading to those who have children with mental illness, ASD, Autism etc.
Highly offensive*

*I'm offended by this advertising as it is making a mockery of mental health issues, self harm and self esteem. Its really pathetic and extremely insensitive.
Aerogard being such an iconic product can definitely come up with something better than this.*

It looks like the boy has a mental health disorder or is self harming through slapping and then the mother blames the father for what would be considered unhealthy behaviour.

*I object strongly to the content of the ad, and to its inferences and undertones of the child suffering from ADHD,
This is reinforced by the language "The Mother" uses*

*and again by the way the young man has been directed to exit the scene.
I cannot imagine the distress this must cause to families who may have one or more ADHD sufferers .
The advert is offensive, disrespectful and in the poorest taste .*

I do not believe self harm is something to make a joke out of. As a mother of a child with anxiety, who at times of extreme panic hits himself in a similar way to the boy on the ad, I found this ad to be distressing. If it had not been for the comments of the parents, there would not have been an issue with the ad. To give the impression that the ad was about self harm when it was really about a bug repellent I found objectionable.

It trivialises and makes fun of self harm and mental illness. It's especially offensive because the subject is a teenager.

This is a serious illness and demeaning to those with terets

The ad in very poor taste satirised self-harm of adolescents by having the parents mix up self-harm of their son with him supposedly swatting away insects!

Mental illness or disability is not humorous and should not be used to advertise products. Disrespectful, that could be a real situation very traumatic for the family.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

Complaint Reference No. 0523/17

AEROGARD AUSTRALIA RESPONSE

Description of the advertisement

In this commercial, an Australian family is outside playing a game of backyard cricket. The daughter bowls to her father who launches the cricket ball into the air with his bat. The son steps forward to catch the ball and is briefly distracted by the sound of a buzzing mosquito around his head.

As a result, he tilts his head down just as the ball bounces off his head and falls to the ground. He looks rather disappointed, and his dad reassures him, telling him not to worry and that he'll "get the next one". We see the boy once again bothered by the mosquitoes as he slaps himself to try and kill them. While it's completely clear to the viewer that the boy is slapping at mosquitoes, his parents, thinking their boy is disappointed in himself about dropping the catch and not actually bothered by mosquitoes, tell their son to not be so hard on himself.

He slaps his arms as one would when mosquitoes are buzzing around and storms inside as we see his father looking guilty/concerned. Mum gives Dad a stern warning telling him that he "puts too much pressure on that boy". We then see our son re-emerge from the house with a can of Aerogard, happily spraying his arms and now looking filled with confidence. A voiceover is heard telling the audience to protect family time with Aerogard odourless spray.

We see our son re-join the family cricket game as makes a diving catch before winking at camera.

The clear take-out of the commercial is that mosquitoes detract from time spent together as a family and, in this scenario; the mosquitos have caused a humorous misunderstanding. Aerogard can prevent mosquitos coming near and therefore protect precious family time.

Copy of the script (30" version)

We open on a family playing backyard cricket. The daughter bowls to the dad. We hear the dad say "show us what ya got".

The dad swings hard and skies the ball and the whole family start to yell "Oooh!".

The son looks upwards at the towering catch. The ball flies high in the air. We hear dad say "It's in the air, oh, that's yours mate, that's yours"

In slow-motion we see the son prepare to catch the ball and a slight mosquito buzzing sound as we hear dad say " Oh, that's yours mate, that's yours".

We hear a slight slight "Thunk!" as the ball flies through his hands and bounces off his head. The parents react and dad offers some encouragement. "Nice try mate...don't worry you'll get the next one."

The son dusts himself off and takes his position. We hear the sound of a mosquito, the son notices. The son slaps the mosquito.

We cut to the parents and see that they have stopped smiling. The dad reacts by saying "Hey, don't be so hard on yourself mate."

We cut back to the boy and hear another mosquito and the son slaps himself again as he storms out of the frame.

As the son slaps himself we cut wide to see the parent's perspective without hearing the mosquito. The mum reacts with shock, "Darling, stop that," as the son storms off.

The mum turns to the dad and scolds him. "You put TOO MUCH pressure on him."

We cut to a quick close up shot showing the Aerogard being sprayed on the son's arm.

VO: Mossies make a mess of family time.

We cut to a new frame of the son spraying Aerogard on himself and then begins to walk out of the frame.

VO: Protect yours with Aerogard odourless spray.

We cut to a blurred frame of the family playing in the background with a close up of the Aerogard can.

Super: Protect family time

We cut to a new frame of the boy suspended in the air catching the ball as he winks.

VO: "...and Avvagooodweekend".

Copy of the script (15" version)

We open on a family playing backyard cricket. The daughter bowls to the dad.

We hear the dad say "show us what ya got".

The dad swings hard and skies the ball and the whole family start to yell "Oooh!".

The son looks upwards at the towering catch. The ball flies high in the air. We hear dad say "It's in the air, oh, that's yours mate, that's yours"

We see the son prepare to catch the ball and a slight mosquito buzzing sound as we hear dad say " Oh, that's yours mate, that's yours".

We hear a slight "Thunk!" as the ball flies through his hands and bounces off his head. The son dusts himself off and takes his position. We hear the sound of a mosquito, the son notices. The son slaps the mosquito.

We see the son slap himself again as he storms out of the frame.

We cut to a quick close up shot showing the Aerogard being sprayed on the son's arm.

VO: Mossies make a mess of family time.

We cut to a new frame of the son spraying Aerogard on himself and then begins to walk out of the frame.

VO: Protect yours with Aerogard odourless spray.

We cut to a blurred frame of the family playing in the background with a close up shot of the Aerogard can.

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CAD details

Reference number: G53LNHPA

Rating: G

Aerogard comments in relation to the complaint

Thank you for bringing to our attention the complaints you received regarding our Aerogard advertisement. Aerogard is committed to responsible advertising and we have carefully reviewed the complaint concerning the TVC, including all components of Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics.

We are truly saddened to hear that some people had this reaction to our Aerogard ad.

We agree about the gravity of the issues mentioned in the complaints and it was absolutely not our intention to make light of such important issues in any way.

The core idea of the campaign is that time spent together as a family is a very precious thing that should be valued and protected. Anything that encroaches on or detracts from this special time should be seen as a negative and addressed. In this case, it is mosquitoes that are seen as the issue.

We aimed to show that the boy's attempts to swot/repel the mosquitoes were misunderstood by his family and we aimed to bring some humour to this. In our creative exploration it occurred to us that much of this Aussie humour has a strong streak of misunderstanding/pathos running through it and we wanted to tap into this.

The comedy of the ad was always intended to be around this idea of misunderstanding. The audience are always completely clear that the young boy is attempting to slap mosquitoes out of his face; the joke is on the parents thinking their son is slapping himself, when he is actually (and very obviously to the viewer) slapping mosquitoes. This clarity around the scenario was very important to us along with the tone of the piece. To keep it light, fun and clearly based on a misunderstanding, we thought it was important to end the ad with the boy coming back out into the garden, with the mosquito issue now resolved, clearly happy and ready to enjoy the family cricket game without distractions. It is also important to mention that the people in the field don't treat the boy's reaction as a joke, instead they show genuine compassion.

We are truly sorry if anyone felt that the ad had a negative impact on such a serious issue but we cannot stress strongly enough that this absolutely was not our intention.

Aerogard is a well-known Aussie family brand, and this advertisement was in no way designed to cause any offense.

We have taken our customers' complaints seriously and have made the decision out of good faith to remove any scenes from our advertisement that could be misinterpreted.

To confirm, the following scenes from the Aerogard 30-second TVC have been removed to be re-edited into a 15-second TVC:

- Boy slapping himself in the face to swat away mosquitos (from 7-18 seconds)*
- Boy slapping his arms to swat away mosquitos (at 17 seconds)*
- The parents' reactions throughout the TVC (from 7-18 seconds and 19-22 seconds)*

We have made the decision to cease airing the current 30-second TVC after the end of this week. Any Aerogard TVC to air thereafter will be the 15-second edit.

We thank you for your consideration.

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 concerns that the advertisement depicts a boy behaving in a way that trivialises self-harm.

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

The Board 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 Board noted the Practice Note to Section 2.1 of the Code which provides the following definitions:

“Discrimination – unfair or less favourable treatment

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

The Board noted this television advertisement features a family playing cricket in the backyard. The Dad hits a shot that goes high in the air and encourages the boy to catch it. The ball hits the boy on the head. The Dad comments that it was “a nice try, don’t worry, you’ll get the next one.” The sound of a mosquito is heard and the boy starts to slap himself and walks inside. The boy is seen applying Aeroguard and returns to the game and takes a spectacular catch and winks at the camera.

The Board noted the complainant’s concerns that the depiction of the boy is offensive as it makes him appear that he has a mental illness.

The Board considered the overall impression of the advertisement as it shows the story of the family together playing cricket and the real nuisance that mosquitos present to outdoor activities in Australia.

The Board noted that it is clear to the viewer that the boy is being annoyed by mosquitos. The Board noted that the parents are not aware that the boy is slapping himself as a response to the mosquitos and that this is a communication breakdown between the boy and the parents. The Board noted that the parents are responding to the boy’s actions thinking he is upset by missing the catch.

The Board noted that from the point in the advertisement where the boy starts to slap himself, it is evident to the audience that he is responding to the mosquito attack.’

The Board noted that the boy applies the Aeroguard product and after this takes a good catch confirming the fact that the failed earlier catch was because of the effect of the mosquitos

biting.

The Board noted that the slapping action of the boy may be a type of behaviour that is associated with someone with a mental illness but considered that in this case the reason behind the boy's actions are clear and it is not a depiction that is a deliberately being negative toward any persons who may have a mental illness.

The Board noted that the advertiser had voluntarily re-edited the advertisement to remove this scene and in the Board's view, the advertisement was light hearted and clear in the reasons behind the boy's actions and does not suggest mental illness.

The Board considered that the advertisement did not portray or depict material that humiliates, intimidates, incites hatred, contempt or ridicule of a person or section of the community on account of mental illness and determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.1 of the Code.

The Board then 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 the complainants concerns that the advertisement was trivialising self – harm.

The Board noted that the boy had missed a catch that his Dad had hit into the air and that after this he is seen slapping himself. The Board noted that it is evident that the slapping is a response to the annoying mosquitos and that in the context of an advertisement for a mosquito repellent, the depiction was not inappropriate or insinuating self-harm.

The Board noted that the mother and father are supportive and the father states that he will "get the next one" and that their response to his slapping is because of a misunderstanding. The Board noted that the mother does suggest to the father that he is too hard on the boy and that this comment is because the parents think he has left the game because of the disappointment of not catching the ball.

The Board noted however that the advertisement is very clear in the depiction of the boy responding to the mosquitos and not to the dropped catch.

In the Board's view the advertisement did not depict material that was contrary to prevailing community standards on health and safety regarding issues of mental illness and self-harm and did not breach section 2.6 of the Code.

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

