



CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	240/09
2. Advertiser	Department of Health
3. Product	Community Awareness
4. Type of advertisement	Outdoor
5. Nature of complaint	Violence Other – section 2.2
6. Date of determination	Wednesday, 10 June 2009
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This poster for the Australian Government National Drugs Campaign is headed “ICE DESTROYS LIVES”

The image is of a young man in an apparent rage being restrained on the ground by two policemen and a security guard. The young man’s shirt is unbuttoned and his chest and torso are exposed.

The poster has the words “Smoked or injected, Ice is highly addictive. Paranoia, panic attacks, psychotic episodes and violent outbursts are all common side effects of regular use. For more information, call 1800 250 015 or visit australia.gov.au/drugs.

The footer has the words “Don’t let Ice destroy you.”

THE COMPLAINT

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

This advertisement is very offensive because of its location. It is disturbing imagery being put in suburban areas, and in this case next to a primary school. I feel that this is inappropriate. The government may choose to promote this filthy lifestyle in Kings Cross or Darlinghurst, but not in suburban areas where children frequent and live. It is offensive because it is being placed in an area where its target audience does not exist, or only exist in such small densities that it does more psychological harm to these children than whatever benefits it hopes to achieve.

THE ADVERTISER’S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complaint/s regarding this advertisement included the following:

The Australian Government believes that the national drugs campaign advertising material is consistent with the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics, particularly in relation to Section 2. In developing this campaign, due care has been taken to present the facts in a responsible and appropriate manner, having regard for the target audiences for whom the advertising is directed.

The ice outdoor advertisement that is referred to was placed at the Westmead location, across the main road outside a cluster of shops, as a bonus site by the Department's master media buying agency. The Department was unaware of this new location and has instructed the media buyer to have it removed. The outdoor advertisement was originally placed at the Westmead location to be in proximity to the Westmead tavern/pub that is approximately 200-300 metres away to target our audience of 18 to 25 year olds.

The Department has requested the media buyer check the placement of all the remaining advertisements to ensure that they are not in close proximity to any schools. The development of the campaign was based on current evidence and best practice in relation to reaching youth with a behaviour change message.

The image depicted in the 'ice' outdoor commercial is a realistic portrayal of the aggressive behaviour that is associated with using methamphetamines. Experts in drug prevention and treatment were involved in the development of the advertising approach, including being present at the filming and post production to ensure accurate portrayal of the harms. The behaviour depicted reflects the current clinical evidence in relation to methamphetamine use.

A number of creative approaches were explored in developing the concept with the final commercial reflecting the most effective way to engage the target audience and increase their awareness of the harms of using 'ice'.

The commercial underwent several stages of testing with young adults, (18-25 years old), including some current users of 'ice'. This testing identified that the graphic imagery was necessary to convey the serious consequences of using 'ice' and fully endorsed the use of accurate and realistic imagery. The concept was also tested with parents of children aged 12- 17 years old to check that it resonated beyond the 18-25 year old target.

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 complainant's concern that the content of the advertisement is inappropriate in suburban areas, in particular near to a school, and that the advertisement does more psychological harm than good.

The Board noted the advertiser's response that the advertisement had been removed from a school proximity.

The Board considered that the advertisement was realistically portraying the consequences of using a prohibited substance and that while some members of the community would consider such a depiction unpleasant, images such as this are often necessary in order to reach the target audience. The Board considered that the advertisement did not contain material that was irrelevant or gratuitous and that it did not breach any provision of the Code.

The Board also considered that the placement of this material in suburban areas was not inappropriate.

The Board considered that if the depiction of a youth being restrained by police was a depiction of violence than it was justifiable in the context and did not breach section 2.2.

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