



CASE REPORT

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Complaint reference number | 345/08 |
| 2. Advertiser | Cancer Institute of NSW |
| 3. Product | Community Awareness |
| 4. Type of advertisement | TV |
| 5. Nature of complaint | Other - Causes alarm and distress |
| 6. Date of determination | Wednesday, 10 September 2008 |
| 7. DETERMINATION | Dismissed |

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement features a compilation from previous anti-smoking campaigns against the background music of the song "Everybody Knows." It shows conditions such as heart disease (fat being squeezed from an artery), gangrene (diseased toes and foot), lung cancer operations, and reduced lung function (tar being squeezed from a sponge). Text appears on screen reading "Everybody knows smoking causes all these diseases." The images continue with chronic bronchitis (woman wearing oxygen mask), stroke (brain cut in half and bleeding), and words reading "But you still smoke." Other images show throat cancer (man with nose taped and a tube inserted), mouth cancer (woman with diseased mouth), emphysema and finishing with the words "Maybe you do need help to break your habit."

THE COMPLAINT

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

I am extremely offended and sickened that human organs presumably donated to research upon one's death is being used as a 'scare' campaign for the anti cancer institute of NSW. The ad does not identify if the human organs are real or replicas, or whether consent has been obtained to use organs donated for medical research to be used in an advertisement. At 3.30pm primary school children are home from school watching TV. I almost vomit at the advertisement and it has been shown unrelentingly throughout the Olympics and at all times of day and night.

This ad is overly graphic. It caters to a minority of population who make an active choice to smoke. The advertisements intention is clear, and it is honourable that people who smoke are being warned, however, as a non-smoker, I am highly offended by the ad's graphic content. I am not comfortable with seeing diseased bodies and organs, it shocks me and takes me by surprise. I am not the intended audience, so why am I subjected to this graphic content. This advertisement serves no purpose to me and the majority of the population, except to offend.

I find them disgusting especially if you are watching TV while having lunch or dinner. I know that you have a view that they are ok if they contribute to effectiveness of message but I do not agree with your view. I am sure the persons working in the advertising industry can come with something more effective and intelligent, it is just a matter of trying. And I am not sure how effective they really are but even so, I do not think they should be allowed. It is also very sad to see the efforts of councils and local governments to embellish the city being neutralised by such ugly advertising in billboards and buses.

I object to this advertisement for the following reasons: 1. It contains imagery which is both graphic and obscene. Whilst I recognise that advertisements relating to safety and/or community issues require a certain level of violence or graphic content I feel this advertisement has gone beyond what can be considered to be acceptable for the community. 2. Further to the above, the

display of bloody tissue in the brain of a stroke victim is not only graphic & obscene it is also traumatising to the young, both my children became extremely distressed seeing the organ with blood spurting out of it and this was followed by further obscene images. At the very least it should be mandatory for these advertisements to be preceded by a warning that they contain graphic content like television programs require. 3. Whilst not an ASB issue, I also object to the timeslot in which this advertisement was aired - it was aired at midday during the Olympics when my children, as well as one can assume, many other children were watching our athletes perform. Whilst the content itself is utterly appalling it is even more appalling that it is shown at a time when young children are going to be watching. I am sure the advertisers response will be that smokers need to be shown the error of their ways and that graphic scenes are needed however if one is to look at this with a logical scientific eye there are already graphic scenes depicted on cigarette packets where they have a 100% guarantee of being seen by smokers and a low probability of ever being seen by non smokers, let alone children. I think it is high time that community standards are enforced fairly; the simple fact that showing genitalia in advertising at midday is not permitted yet showing a hacked up brain spurting blood followed up with a handful of graphic scenes is permitted shows that something has gone askew. I submit that the content of this advertisement needs to be reviewed in line with community standards and the graphic content reduced if it is to return to air, in any time slot.

The images alarm & distress my children as they are shown during the times that my preschool children are watching our athletes compete in the Olympic games. As a non smoking family I can't see why my children should be subjected to hideous and frightful images, particularly during a telecast which is very likely to be watched by children who are a) not smokers and b) will be caused considerable alarm & distress at lunchtime. Surely there is sufficient data to show that smokers will watch and be made physically ill at other times without having to subject the other 17 million Australians who choose healthy lifestyles to viewing these repulsive images over lunch.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

Everybody Knows launched on 17 August 2008 on Free to Air TV across NSW and will run till 11 October 2008 (with a two-week break from 24 August to 6 September).

Tobacco is the largest cause of preventable death and disease in our community. Smoking increases the risk of many cancers and 20% of all cancer deaths in NSW are caused by smoking. The cost to the NSW community as a result of tobacco smoking in 1998-99 was estimated conservatively at \$6.6billion. However, it has been estimated that for every \$1 spent on tobacco control programs to date, \$2 has been saved on health care. Total economic returns of tobacco control programs are estimated to exceed expenditure by at least 50 to one.

The objectives of Everybody Knows are to increase awareness of the health consequences caused by smoking, encourage smokers to recognise the addictive nature of cigarettes and prompt them to seek help to quit.

The television advertisement, referred to in the complaint (see Appendix A) is a 60-second television commercial that has both a PG and M rated version. Both versions present a series of memorable scenes from existing campaigns. They show a range of health consequences caused by smoking. Formative research found that the series of familiar health consequences had a powerful and memorable impact, contributing to a sense of inevitability of the health consequences of smoking. An important element of the television commercial is recognising that smokers do know the health consequences of smoking but still smoke. Research found smokers strongly related to this message. It acknowledged that quitting smoking is hard and that help may be needed to break their habit. The call to action encourages smokers to speak to their GP, pharmacist or to call the Quitline.

Prior to launching Everybody Knows, a survey was conducted to assess the impact of adult-focused tobacco control campaigns on youth aged 13-17 years in NSW. Key findings indicated that Everybody Knows is an effective ad:

- *More than six out of 10 found the advertisement believable and shocking, and 72% found it attention grabbing.*
- *Three-quarters stated that it would make them less likely to smoke.*
- *Two-thirds found the ad makes them stop and think.*

• Seven out of 10 found it makes smoking seem uncool and very unattractive. It was considered overall the most effective campaign compared with other leading campaigns - *Sponge*, *Stairway to Emphysema* and *Which Disease*.

The television commercial was launched and aired for one week during the Olympics to extend the reach of the campaign at a time of increased viewership. Placement of the PG-rated version respected blackout periods and requirements. As footage is taken from existing campaigns, please be assured that none of the scenes in the commercial have used human organs that have been donated for medical research. Actors have been predominantly used but based on real case history.

Trying to change behaviours where addiction is involved is an enormous challenge. We know from research that it is important to demonstrate that smoking has immediate health consequences and that there is an immediate need to quit rather than sometime in the future. In this, we have followed a similar approach in other smoking cessation campaigns.

The research carried out for the National Tobacco Campaign, for example, shows that advertising that is credible, personally relevant, provides new information and evokes a strong visceral response, encourages smokers to put quitting on 'today's agenda'. It also helps ex-smokers stay quit and importantly, discourages non-smokers from starting. Evaluation also found that the number of calls to the Quitline strongly reflected television TARP (target audience rating points) weights. When television advertising activity ceases, call volume to the Quitline generally drops to pre-campaign levels.

Since 2003 NSW has experienced an approximate 4% decline in smoking prevalence. This decline in smoking can in part be attributed to increased funding toward tobacco control, including smoking cessation campaigns. To sustain this level of decline, it is necessary to continue to prompt and remind smokers of the need to quit.

I hope that the Advertising Standards Bureau will appreciate that this campaign is helping to educate smokers on the dangers of smoking. By quitting now, smokers can significantly decrease their risk of smoking-caused diseases and make a change to improve their health.

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board ("Board") considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (the "Code").

The Board considered the advertisement within the context of Section 2.6 of the Code on health and safety, and in particular the potential impact on the physical or mental health of viewers of the advertisement on the grounds of "alarm and distress".

The Board agreed that the images displayed in the advertisement were confronting, but did not think they were excessive and noted the important message underlying the images used in the advertisement. The Board also noted that the montage was made up of images that had already been shown separately in the community in various forms, including television advertisements and images on cigarette cartons. The Board considered that the compilation of a series of confronting images gave the advertisement greater impact, but that this was justifiable by the significant message being advertised. The Board therefore determined that Section 2.6 of the Code had not been breached.

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