



## **CASE REPORT**

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| 1. Complaint reference number | 63/10  |
| 2. Advertiser                 | Cancer Institute of NSW                              |
| 3. Product                    | Public Awareness                                     |
| 4. Type of advertisement      | TV   |
| 5. Nature of complaint        | Violence Community Service advertising – section 2.2 |
| 6. Date of determination      | Wednesday, 24 February 2010                          |
| 7. DETERMINATION              | Dismissed  |

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT**

This television advertisement features a woman in a hospital and she is being told she has cancer of the lung by her doctor. The voiceover says: “What could be worse than hearing this from your doctor? Saying it to your children”.

## **THE COMPLAINT**

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

*My girlfriend just recently lost her father to lung cancer (not related to smoking) and everytime this ad comes on it brings back painful memories and she ends up in tears. I understand that this advertising campaign is trying to shock smokers and make them realise that what their smoking doesn't just affect there own lives. But I feel that this could be portrayed without affecting the children that are having to deal with the loss of a parent. I feel that my girlfriend doesn't need this constant reminder from this thoughtless advertisement.*

## **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE**

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complaint/s regarding this advertisement included the following:*Thank you for your letter dated 8 February 2010, regarding the Cancer Institute NSW What's Worse Campaign. The What's Worse Campaign was launched on 20 December 2009 and on air till 13 February 2010. It was also in cinema in December/January. There is a 30-second and 15-second version. The plan is to repeat the campaign in April/May 2010.*

*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 What's Worse are to increase the salience of the very real health consequences of smoking in a personally relevant way, increase the sense of urgency to quit and accelerate motivation to make a quit attempt, increase awareness of the impact and health consequences of smoking on the smoker and their family and to provide an avenue to quit smoking through the Quitline 13 7848.*

*The television advertisement, referred to in the complaint was developed by the Department of Health United Kingdom. The commercial evokes an emotional response from the viewer by focusing on the difficult situation of a mother communicating the realities of her illness to her*

young children. It emphasises the real health consequence of smoking and how it affects not only the smoker, but the family as well. The campaign creative was tested online with smokers prior to its implementation. It was found to be believable, personally relevant and made smokers more concerned about their smoking. It made smokers think about their family and/or that it not only affects them but their family and friends.

*Preliminary results from campaign tracking show that the campaign is performing effectively. Please note that the following results are from only four weeks of campaign tracking:*

- *Half of smokers and recent quitters found the advertisement made them feel uncomfortable.*
- *Seven out of 10 smokers and recent quitters found the advertisement made them stop and think.*
- *Two-thirds strongly agreed with the statement to “give up for your family’s sake”.*
- *Just over two-thirds strongly agreed that “your smoking is not just about you”.*

*The Cancer Institute NSW recognises that there are other risk factors for lung cancer. However, in Australia around eight out of 10 lung cancers are caused by smoking. Given the strong evidence that smoking causes lung cancer, emphasis is placed on the last words on the end frame “Your smoking is not just about you”. This is to remind smokers of the family responsibility implications of smoking and to motivate them to stop smoking.*

*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 noted the complainant's concern that the advertisement was thoughtless of those who may have suffered the loss of a loved one to cancer caused from smoking.

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

The Board noted that the images presented in the advertisement were confronting and agreed that the advertisement would be distressing to some viewers particularly those who have been touched by cancer.

The Board considered whether the advertisement breached the Code. The Board agreed that the tone of the advertisement was confronting, and that the depiction of and reference to the impact of cancer on children gave the advertisement greater impact. The Board noted the important public health message underlying the images used in the advertisement and that such messages justify impactful advertising. The Board considered that the advertisement did not breach the Code and dismissed the complaint.