



CASE REPORT

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| 1. Complaint reference number | 77/10 |
| 2. Advertiser | Department of Health & Ageing |
| 3. Product | Community Awareness |
| 4. Type of advertisement | Transport |
| 5. Nature of complaint | Health and safety – section 2.6
Other - Causes alarm and distress |
| 6. Date of determination | Wednesday, 10 March 2010 |
| 7. DETERMINATION | Dismissed |

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This poster from the Department of Health and Ageing includes a close up image of skin which has a wound. The wound is 'stapled/stitched' together in several spots. At each of the stitches are words explaining what the skin has been exposed to such as 'Backyard cricket games', Pool party, Tennis with friends, Outdoor Concert, BBQ at Sam's. Above the last stitch are the words "Surgery couldn't get all the cancer".

THE COMPLAINT

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

Below is the original email I sent to TransLink about the posters and they gave me your URL saying that... "Complaints regarding advertising on buses needs to be directed to the Advertising Standards Bureau."

Hello, I would like to complain about a poster you have showing on many of your buses. The one with that ghastly wound & the staples. I have no idea what it's about because I turn my head away and refuse to look at it. It is sick that you have a poster that size on the side of your buses where young children can see it. I've sat in bus stops when the buses with this THING on the side pull up and are right in my face. At least if it was on TV I could turn it off or over, but on your buses it right there in your face. These posters should be taken down as they're sickening and ghastly as I said.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

Comments in relation to the complaint

The Australian Government believes that the skin cancer awareness 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 target audience includes youth aged 13-24 years along with parents/carers of children 0-17 years of age. The development of the campaign was based on current evidence and best practice in relation to reaching youth with a behaviour change message.

The campaign materials are intended to increase young Australians' awareness of the seriousness of developing skin cancer through sun exposure and to promote the adoption of multiple sun

protection behaviours as nonnal, socially acceptable, and endorsed behaviours. The campaign is also designed to engage parents/carers of children 0 - 17 years of age so that they may encourage their children to protect themselves from skin cancer.

The issue of skin cancer is relevant to the entire community, and young people in particular as research shows they have the worst sun protection behaviours and the highest frequency of sunburn. In Australia skin cancer is a common cancer causing close to 1,500 deaths a year.

Skin cancer can occur in people of all ages in the population with 400,000 Australians diagnosed with skin cancer each year. Two of the risk factors for the development of skin cancer are: severe sunburn and exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UVR) during childhood and adolescence. The single most effective way to save lives and reduce the costs associated with skin cancer remains prevention.

The real surgery images used in the campaign materials are not gratuitous; they are intended to increase Australians understanding of how severe skin cancer can be and encourage them to adopt preventative measures against skin cancer. The use of graphic images have the ability to convey a powerful health warning message to all Australians from all cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

As with all advertising we undertake, this approach was focus-tested prior to development and reviewed by the Australian National Audit Office for Compliance with the Guidelines on Campaign Advertising by Australian Government Departments and Agencies (June 2008). Results from this testing identified that the graphic imagery was necessary to convey the seriousness of the surgery and, therefore, skin cancer, and increase their perceptions that they are at risk.

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 about several aspects of this advertisement, of relevance is the concern about the imagery used in the advertisement. The Board noted that the advertisement is a close up of a supposed scar and indicates several possible causes of the person's skin cancer, the removal of which caused the scar.

The Board considered that the depiction was not a portrayal of violence, as understood by most members of the community, but accepted that some members of the community would find the image distressing. In any case, the Board considered that the value of the sun safety message contained in the advertisement outweighed any distress it may cause to some viewers and the depiction was therefore justified in the context of that message.

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