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Submission to the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs

Inquiry into the regulation of billboard and outdoor advertising

Dear madam/sir

I write this as an individual, member of public, father, husband, professional educator and concerned member of society.

Criteria for assessing an outdoor advertisement

I believe the issue should be seen simply and logically, based on the reality that the viewer of outdoor advertising is held captive to the advertisement - cannot switch it off to protect the child within his or her care. I believe the criteria for outdoor advertising should be along the following simple lines:

If the outdoor advertising is not suitable for a kindergarten, then it is not appropriate for outdoor advertising.

Granted, no advertising is suitable for a kindergarten, so a better way to view this could be:

'Will the advertising serve to corrupt, mislead, confuse or force the viewer to ask questions about issues the viewer is not psychologically ready for; the viewer being any well adjusted child of age 2 - 10 years.'

If the answer to the above question is no, then the advertisement does not get the go ahead.

Policing

I do not profess to be an expert here but have followed several excellent Radio National interviews on this topic. The issues which concerns me about self regulation are:

- Very few people complain partly because people do not know how to.
- By the time a complaint has been made and acted upon (assuming the end result is that the advertisement is removed) the advertisement will have already affected vast numbers of minors and caused discomfort to caring, concerned, aware parents.
- Most outdoor advertisements have very short cycles and by the time the advertisement has had the complaint lodged and acted upon, the view cycle may be over anyway, or the advertisement may have had little time left to run by the time it has been axed. Therefore advertisers could resort to short runs thereby effectively avoiding being axed.

If regulation is problematic then the following could be added to the self regulation system:

- Create significant fines for advertising companies whose advertisements become banned - for first and second offenses (ie for breaking the code)
- If an advertising company has three advertisements banned through the complaints process over a 3? Year period then they lose the right to create outdoor advertisements for a period of time (at least 3 years) and receive a serious fine
- To support the regulation process a website could be created, specifically for the lodging of complaints of outdoor advertising. Also the a public awareness raising campaign needs to be run in regard to the complaints process.

Regardless of what policing system is used, the policing system **MUST** offer a significant deterrent to advertisers to **NOT** produce outdoor advertising which is offensive to responsible, thinking members of the public. I believe this currently this is not the case.

Regards,
Richard Andrew