

Submission No. 2  
Date Received: 24-1-11  
Secretary: [Signature]

From: [Redacted]  
Sent: Monday, 24 January 2011 5:00 PM  
To: Committee, SPLA (REPS)  
Subject: Outdoor Advertising

I am a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Australia and active in Federal, State and local governemnt. My concern in relation to the above matter is not with declining community standards, but with direct action taken by those outraged by extreme advertising material.

"Community standards" are generally a matter of opinion except in two areas:

1) Defamation. The trend in American politics toward negative propaganda in political life is increasingly manifesting itself in Australia. Extremism breeds extremism. Etremisim leads to violence. Hitler used advertising to pillory minorities as scapegoats for Nazi political ends and Goebbels was in step with "community standards" of the time. Community standards are not a valid test of acceptability. The Electoral Act is not an effective instrument to control political extremism. "Hate Speech" can be an accusation levelled against genuinely vital information. Involving Consumer Affairs in judging dodgy advertisings appears more often than not to resolve into an arguement about "weasel words". Freedom of speech is notlicence to kill.

Conceivably it may not just be governemntal politics which attract slanderous public advertising. I have a particular interest in religious advertising which has the potential to become toxic. What sanctions are available to preserve the peace of the community?

2) Fraud. The imperative of marketing renders truth irrelevant in the pursuit of profit. Despite every effort by enterprises to "window dress" their ethical credentials, the pressure is on to be economical with the truth in the cause of separating customers from their money. Of course, it's not just about money; it's about power. Vouluntary restraints are, by definition, a matter of convenience - for the perpetrator rather than the victim.

Billboard advertising (including its variants on vehicles and on prominent buildings) is "in your face". We cannot switch it off. If an adult parades nude in public they are arrested for indecent exposure, If a drunken lout mouths off at a gathering he gets fined for offensive language. If a hoon roars up the street with a "straight-through" exhaust he gets his car confiscated. Why should outdoor advertising be a law unto itself?

The committee should bear in mind the ultimately successful campaign by B.U.G.A.U.P. against the tobacco lobby and consider that the governement should have been there a lot earlier and made their campaign unnecessary.

These are just a few thoughts on a subject which has concerned me for some time and I respectfully wish the committee well as it wrestles with an issue which pits free speech and commercial privilege against the perceived general good.

The Rev. Ivan Ransom

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