

<b>COMPLAINT NUMBER</b>	17/225
<b>COMPLAINANT</b>	S Ward
<b>ADVERTISER</b>	Lightbox
<b>ADVERTISEMENT</b>	Lightbox, Radio
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	18 August 2017
<b>OUTCOME</b>	Settled

**Advertisement:** The radio advertisement for the Lightbox series, A Handmaid's Tale, had a voiceover which spoke about a dystopian future, where woman could not have jobs or money and were made to bear children for the leaders and had their own children taken away. The script included a woman screaming "No, please! Don't take her!," while the child screams "Mommy!" as she is taken away.

**The Chair ruled the complaint was Settled.**

**Complainant, S Ward, said:** I am writing to complain about an ad I heard this morning. It was a distressing advertisement for the television show 'Handmades Tale' aired at 0720 this morning as my children and I were having breakfast. It includes a graphic piece of audio where a child is being forcibly removed from their mother. The tone was very distressing and haunting. I believe it grossly stepped over the line in terms of children's interests as it was aired at the 'before school' time referred to in the radio code. This time of day be definition is a normally accepted child listening time - particularly on a family show such as the More FM breakfast.

As per your code: Advertisements should not portray violence, undue aggression, or menacing or horrific elements likely to disturb children. This ad included a graphic description of someone in distress - being the woman having her child taken. Violence was clearly implied.

I believe it disregards the ASA rules under ethics. Fear Advertisements should not exploit the superstitious, nor without justifiable reason, play on fear. This ad clearly portrays fear from the mother having her child removed and was inappropriate to be played at a time when children are listening.

**The relevant provisions were Code of Ethics - Basic Principle 4, Rule 4, Rule 5.**

**The Chair** noted the Complainant's concern that the advertisement was distressing and was played at an inappropriate time when children were listening.

**The Advertiser, Lightbox Radio said in part:** "Our media agency, PHD Media was responsible for booking broadcast spots and requested scheduling based on criteria of top performing radio stations and female listeners aged over 35. Specific broadcast times were then set by our media partner, Mediaworks...We understand the Ad was aired on radio stations for adult listeners and during segments not targeted at children. However, we acknowledge the Complainant's concerns that the Ad may be overheard by children. We are sorry for any distress suffered by the Complainant or their children."

**The Media, Mediaworks said in part:** The advertisement pertains to a TV show set in a dystopian future where child-bearing women have very few rights. Given the nature and target audience of the show, we don't think the advertisement is unjustified in its depiction of fear. Rather, it is an accurate representation of what listeners can expect from The Handmaid's Tale.

The Complainant also notes the time of broadcast; 7:20am on More FM. We acknowledge that this is a time when many families with children are listening to the radio in the car. The audio has since finished on air and I'm not aware of any plans to run it again in the future. Should our client wish to play it again, we'd do our best to ensure it plays outside of peak child listening hours so as not to cause any further distress."

The Chair acknowledged the responses received from the Advertiser and Media representatives saying the advertisement was no longer on air and that the timing of any future broadcasts would be reviewed to ensure it played outside times when children would be listening.

Given the Advertiser and Media's co-operative engagement with the process and the self-regulatory action taken in confirming the advertisement had finished airing and ensuring timing placement would be reviewed for any future advertisements, the Chair said that it would serve no further purpose to place the matter before the Complaints Board. The Chair ruled that the matter was settled.

**Chair's Ruling:** Complaint **Settled**