

COMPLAINT NUMBER	21/500
ADVERTISER	AWWA
ADVERTISEMENT	AWWA TVNZ OnDemand
DATE OF MEETING	27 October 2021
OUTCOME	Not Upheld No further action required

Summary of the Complaints Board Decision

The Complaints Board did not uphold a complaint about a TVNZ OnDemand advertisement for AWWA period underwear. The Board said the advertisement was targeted to adult females and was not offensive, in that context.

Advertisement

The television OnDemand advertisement for AWWA period underwear had images of blood-stained underwear and bedding and a used sanitary pad.

The text said “There’s an easier way to period that gives you freedom. Holding up to 5 tampons worth while keeping you dry & comfy. Absorbent leakproof underwear. AWWAperiodcare.com”

Summary of the Complaint

There were eight complaints about this advertisement. The Complainants were concerned the advertisement was graphic and offensive.

Issues Raised:

- Social responsibility
- Decency and offensiveness

Summary of the Advertiser’s Response

The Advertiser defended the advertisement and said it was an “honest portrayal... including scenes with depicted menstrual blood in all familiar scenarios that have previously been shamed upon”. The Advertiser provided 124 comments from satisfied customers.

Relevant ASA Codes of Practice

The Chair directed the Complaints Board to consider the complaint with reference to the following codes:

ADVERTISING STANDARDS CODE

Principle 1: Social Responsibility: Advertisements must be prepared and placed with a due sense of social responsibility to consumers and to society.

Rule 1(c) Decency and Offensiveness: Advertisements must not contain anything that is indecent, or exploitative, or degrading, or likely to cause harm, or serious or widespread offence, or give rise to hostility, contempt, abuse or ridicule.

Relevant precedent decisions

In considering this complaint the Complaints Board referred to two precedent decisions, Decision 19/317 and 21/427, both of which were Not Upheld.

The full versions of these decisions can be found on the ASA website:

<https://www.asa.co.nz/decisions/>

Decision 19/317 concerned a Libra Blood Normal OnDemand television advertisement which showed various images relating to periods including: red liquid being poured onto a sanitary pad, a woman asking for a pad across a crowded table and a man shopping for sanitary products. It also showed blood running down a woman's leg in the shower and a pixelated sanitary pad being removed from underwear. The text said "Why is it considered unacceptable to show period blood? Periods are normal. Showing them should be too."

The two Complainants were concerned the advertisement was disgusting and asked what other bodily fluids would be next.

The Complaints Board did not uphold the complaints. It said the advertisement had been targeted at females over 18 years of age on the TVNZ OnDemand platform. The Complaints Board said the advertisement was advocating an important social message by trying to break down the taboo about menstruation, and advocate that as periods are normal then talking about them should be normal too.

Decision 21/427 concerned a Libra Period Proof Undies television OnDemand advertisement which featured a jingle which said "wear, bleed, wash, repeat". The advertisements had imagery to demonstrate each word "wear, bleed, wash, repeat", and included a shot of a woman's hands wringing out what appeared to be water and menstrual blood from a pair of underpants.

The Complaints Board said the advertisements did not reach the threshold to cause serious or widespread offence, in light of generally prevailing community standards. The Complaints Board said the advertisement was less graphic than the image of blood running down the girl's leg in decision 19/317 and did not focus on a woman's body parts.

Complaints Board Discussion

The Chair noted that the Complaints Board's role was to consider whether there had been a breach of the Advertising Standards Code. In deciding whether the Code has been breached the Complaints Board has regard to all relevant matters including:

- Generally prevailing community standards
- Previous decisions
- The consumer takeout of the advertisement, and
- The context, medium, audience and the product or service being advertised, which in this case is:
 - Context: New Zealand made sanitary product
 - Medium: OnDemand and livestream television
 - Audience: Females 18-44
 - Product: Re-usable period underwear

Consumer Takeout

The Complaints Board agreed the likely consumer takeout of the advertisement was there is a new period underwear product on the market. It is better than using tampons and sanitary pads. The advertisement aims to normalise a woman's experience of menstruation.

Community attitudes changing

The Complaints Board noted that the way menstruation has been portrayed in advertising has changed over recent years. While it was previously treated as a private matter, with limited portrayals of a woman's lived experience, there is now a greater openness about menstruation and the way period products are promoted. This change in community standards has been reflected in precedent decisions made by the Complaints Board. The Board said that the use of blue blood or pixelated sanitary pads may now be a thing of the past. The Board said social issues such as period shame and period poverty are now more openly discussed.

Was the advertisement offensive?

The Complaints Board said while the television advertisement was distasteful to some people it did not reach the threshold to cause serious or widespread offence, in light of generally prevailing community standards.

The Complaints Board said the advertisement was targeted to females aged 18-44, who were more likely to purchase the product.

The Complaints Board said menstruation is a natural process which is experienced by half the population. The Board said the advertisement compares the experiences of two women having their period; one is using traditional sanitary pads and tampons, the other is using period underwear.

The Board agreed the advertisement did go further than the precedent examples in showing a woman's experience of menstruation, particularly the scene where the woman looks down at her blood-stained, white sanitary pad, while sitting on the toilet.

The Board said while shocking to some consumers, this scene is designed to persuade the viewer that the woman using period underwear is having a better experience, in part at least because she won't see sights like this. This is because the period pants are darkly coloured and made of highly absorbent material.

Was the advertisement prepared and placed with a due sense of social responsibility

The Complaints Board said the advertisement had been prepared and placed with a due sense of social responsibility. The Board took into account the advertisement had targeted registered viewers aged between 18 and 44 years. The advertisement was time-gated to play after 8.30pm and further restricted to programmes M ratings or higher with content more suitable for mature audiences. The media confirmed that advertisement was only served once to each registered viewer it reached.

The Complaints Board also confirmed the advertisement did not reach the threshold to cause serious or widespread offence, and the imagery and wording used was suitable for a restricted audience.

The Complaints Board said taking into account context, medium, audience and product the advertisement was not in breach of Principle 1 or Rule 1(c) of the Advertising Standards Code.

Outcome

The Complaints Board ruled the complaint was **Not Upheld**.

No further action required.

APPEAL INFORMATION

According to the procedures of the Advertising Standards Complaints Board, all decisions are able to be appealed by any party to the complaint. Information on our Appeal process is on our website, www.asa.co.nz. Appeals must be made in writing with notification of the intent to appeal lodged within 14 calendar days of receipt of the written decision. The substantive appeal application must be lodged with the ASA within 21 calendar days of receipt of the written decision.

APPENDICES

1. Complaints
 2. Response from the Advertiser
 3. Response from the Media
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Appendix 1

COMPLAINTS

There were eight complaints about this advertisement.

Complaint 1

Awwa period pants is extremely graphic. Bloodied sanitary pad being pulled off a pair of knickers, bloodied sheet and sanitary items in a bin. It's disgusting. Advertisement of a period product does not need to show this at this extent. Either edit or take off the air!

Complaint 2

We were watching Vigil on TVNZ on demand (9.30pm Friday 1st October) and an ad for period knickers came on. It was absolutely disgusting and should be taken off tv. Fine if you want to advertise them but not ok to show bloody sheets and a bloody pad. It was like watching a horror movie! There should be a warning before the ad comes on. It was very inappropriate and the fact an advertising company thinks it's ok is atrocious.

Complaint 3

Awa period underwear is an important product to have awareness of made to our community. However, a graphic blood stained pad being replaced, blood soaked underwear being rinsed does not have a place on mainstream tv. I could have been watching with my ten year old son, I could have been eating dinner, I could have been watching with a friend who faints at the sight of blood. I would like to be informed of this product and its benefits..... but not in a graphic, stomach churning, shocking format. My husband is very supportive of his wife and daughters experiences with their period needs. And As a first responder he sees graphic Images at work regularly yet this was too offensive for him.

Complaint 4

Ad showed explicit feminine bleeding and blood soaked pads, underwear etc. We don't even show body hair or pimples on television yet this is acceptable? I am a female and find this ad to be crude and tasteless. This was at approx 8.40pm, Duke On demand.

Complaint 5

While watching TVNZ on demand an ad for AWWA periodcare underwear came on. The ad is very graphic showing period blood and women using intimate products which is not appropriate for television or broadcasting. This made me feel very uncomfortable (noting I am a female adult) and I also feel this would be highly inappropriate if a child saw this.

Complaint 6

Graphic visual content of women removing bloody used menstrual pads, washing the blood in basins. Made myself and more so my partner who female feel very uneasy and highly inappropriate for children viewing

Complaint 7

Graphic women's sanitary product.

Complaint 8

I am a female and find the ad absolutely disgusting - we really do not want to see another woman's period leaking through her underwear, blood on the bedsheets or blood running down legs and pooling in the shower. We also do not want to see another woman's used and bloody pad and toilet paper. Highly inappropriate and graphic. A disgusting and disturbing 1 minute and 30 seconds. This does not make anyone in our household want to buy their products. <https://awwaperiodcare.com/pages/watch> should bring up the ad - i am not sure how to share it from TVNZ On Demand. You will know when you see it. The ad aired at around 9.45pm, 9/10/21 while watching Bachelor in Paradise. I see they have it on their facebook platform as well. Please have this ad removed.

Appendix 2

RESPONSE FROM ADVERTISER, AWWA

Re: AWWA Period Care Television - Complaint 21/500

Thank you again for giving us the opportunity to defend our commercial in response to the 8 complaints that aim to breach:

1(c) Decency and Offensiveness

Advertisements must not contain anything that is indecent, or exploitative, or degrading, or likely to cause harm, or serious or widespread offence, or give rise to hostility, contempt, abuse or ridicule.

Defence Response

Commercial's Media schedule

90" Period Lockdown commercial is live on;

Paid content - TVNZ on Demand targeted to only women 18-44 from October 1-31, 2021

Paid content - Youtube targeted to only women 18-44 from October 3-December 11, 2021

Organically - Shared on AWWA's own Facebook and Instagram.

Advertising for women

Stuff.co.nz surveyed (at the time of writing this) 4,600 people and asked the question **"Should sanitary product companies use red liquid to signify blood?"** And the results showed **79% said "yes - remove the stigma"**

Recently, a first of its kind study in New Zealand with PureProfile was run, a cohort of 308 men and women across New Zealand to find out "how representative are we in New Zealand?" ([reference](#))

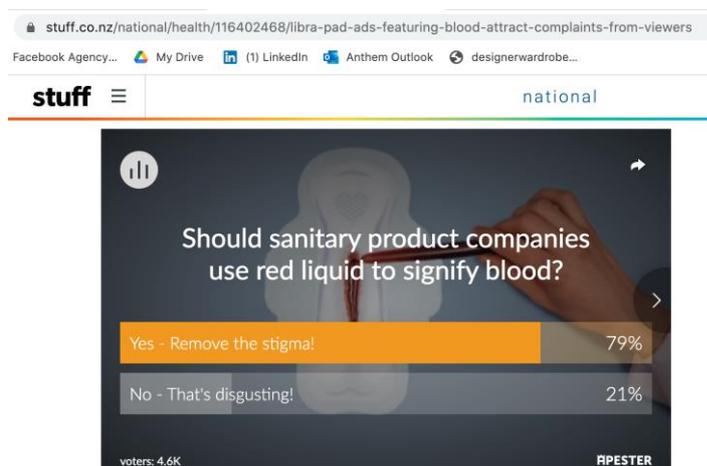
Only 21% of NZ Women feel advertising represents their experience as a woman in a modern world.

And only 10% of NZ Women feel that advertisers really understand them.

Which led to the outcome that to improve the situation we need to show perspective - seeing the world through a woman's eyes, in order to connect with lived experiences.

We aimed to do just that with AWWA Period Care's Commercial

Committed to changing the stigma around periods, AWWA has produced a realistic TV commercial as part of their brand campaign which showcases the future of period care in the most real way.



New Zealand's Advertising Standards Authority has now [rejected two complaints](#) from two people – referred to only as R Kennedy and R Ward – who saw the ads while watching *Shortland Street* on TVNZ On Demand.

In an effort to demonstrate the benefits of their reusable products, AWWA released a 90-second commercial on October 1 on TVNZ on-demand with controlled targeting to Women 18-44. The progressive ad is set during lockdown and features two flatmates menstruating in synchronicity although with contrasting experiences. One of them wears AWWA and embodies freedom and ease as they connect with nature, while their flatmate encounters the hassles and discomforts associated with using traditional period products. The honest portrayal reveals the emotions and normalities experienced during menstruation, including scenes with depicted menstrual blood in all familiar scenarios that have previously been shamed upon i.e small stain on undies, bed sheet, used sanitary pad.

Thus creating a realistic campaign that all menstruators could relate to."As many will recall, we grew up watching period ads that made us feel embarrassed about having a period. The elephant in the room, the actual period, was always absent from these ads. AWWA is challenging the status quo, sparking positive conversations and in-turn normalising menstruating for all people that period." says Holly Dean McDaniel, AWWA Global Brand Director.

Which has resulted is a huge out pour of positive sentiment

The commercial has resonated with women with a public outpour of **positive feedback including the 142 people** who publicly have shared below:

"I love your ad, I was so happy to see something real like this and I am so proud of you all for sharing. I could relate to this ad so much, and I am going to get me some Awwa because of it. Thank you"

"I just saw this ad it gave me all the feels it's beautiful and amazing"

[\(reference for the above\)](#)

"This is so beautiful absolutely love"

"I love this so much no weird blue water! Ataahua"

"mītharo! this really shows the way in which awwa is encouraging embracing our ikura to be something we connect with in an authentic way"

"Yesssssss xx so beautiful and empowering"

"Love this so much"

"Ātaahua!!! So awesome!! I'm SO proud to be an ambassador for AWWA, truly incredible ethos and mahi"

"Love Awwa and this ad! Thanks for showing some of the realities of periods. A far cry from the ads I grew up with!"

"Fantastic ad"

"This is the most beautiful ad I have ever seen also could cry at how relatable it was for me as a young teen before AWWA existed"

"I absolutely love this candid video!"

"Thank you for showing the reality of a woman's menstrual cycle and the struggles that we go through daily, in only a very short snippet. I have yet to buy your underwear but I will in the future."

"beautiful"

"I love this!"

"Beautiful"

"Love"

"so good"

"love"

"goosebumps!! Love this so much!"

"Awesome job xo love this ad we are so proud of you for doing this and representing a brand which makes periods that much easier for women!"

"Love this so much!"

"Awww this gave me all the feels, beautiful koha"

"This is beautiful!"

"Love this vid"

"Fantastic campaign to match a fantastic product, well done to all involved"

"WOW is this the only ad that shows what periods are REALLY like? Absolutely love it. How will younger girls ever know what it's really like to have your period if all they see is the made up fantasy ads that are on T.v now days. This is reality and I'm here for it Great work Awwa"

"Keeping it real. This ad has been thoughtful in its writing and production. Let it run."

"Finally. An ad for people who menstruate, rather than for people who don't. Glad to see a company that isn't afraid to let us see what we see every month. Normalizing menstruation is so important, so big ups AWWA! Why has it taken so long to see this kind of campaign?"

"so beautiful!"

"An honest and true view! What this world needs more of proud of you wahine mā"

"So beautiful! I'm glad my daughters are growing up in a world where our periods are normalised. We'll done Awwa"

"Refreshing and empowering. Finally we are representing this sacred time in a positive way"

"Loving the fact you are bringing it out into the open. Great to see real blood too. Thanks for not pretending!"

"Incredible advert. So true on so many levels. Thanks for creating an incredible product."

“Beautiful mahi, this is life, thank you for showing it”

“Great ad. This is real life and not something to be hidden away”

“Love that this deals with periods in a natural way. It’s a natural process. Nothing to be ashamed of”

“Ātaahua”

“beautiful”

“How awesome”

“AWWA serving reality hot”

“Love this! Refreshing, raw and real”

“I love this. So relatable”

“showing the truth as it is for us wahine.. love this”

“Awesome!”

“Literally accurate; beautiful”

“This is amazing absolutely love it”

“This needs to be normalised love your work AWWA and am a huge advocate and user of your products!”

“Amazing!”

“Love love love this ad! Wiiiiii!!! Ka rawe koutou mā!”

“Finally an ad that is real about periods. Love”

“brave and beautiful mahi rangatira AWWA”

“Great ad of a great product”

“it’s beautifully made wow captures it perfectly”

“Keeping it real love”

“important”

“I love this. The confidence my Awwa gives me. This video describes it all. Great video”

“Love this! So cool to finally see realistic imagery.”

“Great”

“Awesome”

“Finally! A legitimately accurate portrayal of what our time of the month can look like. Blood is RED. Why censor that? This video is refreshing. Keep it up”

“Beautiful”

“Awesome ad!”

“So empowering, so real. Thankyou for all you do beautiful”

“Wow! Really love this advert. Real life right there”

“Amazing amazing amazing!! Finally a company who actually normalises periods. Empowering, raw & real”

“WOAH this ad is literally ground breaking!!! Imagine a world where girls aren't flooded with embarrassment or shame for the real life scenario of waking up to a bloody spot in bed, or running out of pads and having to use toilet paper instead. If we can be open about our lives and not be so ashamed of our own blood imagine the possibilities?? Ah this is just beautiful to see and I hope to see more of it on actual television and in other places!!! Love my awwas”

“Great ad, this is reflects real life and real women”

“Great add so real amd refreshing to see”

“Fantastic Ad, so good to see what is completely normal for all women portrayed realistically. It just comes across so naturally”

“This is amazing thank you for bringing the woman's experience onto screen like this . We are so over being invisible . Our periods are AMAZING”

“Beautiful ad. Keep them coming, this is life and must be seen!”

“Love this realness no unnatural blue water pretending to not be “real” awesome Mahi wahine mà”

“Oh wow! What a refreshing and inspiring portrayal of the 'real' story for so many women. I'm speechless and so on board with this!!!!”

“Such a beautiful ad and god they really do make life so much easier!”

“Very well done #realred”

“Wow an ad that normalises menstruation, how refreshing!”

“Thank you for showing real blood. The most real ad I've ever seen — and so important for young people to see. Absolutely beautiful, well done AWWA”

“Love this. Great to see real blood. Periods aren't an illness and shouldn't be taboo. Every woman has them and they are what allows us to give life. Awesome to see AWWA showing this in a real light”

“Thank you for showing the reality women face every month!”

“So beautiful & so real Relatable content!”

“Awesome! Yay!”

“This is so important!! This is real!!”

“yus! Thank you for your products and a window into our reality”

“Beautiful”

“So relatable! love this”

“This is so empowering for us women! Ataahua”

“Normalising the beauty of our ikura! Love this ad!”

“Wow that was awesome to watch! Great work guys”

“Love this ad. Sharing our truth. Thank you”

“Period realness”

“Love it! So refreshing to see red blood rather than blue liquid in an advertisement for period products. It breaks down the stigma attached to periods and will empower women not to be ashamed. Well done”

“A day in the life of millions of women every single day. Much needed and beautifully created. Love your work”

“Absolutely love this”

“This is reality and empowering for women”

“So empowering Awwa has been life changing for me. 110% team Awwa all the way”

“Beautiful. Love this”

“What a great ad! Making it relatable for us all”

“Absolutely loving this korero! I love how you are encouraging us to embrace our ikura. It's time for change. No more embarrassing stigmas around periods. It's part of who we are so I'll no longer hide it”

“So authentic. Need to see it normalised. Ataahua”

“Love your mahi”

“Thanks for normalizing something so natural for women”

“Thanks AWWA for being real! Love you and your product! Keep doing what you are doing!”

“Thank you for this... it's awesome, it's honest, real and relatable. It's also empowering and normalising our Awa Atua. When my daughter turns 8 I will start a deeper discussion of puberty, I now have this as a tool. Mauri Ora!”

“thank you for being real!”

“So refreshing to see a menstruation product commercial that's based in reality. Let's remove the stigma and taboo around periods, I mean half of the population get them!!!”

“Great ad!”

“What an incredible ad! Great move forward in women's reality! Love the products too”

“Something wahine can relate to! It's so true and is a natural reality for us all. Super proud of your work making this a normalized topic”

“This video helps inlighten the full body of wahine Awesome. Awwa underwear have helped me extremely ..blessed they are amazing!! Thank you for posting making video and helping us all”

“Yasssss very cool ad, with an accurate portrayal of period products. AWWA has been life changing...lets get this out there...no doubt it will change other lives too”

“Awesome work Awwa! Love the realness of the ad. So empowering for women!”

“Women's reality... thanks for keeping it real Awwa”

“I love this...it's beautiful, realistic and natural”

“This is awesome. My daughter has just learnt about periods and she is already asked about me buying her period underwear. The world needs to see more of this type of advertising (from an old advertising hack)”

“Thank you for normalising what we women experience and deal with every month...as a mum of 3 girls it's refreshing to see their questions answered in this add....especially ‘what does it look like?’ And ‘how much blood is there?’.

What a beautiful add to prepare all young girls for what is to come. Thank you”

“Love this! Empowering, real, and no hiding the beauty and power of our tinana and ikura!”

“Finally a real ad showing the reality of female life! Captured in a peaceful way and holding true to your brand to embrace ikura naturally. Well done AWWA”

“Finally someone not afraid to show life for wahine as it really is!! Actual blood. Shocker. Ka rawe”

“Great ad, so relatable... Great to have an advert that actually portrays the right message-so important for the younger ones too.”

“Love this so much that I even shed a lil tear. What a great video to highlight the all round essence of using AWWA period proof underwear. Resourceful tool to show young wahine who are about to get their ikura. AWWA liberates”

“Best add I've seen for a long time. Well done Awwa”

“Love this I thought I was the only one that did the toilet roll trick well.. not anymore tho #LoveMyAwa and finally no kittens and rescue males”

“This is a perfect period story telling our mahi”

“WOW is this the only ad that shows what periods are REALLY like? Absolutely love it. How

will younger girls ever no what its really like to have your period if all they see is the made up fantasy ads that are on T.v now days. This is reality and I'm here for it"

"OMG, finally an ad that shows actual periods. Thank you for the work you do to normalise ikura/menstruation. It's long overdue!"

"Why is this ad being banned? It is one of the best adverts I've seen in my life."

"So real!!! & because it is real it's empowering for all wāhine mā!"

"This is a fantastic ad. It destigmatises what is natural in an authentic way and is empowering for women. Leave it!!"

"Love this ad time to tell the truth, there is nothing shameful about women's cycles, our daughters have enough to deal with in this world without adding period shame into the mix. Thank you AWWA for leading the way xx"

"Best ad ever! Periods as they actually are finally! Love the high quality ad xx"

"Really great to see a campaign that normalises periods. I wish I had seen something like this when I was going through puberty. And ultimately, everyone needs to see this as normal so that people who have periods don't feel like they have to hide something that is a natural body function. Periods are uncomfortable enough without social stigma added on top."

"What a great ad, inclusive too. Menstruation is a cultural issue with lots of stigma and shame attached - this ad normalises it."

"Love the realness of this ad as it relates to so many! And no fake blue water trying to make it "real" awesome Mahi"

"Loving this real life story of periods. Such an important representation for our children to watch and fully understand. Got to keep it real!"

"I love this! As a kid, everything we were taught about periods was blue and sanitised and tidy. I had no idea that it would be bloody and messy and tedious and this ad actually tells it like it is. I wish I'd had this kind of information when I was growing up, because I would have realised that my experience was normal, and that there wasn't something wrong with me."

"Great ad"

"This was amazing to see!"

"Saw the article in stuff this morning and watched the ad - with my 11 year old son standing next to me. We both agreed it was well done and his general opinion was "what's the problem? That's what happens isn't it?"

I hope adverts like this become the normal mainstream way of doing it (including period pants/cups instead of pads/tampons)."

"I loved watching this ad when I first it on TVNZ on demand! My partner was also like hold on a minute... this different and positive!!! Way to go AWWA!!! I bleed! It creates life... it is part of life! So why is that shocking.... Because everyone thinks periods are a blue liquid.

Good on ya!!! Keep period normalisation happening!!! Also I love your underwear and need more pairs!! It honestly has changed my monthly visitor for the better!! I have two daughters

and even through they are far from that stage in life I can't wait to give them the underwear rather than a pad or tampon!!! Sooo much better and more comfortable!!!"

"The moment this came on the TV I sat up straight and was transfixed! Real blood! An accurate depiction of what periods are actually like on the telly. I promptly lost it and went straight to your page to follow. If I had seen this growing up, if kids my age had seen it, things would be so different. Just thinking about how period shaming could be a thing of the past, made me ecstatic. Hearing about Facebook banning your ad this morning made me bloody livid. Get with the times! We NEED this. Down with the blue liquid! Much aroha to you AWWA you're fighting the good fight"

Which reflects years of a different type of advertising, for context

We're likely to see numerous ads daily, with some experts estimating that we could be exposed to 4,000 to 10,000 ads a day. With that much exposure, it's natural that advertising will have an effect on us, whether we are aware of it or not. Whilst advertising can reflect society's values, it can also have the effect of 'normalising' values or behaviours. That means that the ads we see can cause us to shift our views around our own values and behaviours – for the better or the worse.

Dr Jane Connory, a lecturer in Communication Design at Swinburne University of Technology, has released a study on the effects of period ads over the last 100 years have had on us, ([reference](#)) showing shame and secrecy prevailed.

She found the period taboo has been promoted by advertisers for much of the past 100 years. Rather than a natural occurrence, menstruation was framed as an illness. For decades, ads also shied away from depicting blood or even mentioning menstruation. By censoring images of period blood, pad ads established it as taboo — an embarrassing and "unhygienic" problem.

Academic Ira Torresi has described the "moral imperative of cleanliness" historically required of women ([paper reference](#)) — an imperative reflected in the persistent use of the colour white in these ads. Periods were often viewed as dirty, thus the description of pads and tampons as "sanitary".

Dr Connory's study further showed ads propagated the idea periods should be talked about in secret — and mostly woman to woman. Teenagers gossiping in private spaces were pictured in ads from 1939 to 1995.

In 2019, however, the Victorian Woman's Trust published a [book](#) drawing on intensive research, which found women want to be more open about their periods. It showed that talking about periods publicly could help end taboos around menstruation, encouraging informed conversations in schools and workplaces.

Taboos - Negative response to the commercial

The important social message in the commercial is highlighted even more necessary when reading through the **8 negative complaints** made to the ASA. Comments such as "It's disgusting", "absolutely disgusting", "like watching a horror movie", "inappropriate", "stomach churning", "rude and tasteless", "disgusting and disturbing".

These comments are something no women should have to feel or tell themselves about their period, and we have a responsibility to change this narrative.

Defence

When weighing the complaints up against the positive outpour it shows AWWA's commercial has exponential widespread support and gratitude. When weighing up against the proposed breach of 1(c) it shows quite the opposite in where beautiful is used to depict this commercial and has caused positive sentiment and perception in its realness.

Appendix 3

RESPONSE FROM THE MEDIA, TVNZ

Thanks for the opportunity to respond to the complaints in addition to the ad placement information which I supplied earlier.

Placement & targeting:

- Post 20:30
- Running across Livestream and OD
- Mature / Adult – 16+, 18+, AO, M
- Demo: Females 18-44
- Freq Cap: 1 Per lifetime
- Mid Roll 4 ONLY – due to long duration

We understand that the ad may be uncomfortable viewing for some people and this is why it was so carefully targeted. I note again that the advertising was time-gated (after 20.30 when child viewers would be expected to not be viewing), it was restricted to M and higher classified programmes (programmes which are not appropriate for child viewers to see) and it was targeted to females.

The ad realistically depicts a normal part of the female experience, what it is like having a period for many women and girls. I am aware that the Complaints Board is aware of Australian research which shows that [Period Shame Is So Bad That 25 Per Cent Of Australian Girls Are Too Afraid To Buy Sanitary Products](#). It is reasonable to expect that this Australian experience is likely mirrored for New Zealand girls and young women.

“For young Australian girls, the shame of menstruation is so bad that almost 70 per cent would rather fail a subject at class than have their peers know. A quarter of women aged 18-24 are even embarrassed to purchase female care products.

Dr Lauren Rosewarne, Senior Lecturer in the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Melbourne said: “While our society is becoming increasingly open and tolerant around topics such as transgenderism, homosexuality and mental illness, female menstruation is still something that’s seen as unacceptable for public discourse.

“Perhaps that’s because periods aren’t something we commonly see on TV, in movies or on Instagram – if young girls are brought up to hide their period, then they will continue to feel and believe it’s something shameful, embarrassing and needing to be hidden.”

Depicting a realistic period, something which half the population, and presumably a very high proportion of the targeted audience, experiences is not ‘disgusting,’ and it is not like a ‘horror movie.’ In the context in which the ad screened we do not agree that the advertising is indecent or that it would cause widespread offence to a significant proportion of the targeted audience. We further suggest that seeing what real periods look like could have a positive benefit for a significant number of the people, especially those it was targeted to (and therefore is socially responsible).

One complaint mentioned TVNZ Duke – to note this would have been viewed on Livestream as placement was online only.

Feedback through Facebook that banned the ad – the comments are valuable and the fact this was produced by an all-female crew.

A piece from Stuff – Sunday Oct 24:

[Kylie Klein-Nixon on ... raising a cheer for period undies | Stuff.co.nz](#)

[https://urldefense.com/v3/https://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/gender-and-](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/gender-and-society/300434384/kylie-kleinnixon-on--raising-a-cheer-for-period-undies_!!AuqdxLo!0oYaWlcSsQjraUG_hjAZ6WIX7qHzQWR38zwBfBdyhQRgs7XHjpvcC-zWsl57bNcMp_W8$)

[society/300434384/kylie-kleinnixon-on--raising-a-cheer-for-period-](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/gender-and-society/300434384/kylie-kleinnixon-on--raising-a-cheer-for-period-undies_!!AuqdxLo!0oYaWlcSsQjraUG_hjAZ6WIX7qHzQWR38zwBfBdyhQRgs7XHjpvcC-zWsl57bNcMp_W8$)

[undies_!!AuqdxLo!0oYaWlcSsQjraUG_hjAZ6WIX7qHzQWR38zwBfBdyhQRgs7XHjpvcC-](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/gender-and-society/300434384/kylie-kleinnixon-on--raising-a-cheer-for-period-undies_!!AuqdxLo!0oYaWlcSsQjraUG_hjAZ6WIX7qHzQWR38zwBfBdyhQRgs7XHjpvcC-zWsl57bNcMp_W8$)

[zWsl57bNcMp_W8\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/gender-and-society/300434384/kylie-kleinnixon-on--raising-a-cheer-for-period-undies_!!AuqdxLo!0oYaWlcSsQjraUG_hjAZ6WIX7qHzQWR38zwBfBdyhQRgs7XHjpvcC-zWsl57bNcMp_W8$)

Thanks again for the opportunity to respond and please feel free to reach out if you need anything additional.