

<b>COMPLAINT NUMBER</b>	22/041
<b>ADVERTISER</b>	Voices for Freedom
<b>ADVERTISEMENT</b>	Voices for Freedom Billboard
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	22 March 2022
<b>OUTCOME</b>	Upheld Advertisement not to be used again

### **Summary of the Complaints Board Decision**

The Complaints Board upheld a complaint about a billboard advertisement for Voices for Freedom. A majority of the Board said the advertisement was in breach of Principle 1 of the Advertising Standards Code, Social Responsibility.

### **Advertisement**

The billboard advertisement has a photo of a child wearing a face mask. The text says: “Masks for kids: Safe? Effective? Yeah, Nah. The advertisement had the Voices for Freedom logo and the website address [Voicesforfreedom.co.nz](http://Voicesforfreedom.co.nz)”. The billboards were located in central Wellington, Auckland and Christchurch.

### **Summary of the Complaints**

There were eleven complaints about this advertisement. The Complainants were concerned the advertisement was misleading and encouraged or condoned a disregard for safety because it:

- implied that masks are not safe or effective for children
- discouraged the wearing of masks, for children
- spread dangerous and false health information, targeting children
- targeted vulnerable people, through placement outside Work and Income - Te Hiranga Tangata and Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children premises

### **Issues Raised:**

- Social responsibility
- Truthful presentation
- Advocacy advertising

### **Summary of the Advertiser’s Response**

The Advertiser defended the advertisement and said it was not misleading and did not undermine the health and well-being of individuals. The Advertiser said the advertisement ensured that individuals had full knowledge of the pros and cons of mask wearing for children. The Advertiser said there is ample science-based evidence showing that typical mask wearing by school-aged children is not going to make any material difference to the spread of an aerosolized virus.

A full copy of the Advertiser’s response is in Appendix 2.

### 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(e) Safety:** Advertisements must not, unless justifiable on educational or social grounds, encourage or condone dangerous, illegal or unsafe practices, or portray situations which encourage or condone a disregard for safety.

**Rule 1(h) Health and well-being:** Advertisements must not undermine the health and well-being of individuals.

**Principle 2: Truthful Presentation:** Advertisements must be truthful, balanced and not misleading.

**Rule 2(b) Truthful Presentation:** Advertisements must not mislead or be likely to mislead, deceive or confuse consumers, abuse their trust or exploit their lack of knowledge. This includes by implication, inaccuracy, ambiguity, exaggeration, unrealistic claim, omission, false representation or otherwise. Obvious hyperbole identifiable as such is not considered to be misleading.

**Rule 2(e) Advocacy advertising:** Advocacy advertising must clearly state the identity and position of the advertiser. Opinion in support of the advertiser's position must be clearly distinguishable from factual information. Factual information must be able to be substantiated.

### Relevant precedent decisions

In considering this complaint the Complaints Board referred to a precedent decision, Decision 21/539 which was Upheld.

The full version of this decision can be found on the ASA website:

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

**Decision 21/539** concerned 56 complaints about two unaddressed mail advertisements on mask mandates in the pandemic and the claimed Advertising Standards Authority endorsement, published and distributed by Voices for Freedom. The Board said the advertisements were misleading and not socially responsible.

While the Complaints Board acknowledged the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 protection of freedom of expression, it agreed the following reasons justified it taking a higher-level approach to the assessment of this advertising based on the Principles in the Advertising Standards Code, which are the requirements for social responsibility and truthful presentation in responsible advertising.

The broad public health implications of the COVID-19 global pandemic at a population level provided a counterweight to the usual liberal assessment of advocacy advertising with regard to social responsibility and truthful presentation. The Board agreed the rapidly evolving nature of the pandemic also meant information used to support statements for and against the use of masks could quickly become out-of-date.

The Board said the advertising was misleading because it implied the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) had granted formal approval and endorsement of the content, which is not correct and not an accurate reflection of the ASA process.

### **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: The dynamic nature of the global pandemic and criticism of Government decisions to address the spread and impact of it
  - Medium: Billboard
  - Audience: Unrestricted to adults and children
  - Product: Advocacy messaging from an organisation highlighting its views about the use of masks by children as a protection against COVID-19

#### *Adjudicating on Advocacy Advertising*

The Chair noted that advocacy advertising presents some of the most challenging advertising adjudicated on by the Complaints Board. It is usually characterised by parties having differing views that are expressed in robust terms. This results in strong objections from complainants and an equally strong defence from advertisers.

Through the requirements of the Advertising Standards Codes of Practice and the Advocacy Principles, the Board supports issues being openly debated and has generally endeavoured not to apply a technical or unduly strict interpretation of the rules and guidelines.

Complainants sometimes ask the Board to in effect decide which side in an advocacy debate is correct. The Complaints Board has consistently declined to have a view on the merits of either side in an advocacy debate. The Complaints Board's only role is to determine whether there has been a breach of our Codes.

Under Rule 2(e) Advocacy advertising of the Advertising Standards Code:

- The identity of the advertiser must be clear.
- Opinion must be clearly distinguishable from factual information, and
- Factual information must be able to be substantiated.

### **Complaints Board approach to advocacy advertising about COVID-19**

The Complaints Board decided at its meeting on 1 February 2022 to take a higher-level approach to the assessment of complaints about advocacy advertising relating to COVID-19. This approach focuses on the two overarching Principles in the Advertising Standards Code, social responsibility and truthful presentation.

In making this decision, the Complaints Board took into account the exceptional circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been declared a public health issue of international concern by the World Health Organisation.

The Complaints Board acknowledged the importance of the protection of freedom of expression under the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990. At the same time the Board said the broad public health implications of the COVID-19 global pandemic, at a population level, provided a counterweight to the usual liberal assessment of advocacy advertising under the advertising codes.

The Complaints Board referred to a quote from a recent publication by the New Zealand Human Rights Commission:

“Under human rights law some rights can be limited by public health measures which respond to the outbreak of a disease posing a serious threat to the health of a population.”<sup>1</sup>

The Complaints Board noted the Government’s public health measures continue to evolve over time, in response to the latest updates in scientific knowledge about the virus. These measures include the promotion of vaccinations to protect against COVID-19 and the use of masks.

The Complaints Board agreed that in keeping with this approach, it would not be necessary to consider the complaints under Rule 1(e) Safety or Rule 1(h) Health and well-being.

#### *Consumer Takeout*

The Complaints Board agreed the likely consumer takeout of the advertisement was, in the view of Voices for Freedom, mask wearing for children, in the context of the COVID-19 global pandemic, is not safe or effective.

#### *Was the advocacy advertisement adequately identified?*

The Complaints Board agreed the advertisement met the identity requirements of Rule 2(e) of the Advertising Standards Code. The advertisement included the Voices for Freedom logo, and the organisation’s website address. The Advertiser’s position on the efficacy of masks was also clear.

#### *Was the advertisement misleading?*

The Complaints Board agreed the advertisement was not misleading. The Board said it was clear the advertisement was expressing the Advertiser’s opinion, which, in the context of an advocacy advertisement, does not require substantiation.

#### *Was the advertisement socially responsible?*

A majority of the Complaints Board agreed the advertisement was in breach of Principle 1 of the Advertising Standards Code, Social Responsibility. The majority said the advertisement could discourage consumers, especially children, from wearing face masks, despite public health advice to do so and mandates applying to children in some circumstances.

The majority said the question about whether masks are “Safe?” for children, combined with the image of the masked face of the child in the advertisement might cause fear for some consumers, especially children. The majority noted the billboard had an unrestricted audience, which included children.

A minority disagreed. The minority said the advertisement did not reach the threshold to breach Principle 1 of the Advertising Standards Code, Social Responsibility. The minority said it is clear to the consumer that the advertisement is conveying the Advertiser’s opinion. This opinion reflects the challenges of ensuring that children follow correct mask use practices.

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<sup>1</sup> *A human rights and Te Tiriti o Waitangi approach to Aotearoa New Zealand’s proposed Covid-19 Protection Framework* – Human Right Commission - November 2021

*Was the advertisement socially responsible?*

In accordance with the majority, the Complaints Board agreed that taking into account context, medium, audience and product, the advertisement was in breach of Principle 1, Social Responsibility and not in breach of Principle 2, Truthful Presentation of the Advertising Standards Code.

### **Outcome**

The Complaints Board ruled the complaint was **Upheld**.

Advertisement not to be used again.

### **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](http://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 Advertiser
  3. Response from Media
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### Appendix 1

#### COMPLAINTS

There were eleven complaints about this advertisement:

##### Complaint 1

Billboard by anti-vaccination group 'Voices for Freedom' seen above 50 Cambridge Terrace, Te Aro, Wellington on 05/02/22 at 1500. The advert implies that masks are not safe or effective for children, neither of which are correct. The evidence of mask effectiveness in reducing the spread of covid-19 (as well as other airborne pathogens) is well documented. They are also demonstrably safe for the wearer and those around them.. This ad is a clear example of misinformation / disinformation designed to confuse and frighten parents and caregivers.

##### Complaint 2

Hi I saw this billboard on Orbell Street in Christchurch. It conveys false and misleading information related to COVID-19 and the pandemic response. Can you do something about it?

##### Complaint 3

Hi there, A billboard on the corner of Jellicoe and Dunn Road on Panmure has recently started advertising misinformation regarding vaccine and mask safety for children. Attached are photos from both sides of billboard 470 hosted by Jollybillboards. The advertisement appears to have been paid for by 'Voices for Freedom' and points to their website [www.voicesforfreedom.co.nz](http://www.voicesforfreedom.co.nz)

##### Complaint 4

The "Masks" ad suggests that it is not safe for children to wear masks, which again is a completely unsubstantiated medical claim. Their website provides no further details, justification of the claims or sufficient detail for these claims to be advertised.

##### Complaint 5

Billboard promoting COVID-19 misinformation.

##### Complaint 6

I believe the billboards breach advertising standards in relation to advertising health issues to New Zealanders, truthfulness, and the social good. [...] The billboard showing the child presents information that I believe to be factually inaccurate. Masks have been shown world wide to be safe and effective, including for children. Both billboards present a disturbing idea to the New Zealand public, that vaccination is an unacceptable risk. This goes against the position of New Zealand health agencies. I am particularly concerned that these billboards are erected outside of work and income New Zealand/Oranga Tamariki. These are agencies to which members of extremely vulnerable populations are likely to attend in person in order to see these boards. This placement was absolutely not coincidental.

##### Complaint 7

The Billboard Located at 50 Cambridge Terrace, CBD, Wellington (owned by Jolly Billboards) contains a message that the broadly accepted health advice that wearing masks during a global pandemic is unsafe and ineffective. By discouraging the wearing of masks, one of the easiest and most effective tools for controlling the spread of Covid, the advertisement is in breach of 'Rule 1(e) Safety' of the Advertising Standards Code. Specifically that "Advertisements must not, unless justifiable on educational or social grounds, encourage or condone dangerous, illegal or unsafe practices, or portray situations which encourage or condone a disregard for safety." I draw attention to the example given of such a breach on your website (<https://www.asa.co.nz/codes/codes/advertising-standards-code/>) "The absence of approved safety equipment..." The details of the billboard can be found here: <https://jollybillboards.co.nz/wg-61-50-cambridgeterrace-cbd-wellington>

**Complaint 8**

Spreading dangerous false health information targeting children. 39 Durham St, Christchurch

**Complaint 9**

The billboard on the corner of Cambridge Terrace and Vivian St Wellington contains misleading information that masks are not safe and effective for children during a pandemic.

**Complaint 10**

an advocacy advert promoting anti public health message, spreading misinformation and potentially leading to death and serious illness

**Complaint 11**

I consider the advertisement is misleading and deceptive. The meaning of the ad is that the use of a mask is not safe or effective for children (it is implicit that this is against transmission of Covid-19). This is scientifically false information (support information can be provided on request) and will have the effect of undermining public health and particularly but not exclusively the health of children. It breaches the following parts of the code:

Rule 1(e) safety

Rule 1(h) health and well-being

Rule 2(b) truthful presentation

## Appendix 2

### RESPONSE FROM ADVERTISER, VOICES FOR FREEDOM

[www.voicesforfreedom.co.nz/mask-facts](http://www.voicesforfreedom.co.nz/mask-facts)

#### Complaint 22/041

1. We are in receipt of your letter in respect of our billboard featuring a child in a mask (“**the Mask Billboard**”/“**our billboard**”).
2. The Mask Billboard is part of our most recent nationwide billboard campaign which has been viewed by hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders via the billboards themselves and via subsequent reproductions on signs, flyers and social media.
3. In response we have received many thousands of messages of support.
4. Meanwhile, as per usual, a handful of complaints have been made to you. The complaints assert that the Mask Billboard “*conveys false and misleading information*” is “*unsubstantiated medical claim*”, is “*misinformation*” and also that it is going against “*broadly accepted health advice that wearing masks during a global pandemic is unsafe and ineffective*” and that the information presented “*goes against the position of the New Zealand health agencies*”.
5. It is the latter that we wish to particularly draw your attention to in respect of this response. We understand from your previous rulings that you may be inclined to make an assessment of whether or not a publication is deemed to be in breach of your standards by focusing on whether or not the publication is socially responsible and in doing so you appear to be strongly influenced by the prevailing government view as to what constitutes appropriate health advice.
6. The problem for you is that with Covid-19 the government has been engaged in a propaganda campaign against its own people. Time and again during the past two years the government, its health officials and endorsed health ‘experts’ have made misleading claims in respect of various aspects of the Covid response. Not least of which is the masks and their safety and efficacy when it comes to children. Indeed our Prime Minister even acknowledges openly that her government has been engaged in “[sustained propaganda](#)”.
7. What if the government is wrong? What if the advice it has been promulgating is ineffective? What if, worse than that, it is not only ineffective but unsafe?

8. Now is not the time for those in positions such as yourself to shy away from making the right decision. Now indeed IS the time for a liberal assessment of advocacy advertising.
9. Voices for Freedom is an independent, not-for-profit, grassroots advocacy organisation. We are founded by three mothers with backgrounds in corporate commercial law, litigation law, education and with successful business backgrounds. We are supported by an advisory board of distinguished doctors, scientists and other professionals and represent over 100,000 Kiwis. We are honoured to have interviewed many of the world's leading medical and scientific experts over the past two years. We understand the need for truth, for honesty and for transparency. We are fastidious in our research and the work we produce.
10. The truth is that this government's response to Covid-19 has been a disaster, the true depths of which will only become more apparent as time goes on. To understand this, one only needs to look at the farcical situation of the past few weeks where vaccinated hospital workers testing positive for Covid-19 are allowed back into the workplace whilst healthy, non-vaccinated, who have tested negative for Covid-19 are shut out.<sup>2</sup>
11. The fact is that the Mask Billboard is an educational publication. It is classic advocacy. It is a publication providing a service to the public, assisting them as it does as part of their informed consent decision-making process by getting them to think critically.
12. It is important in a democratic society which claims to uphold the rule of law, and rights to freedom of speech, that billboards like ours be seen and heard.

#### **RESPONSE TO THE COMPLAINT:**

13. Our Mask Billboard does not undermine the health and well-being of individuals.
14. On the contrary, the Mask Billboard ensures that individuals are fully armed with the information they need in order to consent to wearing a mask. Full knowledge of the pros and cons of the mask wearing enables individuals to decide what risks they wish to take and the best health outcome for them.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/coronavirus/300535431/covidpositive-health-workers-can-return-to-work-as-selfisolation-rules-change>

15. This is particularly important when dealing with a medical procedure that is being mandated on millions of adults, youth and young school children and even more so when it is being mandated for healthy adults and children.
16. There has been an enormous quantity of 'information' provided over a sustained period from both the media and the government claiming positive reasons for mask wearing. Essential information about the limitations in efficacy, potential health risks and environmental consequences has been sparse to non-existent.
17. Our Mask Billboard is designed to address the current imbalance, thus providing the best chance for individuals to demonstrate self-responsibility regarding their well-being.
18. The Mask Billboard does **not** mislead, nor is it likely to mislead, deceive or confuse consumers, nor abuse their trust or exploit their lack of knowledge.
19. Nor does it "frighten" – it uses classic Kiwi humour with a play on "yeah right" with "yeah nah" in respect of a photographic depiction of one aspect questioning the efficacy of the masks relating to the size of the virus particles vs the vapour particles from breath. It can be clearly seen that vapour escapes the mask (even an N95 one) and you can see more on this with the video below.
20. There is a clear and simple method to access the information backing our billboard via the link provided [www.voicesforfreedom.co.nz](http://www.voicesforfreedom.co.nz). On our home page there is a prominent link to our billboard campaign [www.voicesforfreedom.co.nz/billboards](http://www.voicesforfreedom.co.nz/billboards) where you can click through to our mask info page<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.voicesforfreedom.co.nz/mask-facts>



26. The reality is, the way the exemptions are drafted, there is not a single person in New Zealand who could not qualify to be exempt from wearing a mask (face covering).
27. The Ministry Of Education's own information confirms that **the use of masks is self regulating**. The children decide if they meet the criteria and they cannot be required to provide any evidence in support of this. See <https://temahau.govt.nz/covid-19/general-advice-sector/mask-guidance>: "*Anyone who considers themselves to meet the criteria cannot be required to provide any evidence that they meet the criteria. Schools are not required to undertake an enforcement role in this regard.*"
28. This same information has been on Unite Against Covid website (and in the legislation that has been in place since the very beginning of mask "mandates") where it is clear that any condition that makes wearing face coverings "unsuitable" as adjudged by the child themselves is sufficient for an exemption: "*You do not need to wear a face mask if you have a physical or mental health illness or condition or disability that makes wearing a face mask unsuitable.*"<sup>4</sup>
29. Conditions are not defined. Which makes sense since it is ANY condition a child feels that makes wearing a mask for that child unsuitable. However, for practical purposes, we note the following are a non-exhaustive list of conditions that have been found by kids to make wearing a mask unsuitable for them: shortness of breath, asthma, bronchitis, auditory processing disorder, stress, feelings of anxiety, deafness, wearing of glasses, PTSD, facial hair, nose bleeds, skin irritation, general irritation.
30. Iona Holsted, Secretary for Education, reiterated the above this past week in an email to one of our members saying: "...**children may neither be denied full access to the curriculum (and extra curricular activities arranged by the school) nor required to provide any reason for not wearing a mask.** There is no authority for compliance notices to be served in relation to students."
31. Unfortunately, due to the passage of time, certain habits have now become entrenched in schools and the simple fact of children being exempt is not enough for many to stop wearing a mask especially with the older kids. Now the pressure of their peers keeps many masked up.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://covid19.govt.nz/prepare-and-stay-safe/keep-up-healthy-habits/wear-a-face-mask/who-does-not-need-to-wear-a-face-mask/>

**ADVERSE HEALTH EFFECTS OF MASKS:**

32. It is not unreasonable to conclude that surgical and cloth masks, used as they currently are being used in New Zealand schools have no impact on controlling the transmission of Covid-19 virus.
33. The body of evidence indicates that face masks are largely ineffective and carry health risks.
34. We saw very early on that the lockdowns and the Covid-19 responses generally including masks were the single greatest mistake in public health history. We knew the history and knew they would not work. We also knew very early of Covid's risk stratification. Sadly, our children will bear the catastrophic consequences.
35. On the issues of safety and efficacy. There is ample science-based evidence showing that the typical mask wearing of a child at school in New Zealand is not going to make any material difference in respect of the spread of an aerosolized virus such as Covid-19.
36. This is a 12 minute compilation video with a doctor and other experts explaining why masks don't work: <https://rumble.com/vtuy6k-dr.-gary-sidley-3-reasons-why-face-masks-are-the-most-insidious-of-restrict.html>
37. This is a 6 minute video from a doctor showing various masks and how they do not stop aerosols from escaping: <https://odysee.com/@voicesforfreedom:6/Why-Masks-Don%27t-Work----Careful-Consideration-Of-Our-Common-Concerns----Dr.-Ted-Noel:c?r=427XRcfKdBzpzWB1EhH6F8wuPLn422Xm>
38. Here is a link to [over 150 comparative studies and articles on mask ineffectiveness and harms](#)<sup>5</sup>. To date, the evidence has been stable and clear that masks do not work to control the virus and they can be harmful and especially to children.
39. And here is a small selection of the hundreds of links showing evidence that we cannot conclude the typical mask wearing of children in New Zealand is SAFE for them.
  - [Review of scientific reports of harms caused by face masks, up to February 2021](#)

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<sup>5</sup> <https://brownstone.org/articles/more-than-150-comparative-studies-and-articles-on-mask-ineffectiveness-and-harms/>

- [Effect of a surgical mask on six minute walking distance](#)
- [“Exercise with facemask; Are we handling a devil’s sword?” – A physiological hypothesis](#)
- [The physiological impact of wearing an N95 mask during hemodialysis as a precaution against SARS in patients with end-stage renal disease](#)
- [Respiratory consequences of N95-type Mask usage in pregnant healthcare workers-a controlled clinical study](#)
- [Contamination by respiratory viruses on outer surface of medical masks used by hospital healthcare workers](#)
- [Masks, false safety and real dangers, Part 1: Friable mask particulate and lung vulnerability](#)
- [Masks, false safety and real dangers, Part 2: Microbial challenges from masks](#)
- [Optical microscopic study of surface morphology and filtering efficiency of face masks](#)
- [Use of surgical face masks to reduce the incidence of the common cold among health care workers in Japan: a randomized controlled trial](#)
- [Don’t Use N95 Masks for More Than 2 Days, Research Suggests](#)
- [Investigation of adverse reactions in healthcare personnel working in Level 3 barrier protection PPE to treat COVID-19](#)
- [Effects of long-duration wearing of N95 respirator and surgical facemask: a pilot study](#)
- [Video: Pulmonary Specialist Speaks Out On The Health Risks Of Wearing Masks & The Lies Surrounding COVID-19](#)
- [Impact of respiratory protective devices on respiration: Implications for panic vulnerability during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [PSmicrographs: One day old surgical face mask](#)
- [Risks associated with the use of a mouth-nose-cover \(MNC\) in children and adolescents](#)
- [Exercise with facemask: Are we handling a devil’s sword?” – a physiological hypothesis](#)
- [Effects of long-duration wearing of N95 respirator and surgical facemask: a pilot study](#)
- [Video: Wearing a mask is hazardous to your health](#)
- [Chronic hypoxia-hypercapnia influences cognitive function: a possible new model of cognitive dysfunction in COPD](#)

- [Effects of surgical and FFP2/N95 face masks on cardiopulmonary exercise capacity](#)
- [Adverse Effects of Prolonged Mask Use among Healthcare Professionals during COVID-19](#)
- [Preliminary report on surgical mask induced deoxygenation during major surgery](#)
- [The effects of wearing facemasks on oxygenation and ventilation at rest and during physical activity](#)

### Case Study Children's Hospital Toronto Canada

40. In June 2020, the Children's Sick Kids Hospital, arguably the most prestigious hospital in Canada, advised that children, by and large unaffected by the virus, should not wear masks and added that physical interaction and play was essential for their well-being.

*"We have suggested that masks not be required when children return to school."*  
Michelle Science MD, MSc, FRCPC, Division of Infectious Diseases, The Hospital for Sick Children, Assistant Professor, Department of Paediatrics, University of Toronto

*"For children and adolescents, masks are an absolute no-no. Children and adolescents have an extremely active and adaptive immune system and they need a constant interaction with the microbiome of the Earth. Their brain is also incredibly active, as it is has so much to learn. The child's brain, or the youth's brain, is thirsting for oxygen. The more metabolically active the organ is, the more oxygen it requires. In children and adolescents every organ is metabolically active."*  
- Dr. Margarite Griesz-Brisson MD, PhD, Consultant Neurologist and Neurophysiologist.

41. A check of this hospital website now in March 2022 found their [Covid-19 Recommendations For School Reopening](#) which includes the following on masks for children:

### 3. Non-Medical and Medical Face Masks for children

Non-medical masks may reduce transmission from individuals who are shedding the virus.<sup>24</sup> However, the extent of this benefit is unknown (especially in children) and would only be potentially beneficial if done properly. In fact, if worn incorrectly, it could lead to increased risk of infection and it is not practical for a child to wear a mask properly for the duration of a school day.<sup>24</sup> It is noteworthy that several European countries have had children successfully return to school without face masks.<sup>2</sup>

Guidance statement(s):

- Non-medical and medical face masks are not required or recommended for children returning to school.

The following points were considered in this recommendation:

- There is a lack of evidence that wearing a face mask prevents SARS-CoV-2 transmission in children.
- Children are not typically trained in their use and there is potential for increased risk of infection with improper mask use.
- In young children in particular, masks can be irritating and may lead to increased touching of the face and eyes which could increase the risk of infection.
- It is impractical for a child to wear a mask properly for the duration of the school day. Children would need assistance to follow appropriate procedures for putting on and taking off the mask (i.e. during meal times, snack times). In addition, during these times when the mask is removed, they would need to be stored appropriately to prevent infection spread.
- It is likely that masks will be disposed of improperly throughout the school and potentially lead to increased risk by children playing with them.
- The mask may not be tolerated by certain populations (i.e. children with underlying lung conditions, asthma, allergies) and especially during warm/humid time periods.

42. Unfortunately, these recommendations were largely ignored by the media and, despite the warnings, the government and school boards made mask mandates for children in much the same way as warnings from experts are ignored in New Zealand.

## LACK OF EFFICACY OF MASKS

43. In addition we can refer you to the following videos which cover efficacy problems with masks:
- This is an excellent resource put together by group of diverse professionals including doctors, scientists, epidemiologists looks at the ineffectiveness of masks, mask harms and particularly the negative health consequences for children wearing masks <https://www.pandata.org/infobank-masks/>.

- Short 2 minute video on kids and masks: <https://odysee.com/@voicesforfreedom:6/mask-mandate-madness:8>
- A comprehensive overview of the current evidence regarding the effectiveness of face masks: <https://swprs.org/face-masks-and-covid-the-evidence/>.
- A New Zealand made video that comprehensively explains the problems with masks as acknowledged by medical experts: <https://odysee.com/@voicesforfreedom:6/Challenging-Epidemiologist-Michael-Baker-on-Face-Masks---Mass-Masking:9>
- An excellent succinct video on masks looking at absolute and relative risk analysis from an emergency room doctor: <https://odysee.com/@voicesforfreedom:6/Dr-Chris-Milburn-On-The-Efficacy-Of-Masks:0>
- Video featuring our own Prime Minister and her 'experts' discussing masks and lack of effectiveness: <https://odysee.com/@voicesforfreedom:6/face-mask-logic-%28nonsense%29-from:5>
- A recent [Official Information Act enquiry](#) response confirmed that: *"Maintaining the requirement for face coverings on public transport in Alert Level 1 provides wider benefits that support the overall response to the pandemic. For example, **face coverings are a constant reminder of the ongoing threat posed by COVID-19 and will help prompt people to be more vigilant about other important behaviours**, such as physical distancing, scanning and using the New Zealand COVID Tracer App, hand hygiene and coughing and sneezing etiquette."* <https://dpmc.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2021-04/cab-20-min-0477-mandatory-masking.pdf>
- Another comprehensive critique of mask studies: <https://eugyppius.substack.com/p/most-mask-studies-are-garbage>
- Only just this month the UK government has released a new "Evidence Summary" looking at the use of face coverings in education settings. The BBC <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-59895934> looks at the study finding "it did not provide proof of a statistically significant impact...The government admits the evidence for using masks in schools to reduce spread of Covid is 'not conclusive'."

## CONCLUSION

44. The information we provide never makes it into mainstream news, media or government promotions. The public is not exposed to a balanced conversation, pros and cons, the big picture of risks, potential risks, or any other limitations on mask use.
45. There is no full and transparent information from the authorities or media to ensure a genuine informed consent process. We consider it an indictment on the system that a grassroots movement such as Voices for Freedom has had to take up that charge independently.
46. It is clear from the complaints that receiving this information has been new and challenging for some recipients. Yet every statement in our billboard is backed up. In many cases, directly from government sources, including the NZ government.
47. At Voices for Freedom, we welcome rigorous debate and respectful, bold conversations. Only when information about all of the potential risks is widely available can we have an open discussion about the Covid-19 response including the mask mandates. Many people are rushing to comply without access to all the information.
48. NZ law requires that individuals are provided with the information they need to make a fully informed choice.<sup>6</sup> Without full robust dialogue, that cannot happen. Simply put: without free speech we are not free.

### Appendix 3

#### RESPONSE FROM MEDIA, JOLLY BILLBOARDS

Jolly Billboards confirmed that the billboard had been taken down.

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<sup>6</sup><https://www.hdc.org.nz/your-rights/about-the-code/code-of-health-and-disability-services-consumers-rights/>