



August 2012

Jane Fitzgerald  
Assistant Secretary  
Advertising Branch  
Attorney-General's Department  
Locked Bag 3  
Haymarket NSW 1240

Dear Ms Fitzgerald,

Thank you for your letter dated 15 June 2012 regarding the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs – Inquiry into billboard and outdoor advertising (the Inquiry), and in particular recommendation 17 from the Standing Committee's Report (the Report).

The Outdoor Media Association (OMA) is committed to achieving the best outcomes for our members and the community, and on joining the OMA members are required to sign up to our *Code of Ethics*, a set of voluntary principals that defines the industry's standards for doing business with advertisers and regulators, and it's responsibilities towards the community and the environment. As such, following consultation with the Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA), we have amended our *Code of Ethics* (Attachment A) to include the following statement:

*'When we receive a complaint about any advertisement we display we refer the complainant to the Advertising Standards Bureau, an independent complaint adjudicator.'*

It should be noted that our *Code of Ethics* also states:

*'We support all decisions made by the Advertising Standards Board in regards to complaints about outdoor advertising.'*

The OMA is also encouraging our members to provide the contact details of the Advertising Standards Bureau (ASB) on their websites to assist the community in properly addressing their complaints.

We are currently undertaking an audit of our members' websites to ensure that all members are promoting the ASB's services. Once the audit is complete we will follow up members who aren't promoting the service to ensure that this information is added to their sites.

Since the Inquiry the OMA has also undertaken a number of new initiatives to further improve the way we manage self-regulation in our industry which has resulted in a significant reduction of breaches of the Code. We will continue to be vigilant in this area and to that end I draw your attention to the initiatives we have in place including:

1. The OMA now has a new Content Review Policy, which is accessible here: <http://oma.org.au/content/id/55/OMA-Policies/>.

Under this policy, our members will refer contentious advertisements to the OMA prior to display. If the OMA considers that the ad is likely to breach the AANA Code of Ethics, it will not be displayed. Since the policy came into effect at the end of June 2011, we have advised against both displaying ads and requested that ads are modified before display. Our judgements about whether an ad is likely to breach the AANA Code of

Ethics are based on our understanding of previous ASB determinations, ASB research and also discussions with the ASB and the AANA in each case. This initiative is relevant to recommendation 5 (ASB copy advice service). In effect, it will lead to a reduction in the (small) number of times that ads are displayed which are contrary to the AANA Code of Ethics (in 2010, of 30,000 ads displayed, only 7 were found to be contrary to AANA Code of Ethics – that is, 0.02%).

Since commencing this policy we have seen a reduction in outdoor complaints that have been upheld, 5 since January 2012. It should also be noted that those that were upheld either did not go through our copy advice service or were not placed by our members.

2. The OMA has commenced a regular program of education for our members – in conjunction with the AANA and the ASB. The education provides members with clear guidance about the various industry codes and how best to comply with them. Again, we believe this initiative has led to the reduction of breaches to the AANA Code of Ethics. Over 100 people attended the course last year which was run in every state in Australia. We will be running the course again later this year across Australia.
3. The OMA has also established a concept advisory service, which is available for advertisers and their creative agencies and enables them to seek advice about an idea for an advertisement in the early stages of development. Again, this has led to a reduction of the number of advertisements presented to the OMA's members which are contrary to the AANA Code of Ethics.
4. The OMA's members have donated a \$1.6 million campaign to advertise the ASB complaints process, which commenced mid-August 2011. This campaign will run regularly and goes towards answering recommendation 16.
5. Additionally the matter of content review and regulation is now a standing item on the Agenda of the OMA's board, which meets quarterly. A written report on this issue is presented to the board by the senior policy adviser to ensure that the board are across matters pertaining to self regulation and prevailing community standards.

I trust the above has provided adequate information as to how the OMA has implemented recommendation 17 from the Report, as well as the work we have done to further other recommendations made in the report.

If you have any further questions regarding this issue please contact our Senior Policy Advisor, Emma Luttrell, on 02 9357 9900 or at [emma.luttrell@oma.org.au](mailto:emma.luttrell@oma.org.au).

Yours sincerely

Charmaine Moldrich  
**Chief Executive Officer**