Copeland Publishing rejects AVN ad sight unseen

The AVN's recent fund-raising efforts have enabled us to action many of the items which you, our members, have expressed a desire for. Apart from more research and information for distribution to our members and others, one of the requests which has come up time and time again is for the AVN to let more people know that we are here for accessing information, lobbying and support. The way our Committee decided to fulfill this desire for greater exposure was through advertising.

The publishing company we chose to book ads with is one that prints a monthly free magazine in every capital city - Copeland Publishing. Their magazines are very widely distributed and are read by parents of young children - exactly the market that we need to reach.

Two weeks ago, we contacted their advertising department and booked 1/4 page ads in Sydney's Child, Melbourne's Child and Brisbane's Child magazines - hoping to expand our exposure to the other editions (Adelaide, Canberra, Darwin and Perth) as time went on.

We negotiated a price, got information on the deadline and were going to put through the payment on April 1st.

Unfortunately, after confirming our booking, I received the following message by email on March 31st:

Dear Meryl

It is with regret that I need to advise you that the publisher and editor of The Child magazines have decided that they are unable to publish your advertisement [sic] in the upcoming issue.
As independent publishers all material placed is at our discretion.

Please do not hesitate to call me on 02 8876 4811 if you wish to discuss this matter.

Kind regards

Marion Day
National Advertising Manager
Copeland Publishing

Now, I would like to advise you that Neither Marion Day nor anyone else at Copeland Publishing had even SEEN our ad yet (it wasn't even laid out - I had only just sent the information to our graphic designer approximately 30 minutes before receiving this email message!). Our ad was rejected out of hand, without explanation - an action which I personally feel is tantamount to censorship and is quite upsetting for anyone who believes that the media is there to allow its readers access to all aspects of an issue - not to decide what people will and will not be allowed to know based on their own personal opinions or the opinions of their other advertisers.

I was able to speak with Marion Day by phone on April 1st and our conversation was very interesting. I was unsure of how to share the information from our phone call with you, our readers and supporters. As you will see below however, the decision was taken out of my hands because someone has notified the septics and their supporters of the fact that we not only were interested in taking out this ad but that the ad was being rejected.

But first, my conversation with Marion Day.

When I spoke with Marion, I said that I was a magazine editor myself and that it is a very unusual step to reject an ad without even seeing it first.

She then offered to send our ad to the editor who would vet it and get back to us. I asked if the decision would be changed after they looked at my ad and she said probably not. So what was the point, I asked?

She then went on to say that it was at the editor's absolute discretion which ads would or would not run and that, particularly in the current economic climate when the Child magazines take a great deal of both pharmaceutical and government advertising - and both of these areas are pro vaccination - taking ads that encourage people to look at the other side of this issue could be economic suicide.

I asked Marion if the septic organisation had contacted the newspaper because the head honcho of the septics had blogged about this very issue only a few days earlier and had indicated that he would be contacting parenting publications to ensure that they did not take any advertising from us. She stated at first that she was unaware of any contact from this organisation but a little bit later in the conversation, she indicated that I should assume that my initial assumption in this regards could be true.

Regarding this organisation, she said that both herself and the editorial staff of the Child publications were aware of what was happening in the marketplace regarding the targeting of the AVN. That since this was a very difficult economic time, they needed to protect their own personal market condition. They were aware of the
erratic behaviour (her words) of these people and of the manner in which this group tries to enforce their guidelines on others.

She said that historically, the Child publications have always leaned towards ensuring that both sides of this issue were always shown but that she personally, “...did not want to be standing before a camera on A Current Affair explaining why it was they had decided to take our ads.”

I left her with the following thought:

In fairly recent history, there have been countries where the press kowtowed to the wishes of interest groups and the government to the detriment of the masses.

The countries where these events took place suffered badly as a result of the media 'simply following orders'.

Though it may not be economically viable for them to take an ad from an organisation which may affect their other advertisers, there will come a time when people - including them - have to do what's right BECAUSE it's right - not because of economic reasons. If that doesn't happen, we are no better than any dictatorship or fascist nation and Australia is - in name at least - still a democracy.

As I said, our Committee was of two minds about how and when to tell you about this situation. In consultation together, however, we have decided that the release of these details on the internet by others has taken the decision out of our hands. Please read the following blog - this information is repeated on many septic websites:

The AVN knocked back from advertising in mums & babies publication

It was recently revealed that the AVN was allegedly knocked back from putting paid advertising into a publication for mums and babies.

The Child group of magazines, covering Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Canberra and Perth are free monthly publications distributed via childcare centres and baby shops and are highly targeted to Australian parents.

The website of Sydney's Child describes the publication as, 
"...well established in the marketplace and highly respected by readers."

"With six publications reaching across Australia, the Child group of magazines offer advertisers the ability to advertise
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nationally, or selectively depending on their needs. The tailored content within each magazine ensures that the publications always remain locally relevant to readers."

All of which combines to make this the perfect platform for the AVN to scare parents into not vaccinating with their misinformation about vaccines causing autism, SIDS, shaken baby syndrome etc.

I understand that the AVN applied to purchase a 1/3 page ad in Sydney's Child, Melbourne's Child and Brisbane's Child at a total estimated cost of $8000.

But in a highly principled and responsible move, it appears that the magazine declined the AVN the opportunity to do so, thus forfeiting a large amount of advertising money. This is a honorable move on their part, especially since being a free publication, they rely heavily on advertising revenue.

At question here is how the AVN came to have a spare $8000, after their recent donation drive initiated apparently to keep them from going under. Meryl apparently needed the cash to cover debts, so just a few weeks later she has enough in the coffers to blow eight grand on advertising?

I also wonder if her donors would be happy to see their money being diverted from keeping the AVN running to this new venture. That is, if indeed it is their money.

In August 2009, she was asking for donations to run a Generation Rescue ad, for which they would cover half the costs. An ad which never ran mind you, because we pipped her at the post. So it is possible that they have come to the party here.

In any case, I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall when Meryl was told that The Child group did not want her anti-vaccine money. If she was not already convinced there is a conspiracy to see her silenced, then she ought to be well and truly by now. Paranoid much? Well maybe you should be Meryl!

I would like to clarify that neither Australian Skeptics, Stop the AVN or myself had anything to do with this decision. I'm sure Meryl will blame us, and I certainly wish I had the influence to persuade publishers and journalists to never publish her nonsense again, but I don't. (Or do I? *look over there, it's a reptilian overlord*)

Congratulations to The Child group for adhering to their editorial policy and extending this to advertising: Editorial Integrity - Our editorial integrity ensures that advertisements are always viewed within the context of a highly regarded, quality publication. That our magazines are seen in such a favourable light contributes positively to how an advertiser's message is received by our readers.

The Child Group had done a great service to public health by limiting the exposure of the AVN's misinformation. And by doing so, they may have saved a baby's life.

http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?et=1103274330482&s=9837&e=001ut-1GZCnD0co3V0qdLLltVeDyZz1DXjHakIu7CKHBBXoClMEu4aI0j-yLmPhYnumE0aTHiaLxpnRVoso4PzPkeVycVrJpDhIZFOX5gUrGIn_Zs37mTCifQ==

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Though this piece gets the size of the ad and the amount of money we were going to
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pay wrong (it was far less than that), they are right in many other points such as the
cities in which the ad was to run and the fact that we had taken this ad out in the
first place! Short of hacking our emails or tapping our phones, it is my feeling that
the only way in which the septics could know about our negotiations to place these
ads would be if someone on the Copeland Publishing staff told them. I am hoping
that is not the case, but yesterday, I sent the following letter to Danielle, the
woman I originally booked the ads with:

Dear Danielle,

As you are most likely aware, Marion Day who is cc’d on this message, has
written to me to state that Copeland Publishing will not accept an ad from the
AVN. I discussed this with her and have also discussed it with my committee but
we have not discussed this with anyone else.

Despite the fact that we have not released this information, the Australian
Skeptics not only know that this has occurred, but have an idea of how much we
were going to be paying for our advertising.

Can you please explain how this is the case and whether someone at Copeland
Publishing has released our private information which is not only terribly
unethical but a breach of best business practices.

I await your prompt reply.

Kind regards,

Meryl Dorey

At the time of writing this e-newsletter, I have not yet received a reply to my
question.

Ethics or finances?

In the blog post quoted above, it is stated that the Child group has stuck to their
ethical standards. Strange thing to say when their representative has admitted to me
that the basis of this choice was not an ethical belief but simply economics; if the
Child publications took our advertising, they might lose out on lucrative government
and pharmaceutical support.

It is my opinion, based on these conversations, that this decision had nothing to do
with ethics and everything to do with protecting their current advertisers from any
information which might make readers look a bit closer at claims of vaccine safety
and necessity.

I have to ask myself this question - if all of the natural health businesses, schools,
party services etc. who advertise in these publications and stock them in their
businesses and practices were to find out about this decision and as a result, were to
suddenly withdraw their support, would that make up for the pharmaceutical and
government advertising they would retain? We will probably never know, but it is an
interesting mental exercise for me personally.

Please make contact

If you regularly read any of the Copeland Publishing
magazines (you can find the complete list on their
website), stock them in your business or practice or
advertise with them, I would like to suggest that you
contact them to let them know how you feel about their
rejection of our advertisement.
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You can contact Marion Day, the National Advertising Manager, either by email or by telephone on (02) 8876 4811, and/or contact the Editor of all the Child publications, Sean Mooney via this website or at the main Sydney's Child number, (02) 8876 4800.

Please send a copy of your letter to me at meryl@avn.org.au.