

The 'Stoner Sloth' Anti-Cannabis Campaign



Situation Analysis

- Drug taking is an ongoing and increasing problem in society leading to road accidents, violence, and health issues
- Research shows that first use of drugs occurs in the age range of 14–18 years and that Cannabis is the most common first drug

Organisational Goals

The Government of the state of New South Wales, Australia resolved:

- To prevent/reduce the recreational use of Cannabis in NSW, particularly among young people
- To increase the number of young people who have never tried Cannabis

INPUTS:

Communication Objectives

- To **raise awareness** of the risks and consequences of recreational use of Cannabis
- To **dispel the curiosity and excitement** associated with trying Cannabis
- To **challenge the belief** that Cannabis is a safe and acceptable 'first' drug
- To **empower young people from using Cannabis and to discourage their friends and peers from using Cannabis.**

Target audiences

- 14–18 years old in NSW who have tried Cannabis, or who are contemplating trying Cannabis, but who are not frequent users
- Key influencers of 14–18 years old in NSW including peers

Strategy

- Develop a creative digital campaign that is funny, edgy, and appealing to 14–18 years olds, but which communicates messages supporting the objectives
- To conduct the campaign over the Christmas/summer holiday (December-January) period when drug taking is common
- To evaluate the campaign rigorously

Other Inputs

- In late 2016, the NSW Government allocated \$500,000 to an anti-Cannabis campaign targeting 14–18 year olds
- Contracted Saatchi & Saatchi to develop creative content for the campaign
- Contracted the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) to advise on formative and evaluative research, led by Professor Jim Macnamara

ACTIVITIES:

- **Formative research** including accessing national benchmark data on drug taking
- **Creative design** of Stoner Sloth, an animated human-size sloth who portrayed drug takers moving slowly and grunting and groaning (unable to speak coherently), and unable to perform tasks such as complete school work, or interact socially
- Developed the **theme** ‘*You’re worse on weed*’
- **Pre-testing** of creative concepts
- Produced **3 x 30-second videos** (school scene, party scene, family dinner scene)
- Produced **6 x 3-second GIFs** (short animations)
- Created a *Stoner Sloth Community Facebook page*
- Crated a **Tumblr** www.stonersloth.com.au page
- **Media buying** for digital advertising through UM (Universal McCann)
- **Evaluation design** including developing a pre/post exposure survey questionnaire and buying a panel list

OUTPUTS:

- Posted the **videos on Tumblr** www.stonersloth.com.au with links to [Your Room](#), a drug information service providing detailed information and resources in relation to drugs
- Posted the **GIFs on the Facebook** ‘Stoner Sloth’ community page with links to [Your Room](#)
- Placed targeted **online advertising on Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram, and Google paid search** with links to the videos and GIFs
- A ‘**Stoner Sloth**’ **spokesperson** responded to online questions and questions creating conversations

OUTTAKES:

- **Media metrics showed:**
 - 2.19 million reach on Facebook (Facebook Statistics)
 - 8.31 million total impressions¹
 - 194,644 views of the party scene video
 - 211,155 views of the family dinner scene video
 - 232,655 views of school exam scene video
 - 3.5 million impressions from videos on Facebook
 - 78% reach of the target audience against a target of 72%
 - \$0.05 per 3-sec video view compared with a target cost of \$0.10 per 3-sec video view
- **Social media quantitative analysis showed:**
 - 30,000 comments on social media
 - 10,000 plus likes, shares, tags, and reblogs
- **Social media qualitative analysis of 27,000 social media posts² showed engagement with the campaign and use of messages with supportive comments such as:**
 - “this is me”, “was me”, “is my family”, or just “me” posted 381 times
 - “this is you” messages or suggestions sent to others 230 times
 - “loving” the content and/or Stoner Sloth stated 51 times
- **Post-campaign survey showed:**
 - High awareness of the campaign among target audience (*see survey findings under ‘Outcomes’*)

¹ **Impressions** here denote the total number of users who accessed a page with an in-stream video. In-stream is a format where a video begins playing without a user clicking ‘play’. **Views** are the number of times videos are viewed for at least 30 seconds by a viewer clicking the ‘play’ button.

² Some social media posts could not be retrieved.

- **Traditional media analysis showed:**
 - Criticism by public commentators including journalists, columnists, TV personalities, and some advertising industry executives (e.g., “a waste of taxpayers’ money”) when **the campaign went viral** after one month, including compilation videos on YouTube

OUTCOMES:

- **Post-campaign survey of 14–18 year olds in NSW** (*n* = 400 with error rate of +/-4.9% at the 95% confidence level for results around 50%) with pre-exposure and post-exposure questions found:
 - 60% of 14–18 years olds in NSW were reached by the campaign
 - 53% of 14–18 years olds in NSW reported being aware of the videos and/or ads
 - 11–25% of respondents could recall key messages
 - 60% found the campaign memorable
 - 40% found the campaign credible/trustworthy
 - 32% of 14–18 years olds in NSW said the campaign ‘made them think’ and potentially influenced their future behaviour
 - All key messages about the negative consequences of using Cannabis increased by 5–10% (see Table 1)

Table 1. Key messages about the potential negative consequences of Cannabis use pre- and post-campaign.

Concern / message	Pre-exposure	Post-exposure	% increase
Performing poorly at school	69%	74%	5%
Not being able to follow conversations or interact with friends in a social environment	54%	63%	9%
Being an embarrassment to friends	50%	58%	8%
Being isolated and alone at parties and other social events	46%	56%	10%
Having awkward family dinners	45%	54%	9%

- **Triangulated analysis of (1) social media analysis, (2) traditional media, and (3) survey findings showed:**
 - Criticism was from non-target audience groups (50 plus years of age) and vested interests (e.g., traditional and competitor advertising agencies)
 - The target audience was reached and engaged with the campaign messages and it achieved its objectives within the target audience
 - However, the public criticism received showed the risks of ‘collateral damage’ as well as benefits when campaigns go viral

IMPACT:

- **Organisational and social impact:**

The impact of such a campaign are likely to be longer-term. However, evaluation showed **reduced intention to try Cannabis** and, based on outtake and outcome data, it can be predicted that it will likely contribute to:

 - Reduced trialling of Cannabis among 14–18 year olds
 - Reduced use of drugs in the community
 - Potentially reduced DUI, road accidents and violence
 - Reduced costs on health system
- **Insights:**
 - The triangulated analysis and synthesis of data informed future planning by showing the risks of virality (typically only the benefits are recognised) and the need to conduct careful environmental planning to consider all audiences.