

## AMEC International Communication Effectiveness Awards 2016 Entry Form Template – PR Consultancies/In-House Teams

### (Maximum 4 sides A4)

For full details on how and where to send your entries for the awards go to the page [5 steps to submitting an entry](#) at [www.amecawards.com](http://www.amecawards.com)

**Category:** ‘Best Use of a Measurement Framework’ OR ‘Best Use of Integrated Communication Measurement/Research’ (*this category is shown as open to ‘Media Research, Research, and Insights Companies’ but I am not sure why this category would not be open to in house teams as well*)

**Entering Company Name:** University of Technology Sydney (UTS)

**Name of persons entering:** Prof Jim Macnamara & Dr Gail Kenning

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**Client:** NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet

**Campaign title:** Evaluation of the ‘Stoner Sloth’ Cannabis Campaign

The entry must include the following in a maximum of 4 sides A4. (Minimum font size – 10 pt)

### Overview

This entry demonstrates:

1. **Application of a three-stage measurement and evaluation framework** at *output, uptake, and outcome* levels in line with Best Practice and the AMEC integrated evaluation framework;
2. Use of **rigorous quantitative and qualitative social science research methods including a post-campaign target audience survey** to evaluate results;
3. **Evaluation of an integrated campaign involving advertising and social media content including the retrieval and analysis of 27,000 online comments** in a very short timeframe as an interim method of uptakes evaluation and progress reporting.

### Objective/Brief

In the second half of 2015 the New South Wales (NSW) Government received research showing that the first use of drugs occurs in the age group 14–18 years. Most anti-drugs campaigns are targeted at older audiences using health and fear messages and this young demographic had not been previously addressed with an information or persuasion campaign. The research also reported that the first drug of choice was Cannabis.

The **NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet** (the client) took the decision to develop a \$500,000 digital online communication campaign to raise awareness of the risks and discourage young people from trying Cannabis.

Noting that there is frequent criticism of governments for waste of taxpayers’ money on advertising and PR campaigns, and anti-drug campaigns in particular are often controversial, the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet contracted **Professor Jim Macnamara of the University of Technology Sydney to develop an evaluation strategy and provide an independent evaluation report to the NSW Government** on the campaign.

### Campaign Objectives

- To **raise awareness** of the risks or 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.**

## Budget

The budget for the campaign was \$500,000.

The budget for evaluation was \$50,000 (see 'Evaluation Strategy').

## Campaign Strategy and Content

Given the young target audience, a creative **digital campaign** was produced using a series of [short videos](#), [GIFs](#), and [images](#) illustrating the negative effects of Cannabis use on young people in various situations such as at school, interacting at a family dinner, and socialising with friends.

The campaign, developed by Saatchi & Saatchi, featured a character '**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 with friends, using the theme '**You're worse on weed**'. The campaign was designed to be 'funny' with a 'cute' character to be appealing to the Generation Z / post-millennial audience, while containing serious messages. The content of the campaign included:

- **Three 30-second videos**, which were hosted on a **Tumblr** [www.stonersloth.com.au](http://www.stonersloth.com.au) page along with **six GIFs** (3-second animations). The site also had links to [Your Room](#), a NSW Health and St Vincent's Alcohol and Drug Information Service initiative containing drug and alcohol information and resources;
- Promotion of the videos through **online advertising on Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram, and Google paid search** with links to the videos and GIFs;
- A [Stoner Sloth Community Facebook page](#) where the three videos and one GIF were hosted and could be viewed, liked, shared, or commented on;
- A compilation video was posted on [YouTube](#) mid-way through the campaign.



The 'Stoner Sloth' campaign ran for two months **from 18 November 2015 to 18 January 2016**.

## Evaluation Strategy, Methodology, and Methods

A comprehensive three-stage strategy was designed and implemented to evaluate the campaign at *output*, *outtake*, and *outcome* levels using *quantitative* and *qualitative* research as follows.

1. Compilation of **media metrics** on audience reach of the campaign including total views and impressions, likes, shares, reblogs (on Tumblr), and tagging (OUTPUTS).

Media metrics were obtained from Facebook Statistics and the NSW Government's media agency, UM (Universal McCann), which placed and tracked all online advertising and video hosting;

2. **Content analysis of social media user comment and traditional media reporting** during the period 9 November 2015 (10 days prior to the launch of the campaign to identify baseline discussion of Cannabis issues) to 4 January 2016 to **identify reactions and response**. An **interim evaluation report** was provided to DPC on 8 January based on media content analysis. This provided early feedback on reactions to the campaign and allowed fine-tuning and adjustment of the strategy (OUTTAKES).

Content analysis of traditional media involved manual collection of online newspaper content and recording of TV news, current affairs, and lifestyle programs undertaken by the UTS researchers.

Social media content and metadata (e.g., profiles including date of birth, occupation, etc.) were retrieved from **Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter**. This involved using a proprietary script to open all comments and then import content and metadata into Microsoft **Excel** where content was categorised by names, dates, and format (e.g., like, share, tag, comment, reblog, etc.) and calculations were made for counts not available in site metadata (such as the number of replies to comments and number of conversations). **More than 27,000 comments were retrieved and analysed**. The text of comments was classified using inductive and deductive coding to identify themes and *memes*<sup>1</sup> such as humour, personal messages, criticism, and key words and phrases (e.g., “This is you”, “Don’t be a Stoner Sloth”, “waste of money”, etc.). See ‘Results’.

Two researchers led by **Dr Gail Kenning** undertook the massive data retrieval and content analysis, with intercoder testing to reduce subjectivity and verify interpretations.

Word clouds of the most frequently occurring terms were produced from the text of comments after deleting ‘stopwords’ (e.g., prepositions, pronouns, etc.) using **WordItOut**.

3. A **post-campaign survey** of 14–18 year olds was conducted to identify their awareness of the campaign and its messages; their perceived credibility of the campaign; and their views on Cannabis use including whether these had changed post-campaign (COMMUNICATION OUTCOMES / IMPACT).

An online questionnaire was sent to a **pre-qualified sample of 14–18 year olds (n = 400)** obtained from a panel with de-identification and parental consent for minors. The maximum error rate on a sample of 400 is +/-4.9% at the 95% confidence level for results around 50% - i.e., high statistical probability.

The survey was administered independently by **JWS Research** in consultation with the UTS researchers who developed the questionnaire as well as the overall evaluation strategy and prepared the final evaluation report. The survey was in field from 8–17 January 2016.

## Results (Outputs)

- Between its launch on November 18 and early January, the ‘Stoner Sloth’ campaign achieved a **total reach on Facebook of 2.19 million** (Facebook Statistics) yielding a total of **8.31 impressions**<sup>2</sup>.
- The three videos at the centre of the campaign each generated **between 1.1 and 1.28 million impressions** on Facebook and **194,644 views for the party scene video; 211,155 for the dinner scene video; and 232,655 for the exam scene video**.
- The campaign reached **78% of the target audience against a target of 72% at a cost of \$0.05 per 3-second video view compared with a target cost of \$0.10 per 3-second video view**.
- The ‘Stoner Sloth’ campaign **generated more than 30,000 comments on social media, as well as tens of thousands of likes, follows, shares, tags, notes, and reblogs** on social media sites including Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter.

## Results (Outtakes)

Content analysis of social media in the first few weeks of the campaign revealed that the videos were seen as **“funny”, “amusing” or “hilarious** (posted 512 times) and a substantial number of young people tagged and shared the ‘Stoner Sloth’ videos with peers and colleagues in ways that supported the objectives of the campaigns. For example, comments included:

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<sup>1</sup> **Memés** are activities, concepts, ideas, catchphrases or pieces of media content which are spread from person to person via the Internet and become part of a culture.

<sup>2</sup> **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.

- “**This is me**”, “**was me**”, “**is my family**”, or just “**me**” were posted 381 times;
- “**This is you**” messages or suggestions were sent to others 230 times;
- The hashtag **#stonersloth** appeared 97 times;
- “**Loving**” the content and/or Stoner Sloth was stated 51 times;
- Suggestions that the content was “**bad**” or that the videos were “**creepy**” were made only 11 times.

Analysis showed that most of those engaging in the campaign in the first month (from the launch on 18 November to 18 December) were in the age range 14–18, with some individuals appearing to be slightly older in the 20–21-year-old range (i.e., **most of those engaging and commenting in this early phase of the campaign were in the target audience.**

However, as the campaign progressed in late December 2015 and into January 2016 content analysis of traditional media revealed widespread and growing criticism of the campaign. It was branded a “misuse of taxpayer’s money” and ridiculed as “missing the mark” and “backfiring” (see ‘Supporting Materials’ for samples). But, importantly, in-depth analysis of these articles and posts revealed that the vast majority were made by people **not in the target audience** (based on age revealed by date of birth and/or occupation in profiles and photos when DOB was not available).

### Results (Outcomes)

- The post-campaign survey showed that the campaign:
- **Reached almost 60% of 14–18 years olds** – either through direct exposure to the campaign or hearing about the campaign through traditional or social media;
- Gained **significant direct exposure of the campaign messages** – potentially to 53% of 14–18 years olds in NSW (the percentage of the survey sample who reported being aware of the ads), and **most campaign messages were recalled by 11–25% of respondents**;
- Was found to be **memorable** by almost 60% and **credible/trustworthy** by almost 40%;
- Almost **one-third of 14–18 years olds in NSW indicated that it ‘made them think’ and potentially influenced their future behaviour.** (See ‘Supporting Materials’ for details)

Evaluation showed that the campaign:

- **Did not increase perceptions of harmfulness of Cannabis use** – although a high proportion of 14–18 years olds in NSW already see Cannabis use as harmful and the campaign provided reinforcement of these views;
- Received a **large amount of criticism in traditional and online media** and in some social media such during the latter stages of the campaign (i.e., late December – early January).

However, detailed quantitative and qualitative evaluation revealed that the campaign evolved through three stages:

1. **Target audience engagement** stage during which links to videos and information were accessible only to the target audience through strategic digital advertising (by demographic);
2. **Themes and memes** stage during which a number of themes and memes began to emerge – initially related to the campaign, but gradually broadening to open public debate about other drugs, alcohol, the campaign itself (e.g., criticisms of the creative strategy), etc. In this stage the campaign was progressively commented on by non-target audience people (i.e., professional **meme-making** and **news-jacking** was occurring);
3. **Viral** phase in which the campaign became a full-on viral phenomenon. In this stage, which began with the videos being posted on YouTube and receiving 3.6 million views, the target audience retreated from conversations and the campaign was hijacked by various interests.

### Conclusions

This project demonstrates a sophisticated level of evaluation, looking beyond volume to **segmented audience analysis** using *quantitative* and *qualitative* research methods. This evaluation provided new insights not only into the ‘Stoner Sloth’ campaign, but into the phenomenon of ‘going viral’. It revealed that when communication campaigns or materials go viral – something that many commercial and social marketers seek and see as a positive – they in fact lose their strategic focus and can become ineffective. In short, **virality** results in volume of reach, but not effective communication. This evaluation informs strategic planning in marketing and social media communication and is being written up in industry and academic journals.