

NEWS RELEASE

23 April 2008

Controversial alcohol campaign prompts calls for help

In its first couple of days on air, the hard-hitting ALAC "It's how we're drinking" television advertising campaign prompted 15 complaints to the Broadcasting Standards Authority – has doubled the number of calls to the Drug Alcohol Helpline from people seeking help with an alcohol problem.

Cate Kearney, CEO of ADANZ (Alcohol Drug Association New Zealand), which manages the Helpline, said the new advertisements that started running on April 6 might have upset a few people in the community by being so graphic, but they had certainly worked.

"In the first two days, calls to the Helpline went up by 30% and within a week, they were up by 50% and have now dropped to 42%," she said. "What's even more significant, is that over 80% of those that called due to the advertising had never called the Helpline before. That means the ads are hitting home with people who didn't realise they had a problem. It's given them the motivation to do something about it and seek help."

There are three ads in the series:

- Lisa, featuring a shy young woman out drinking with friends who becomes increasingly uninhibited as she drinks to excess and becomes easy prey to a waiting male
- Uncle Mark, featuring a man whirling children round at a family gathering who becomes so drunk he slams a young boy into furniture
- Danny, showing a young man drinking to excess with his mates in a pub. He becomes aggressive, picks fights, and ends up on the bathroom floor covered in blood and vomit, observed by his young bewildered daughter.

"All these ads have made an impact on the people calling the Helpline," Kearney said. "The message is penetrating their consciousness and people are getting the message that binge drinking is not O.K."

Most of the calls had been about Uncle Mark and Danny. "One man said he realised Uncle Mark could easily have been him and he thought he'd better get help. And a lot identified with the guy in the pub," she said.

Particularly disturbing were the male callers who had mentioned they'd seen the "Lisa" situation a lot and had never done anything to stop it, she said.

People calling to complain had said the ads were too graphic and "shocking," and upset children, although many callers admitted they knew such things happened. More compliments than complaints have been received at the Helpline with 90% of callers commenting on the campaign expressing appreciation.

For further information, please contact:

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