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Sneaky withdrawal

By Matebello Motloung

Wondering what happened to the edgy OUTsurance advertising campaign that showed three burly men discussing how to best exploit an unsuspecting insurance claimant and laughing about it?

It has been canned.

OUTsurance withdrew the TV and radio campaign after complaints and pressure from industry colleagues who said it damaged the insurance sector's reputation while portraying OUTsurance as the only ethical insurance company.

The advert featured three, unattractive insurance men conspiring to cheat a customer and saying things like "they think they have fixed excess, little do they know. . ." and "let's make her wait. . ." Another, better-looking and reasonable man symbolising OUTsurance then intervenes to point out they are exploiting the claimant and exposes the hidden conditions in their fine print.

Among the complainants was insurance giant Mutual & Federal, which took up the matter with the Advertising Standards Authority of SA.

Mutual & Federal submitted the advert was misleading and disparaging to other companies like itself, and that it insinuated incorrectly that OUTsurance was the only insurance company offering the benefits mentioned - among them, fixed excess and full recovery against theft - which wasn't true.

OUTsurance communications head Trevor Devitt denies that pressure was the sole reason for withdrawing the advertisement.

OUTsurance decided with "hindsight" to discontinue the adverts out of concern that they may contribute to the "negative perceptions" of the insurance industry, and that the decision coincided with the company's new advertising campaign.

The company makes its advertising campaigns in-house.

Arnold van der Linde, president of the **Financial Intermediaries Association**, says the organisation is "happy" that the campaign has been withdrawn because it created "a false impression of the industry which is our profession.

"What we must ensure is that a company doesn't do such naughty things and then quietly withdraws the adverts, only to repeat the same thing again next time. "

On the possible damage to the industry's image that the campaign may have caused, Devitt says: "I don't think there's been any damage because it didn't run for that long. The public also has a short memory and things like that are often shortlived. "