



# Children's interpretation of the Crayons TVCs

Research undertaken for Quitline

By Premium Research,

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## Background

Quitline has recently developed a new series of TVCs focused on encouraging quitting by showing the negative impact that adults smoking have on children. The development of the TVCs was informed by extensive qualitative research with Māori, Pacific and low income people (these are people with higher smoking rates than other New Zealanders). The campaign responds to the primary research finding that to be effective the advertising needs to be hard-hitting and give an emotionally poignant reason to quit (impact on children).

Quitline commissioned Māori Television to design and create the TVC series. The mock TVCs were tested via independent research and the findings of this research were used to inform the development of the final TVCs.

This document reports on a further phase of testing focused on how children interpret the TVCs. This phase of the research was intended to identify whether there is a significant risk of the TVCs encouraging children to smoke.

## Method

This phase of the research was undertaken over two days in September 2014. All of the respondents were recruited from the researcher's own community (Newtown Primary School). Permission was sought from Newtown School and the researcher would like to acknowledge the School Principal, Mark Brown, for giving this permission. Informed consent was also sought from parents/caregivers of all children invited to participate in the research.

The children were all interviewed during school hours on the school site. The interviews took about 15 minutes to conduct. The approach was qualitative and used open-ended questioning. In each interview the children were shown one TVC at a time (4 TVCs) and asked what they thought the TVCs were about. They were also asked what they thought the TVCs were telling people to do. At the end of the interview the children were asked if they knew anyone who smoked.

Giselle Bahr (Clinical Psychologist, specialising in child and adolescent mental health) provided guidance to the Premium Research team on the approach to the research, the interview questions/approach and interpretation of the findings.

A total of 20 children were interviewed. As the sample was small, and was selected from one school population, the findings cannot confidently be extrapolated to all children. However, the interviews do give some insight into the range of responses that children can have to these ads.

In considering the findings of the research it is also important to be mindful that we couldn't find any literature which related directly to the effects on children of watching ads about smoking.

## Sample

The sample profile was as follows:

Respondents		Gender	
<b>Age</b>		<b>Gender</b>	
5 years	3	Male	10
6 years	1	Female	10
7 years	7	<b>Ethnicity</b>	
8 years	1	Māori	3
9 years	5	Pacific (all were mixed ethnicity)	6
10 years	1	European	8
11 years	2	Other	3
<b>Parents that smoke</b>			
Yes	5		
No	15		

## Context

All of the older children (9-11 years) and many of the younger children (5-8 years) demonstrated in the interviews that they had a strong, pre-existing view that smoking was 'bad'. Several of the children said the TVCs told them about risks of smoking that were not within the content of the TVCs (e.g. damage to heart, teeth, lungs).

## TVC 1: Crayons

<http://youtu.be/IJqMgrvAyQU>



Most of the older children (9-11 years) said that this TVC was intended to let parents who smoke know they are encouraging their children to smoke. They used words like 'role model' and 'influence' to describe the impact of parents smoking on their children.

Most of the younger children could describe the content of the TVC but were less certain of the message from the TVC. Half of the younger children said the TVC gave a negative message about smoking (quit smoking or smoking is bad for your health).

Three of the younger children (5-8 years) thought the TVC was primarily about not being allowed to go outside. They tended to say it was not fair the children were not allowed to go outside. They did not spontaneously associate the ad with smoking. One of the younger children did not know what the TVC was about.

One of the older children (9 years, male, Euro, parents who do not smoke) and one of the younger children (7 years, female, Euro, parents who do not smoke) thought the TVC was telling children that they should smoke. Both of these children said the TVC should not be shown because children should not be told to smoke.

## TVC 2: Little Miss

<http://youtu.be/jBaUKBTQ1Vs>



Again, most of the older children (9-11 years) said this TVC was intended to tell parents who smoke they are encouraging their children to smoke.

The two children who said the *Crayons* TVC would encourage children to smoke also said this ad would encourage children to smoke.

Four of the younger children said they either did not know what the TVC was about or did not associate the TVC with smoking.

The remaining children said this TVC was about the dangers of smoking, not to smoke or to quit smoking. Some of these children did say the ad encouraged children to play – but not to smoke.

### TVC 3: Just Give Me a Minute

<http://youtu.be/A-eaR5MpFgQ>



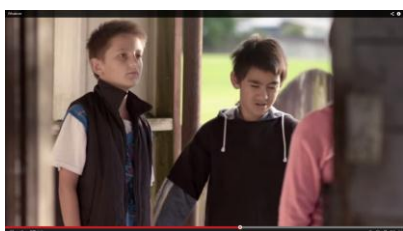
Most of the older children (9-11 years) said this TVC was telling parents their children are more important than smoking is. They said the TVC was telling people to care more about their children and think about the impact smoking has on their children.

Several of the younger children were concerned that the mum was leaving the children when they were hungry and/or baby was crying but did not make the association with prioritising smoking over the children.

None of the children were concerned that this TVC would encourage children to smoke.

### TVC 4: Whatever

<http://youtu.be/kPUY-GYdLmU>



Most of the children interpreted this TVC literally - as being primarily directed at telling children not to smoke or to quit smoking – essentially seeing the dialogue from the older sister as being directed at them. They said the girl was telling all *children* not to smoke.

Four of the older children (9-11 years) said the message from this TVC was intended to tell parents to quit smoking so their children don't copy them and start smoking too.

One of the children thought the TVC was telling children they needed to wait until they were adults before they started smoking (5 years, male, Pacific, one parent smokes occasionally).

One of the children thought some children would interpret the TVC as telling them smoking is 'cool', he was concerned that his younger sister might take the message smoking is 'cool' from this TVC (9 years, male, Māori, parents smoke)

## Conclusions

Overall, most of the children had already accepted the message smoking is 'bad' and interpreted the TVCs through this already knowledgeable lens. Fourteen of the twenty children interviewed did not believe watching any of the TVCs would encourage children to smoke.

Three of the children were concerned that other children (but not them) would be encouraged to smoke after watching children pretend to smoke on the TVCs (9 years, male, Euro, parents did not smoke; 7 years, female, Euro, parents did not smoke and 9 years, male, Māori, parents smoke).

Two of the children extrapolated the message that children should wait until they are adults to start smoking one from the *Whatever* TVC and one as an end comment not specific to any TVC (5 years, male, Pacific, one parent occasional smoker and 7 years, male Māori, one parent smoker). We do not know whether watching the TVCs caused these children to have the view that 'children should wait until they are adults to start smoking', nor do we know if there is a connection between children thinking 'children should wait until they are adults to start smoking' and their actual behaviour.

One child (English as a second language) was only able to make a limited contribution. When asked at the end of the interview whether kids should smoke replied 'yep', but this view could not be confidently be attributed to watching the TVCs.

There were no clear themes in the responses from the children that could be attributed to gender, ethnicity or parental smoking.

The children responded and interpreted each of the TVCs differently. *Just a Minute* stood out as the TVC none of the children thought would encourage children to smoke. Some children were concerned that *Crayons* and *Little Miss* could encourage some children to smoke but were clear it would not impact them. *Whatever* was interpreted more literally by many of the children and some did interpret the TVC as saying 'children' (and by extrapolation not adults) should not smoke.

## Moving Forward

As the sample was small and selected from one school population, the findings cannot confidently be extrapolated to all children. We do think, however, that the findings of the research can be used to help guide the media placement strategy for these TVCs. On the basis of our findings we recommend that all the TVCs are placed in slots intended primarily for adult viewing (because adults are the target audience). The only TVC we think needs to be placed as for 'Adult Only' viewing is 'Whatever' (because the children in this sample did tend to think this TVC was talking directly to them).