



22 June 2007

Regional Director
GPO Box 520
Melbourne VIC 3001

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Misleading Claims made by Toyota Prius advertisement

I write to you regarding false and misleading claims made in a Toyota Motor Corporation advertisement for its Prius hybrid car. Enclosed is a copy of the advertisement that appeared in the *Good Weekend Magazine* on June 9, 2007.

The advertisement claims that “If everyone drove a Prius with Hybrid Synergy Drive, then each one of us could reduce greenhouse gases by 1 tonne per year.” This claim is false and misleading for the reasons outlined below.

Firstly, the overall claim is false. The advertisement means to tell consumers that “if everyone drove a Prius”, the outcome would be a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, thereby helping, (in the advertisement’s words) to “build a cleaner sky”. This is a false claim, since in reality, a person who currently chooses to walk, cycle or catch public transport produces significantly less greenhouse gas emissions than someone driving a Toyota Prius. For most walkers, cyclists and public transport users choosing to drive a Prius would actually *increase*, not reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

Secondly, the greenhouse gas emission figures which appear as part of the claim are misleading, since they are not based on Australian average mileage. The advertisement bases its figures on the average person driving 25,000 km a year. However, statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) show that in the 12 months ending in October 2005 – the most recent figures available – each passenger vehicle in Australia traveled only an average of 14,800 km by road. As a result, the claim by Toyota that 1 tonne of greenhouse gas would be saved by drivers switching to Toyota’s hybrid vehicle are over-inflated by almost 70%.

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I draw your attention to the successful challenge to a similar Toyota advertisement which appeared in the UK. The ad was withdrawn by Toyota after a complaint about it was made to the UK's Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). The ASA ruled that "we did not consider their [Toyota's] evidence demonstrated that it [the Prius] emitted one tonne less than equivalent vehicles with diesel engines or that it took into account the average annual distance driven by private cars in the UK."

The Toyota ad clearly breaches sections 1.2 and 1.4 of the Australian Association of National Advertisers' *Advertiser Code of Ethics*, namely:

- 1.2 - Advertisements shall not be misleading or deceptive or be likely to mislead or deceive
- 1.4 - Advertisements shall not exploit community concerns in relation to protecting the environment by presenting or portraying distinctions in products or services advertised in a misleading way or in a way which implies a benefit to the environment which the product or services do not have.

As such, I request that the ACCC immediately and urgently require that Toyota withdraw the aforementioned advertisements from public display, so as not to continue to mislead and deceive the Australian public about the benefits of its products.

I look forward to your prompt response.

Regards,

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