

Some of Australia's biggest brands work together to create the 'Unignorable Adbreak', launching the Shift 20 Initiative via Special, Glue Society and PHD.

Last night, during the Sunday Project, in an iconic and unignorable moment for Australian advertising, 10 of Australia's most well known brands came together in support of disability representation with the 'Unignorable Adbreak'. Swapping out key scenes in their advertising to include a person with disability to launch the Shift 20 Initiative.

The altered spots from ANZ, AAMI, Bonds, Kia, McDonalds, Oral-B, nib, Pantene, Uber and Weet-Bix™ ran for a week and culminated in a complete media roadblock during the prime time Sunday Project. A moment designed to make Australia take notice of the lack of disability representation in our advertising and launch an initiative designed to combat it, the Shift 20 Initiative. In addition to the brands who have altered spots, Tourism Australia, Virgin and TikTok have also come onboard as foundation partners.

The Shift 20 Initiative is a coalition of leading brands, led by the Dylan Alcott Foundation, which is focused on increasing disability representation, inclusion and accessibility in Australian advertising and media. Australians with disability make up almost 20% of the population. Yet in advertising, they are only represented 1% of the time.

This initiative was conceived by Special and the Dylan Alcott Foundation over two years ago.

Ryan Fitzgerald, Executive Creative Director at Special, said "When we first started talking to Dylan about the issue, we knew this couldn't simply be an awareness job. We needed to do something bold that made a statement, and more importantly, created real change with a long-lasting impact.

"Changing out something that has already been and including a person with disability is a simple yet powerful way to highlight that people with disability can easily fill the same roles as anyone else."

"Whether it's changing the iconic face of a brand, brand representatives or simply the characters in the stories we tell, our industry is in a powerful position to send a message to 20% of Australia that, up until now, has gone largely unseen to say 'we see you'.

"Outside of the 'Unignorable Adbreak' the Shift 20 Initiative is a crucial part of ensuring long lasting change in this space. The organisation is designed to set the standard for what disability representation looks like and give others the tools and resources to make an impact."

The majority of the production re-shoots was led by Revolver, featuring both talent and crew with disability. There was also essential oversight from a variety of disability consultants and production partners such as Bus Stop Films to ensure the production environment was inclusive. This included consultancy on the casting process, production considerations for people with disability, disability riders, crew attachments and Auslan translators.

The Glue Society was a key creative partner in the early development of this campaign. Working closely with Special from the initial agency brief, the team formed a clever and restrained production approach that would allow brands incorporating talent with disability to have maximum effect, ensuring the work prompted focus and discussion on the issue.

Rumble Studios, working across a number of the revised TVCs, as well as the supplementary behind the scenes films, brought to life with their thoughtful music, composed by Guy Brown.

Lindsey Evans, Partner at Special and Board Director at Advertising Council Australia, said “The support from the industry has been instrumental to launching this initiative. This is about sharing and educating the wider industry as to the massive commercial and cultural opportunity of having representation of the whole population. We hope more brands see this and want to get involved. We have learnt so much from Dylan, the talent and production partners. We can all do better together - as an industry, as consumers and as brands.”

PHD worked with all of the participating brand’s media agencies to coordinate the roadblock in the Sunday Project as well as securing further paid and earned media support for the initiative from media owners across Australia.

Simon Lawson, Managing Director at PHD Melbourne, said “The widespread support from the media owners across Australia has been incredible, quite simply, we’ve never seen collaboration at this scale, leading to a world-first media approach. It really underscores the importance of this issue. It’s been a privilege to be involved in this initiative on behalf of PHD and OMG.”

The coalition of launch partners will lead the way in commitment to fair representation of people with disability within their ads and marketing communications, providing opportunities and opening doors for people with disability. Each brand has their own unique way of showing up in the space from product development, influencer strategies, accessibility innovations, community support and employment with further innovations to come off the back of the initiative.

Dylan Alcott AO, Founder of the Dylan Alcott Foundation commented; “One of the coolest things about working with the amazing brands who have joined the initiative is seeing them learn and grow from listening to the lived experience of people with disability. From previous conversations we’ve had with brands, we know that whilst they want to include people with disability in their ads, they are sometimes scared they’ll get it wrong - so they don’t. Getting it wrong is ok. It starts conversations, so you can get it right and can be more inclusive and accessible for everyone - including people with disability. The tides are turning and the time for brands to get involved is now.”

A dedicated website has been built to give brands access to best practice resources to create more accessible and inclusive communications. Brands can sign-up and find out more about the Shift 20 Initiative at shift20.org and be part of the change.

The campaign is rolling out across TV, OOH, cinema, earned media, social and digital and has even driven product innovation ensuring that all assets created have been built to be truly accessible.

- ENDS -

- ENDS -

About the Shift 20 Initiative:

Shift 20 Initiative was created by Dylan Alcott Foundation, Special and some of Australia’s leading brands to increase representation, inclusion and accessibility for people living with disability in marketing and communications. The initiative demonstrates the importance of disability representation on-screen, by encouraging brands to commit to fair representation of people with disability, whilst providing the opportunity and opening doors for people with disability to see themselves on screen.