

Executive summary: ‘Serial Killer’ heart health campaign

On February 10, 2019, the Heart Foundation launched the co-ordinated advertising and editorial ‘[Serial Killer](#)’ campaign in partnership with News Corp Australia to remind Australians that heart disease is the nation’s leading cause of death. The campaign provided Australians with an easy to use online tool, the [Heart Age Calculator](#), to help them assess their own levels of risk for heart disease and called on the Government to invest in the prevention of heart disease by providing a Medicare benefit for Heart Health Checks.

Results: The campaign was spectacularly successful, after just 7 days, the Australian Prime Minister promised to introduce a dedicated Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) item number for Heart Health Checks by 1 April 2019. The Heart Foundation had been advocating for this change for more than 10 years.

By the end of the 4-week campaign more than 390,000 people completed the Heart Age Calculator, equivalent to 28% of the high-risk target audience across the nation. Since then, over 1.2 million Australians have completed the calculator and over 76,000 have visited their GP to access the Medicare item number.

The creative concept – the big idea

Drawing on Australians’ fascination with ‘True Crime’ as entertainment, ‘Serial Killer’ highlighted the ‘criminal’ behind Australia’s biggest killer, heart disease. It urged the government and the community to ‘show some ticker’ - #showsometicker (Australian colloquialism for *show courage/show heart*). The concept was intended to shock Australians into action.

The strategy

The use of an integrated advertising and PR campaign to drive and achieve the objectives represented a significant change in our advocacy strategy; it was bold, noisy and risky, and it was designed to hold decision makers to account.

Timing was crucial, we launched the campaign in February 2019 in the lead up to Australia’s Federal Election, a time when political parties were receptive to community pressure. It was the perfect time to influence public health policy and to grab the attention of Australians.

The execution

The campaign launched with “teaser” executions warning Australians about a serial killer on the loose – without naming this killer. On Sunday 10 February, every capital city metropolitan News Corp newspaper across Australia had advertisements warning that Australia’s worst serial killer was on the loose and would be named the following week.

The following Sunday contained the “reveal” – divulging that the “criminal” behind Australia’s biggest serial killer was in fact heart disease. Advertising was supported by editorial featuring everyday Australians sharing how heart disease has touched their lives. This reveal included high-impact Sunday metropolitan advertising wraps in print publications and across digital sites, and a takeover of the [True Crime Australia](#) website. It was supported by TV and radio advertisements, digital and social media, and editorial and educational videos about heart disease.

A media channel plan was developed to deliver the campaign across Australia and to invest more in areas at higher risk of heart disease using our proprietary [Australian Heart Maps](#) data. Digital and social media was used to compliment the media buy in hard to reach regional areas that had little or no print publications.

Heart Foundation-owned media channels were leveraged including the website, a campaign landing page, eDMs (electronic direct mails) to 300,000 subscribers and social media platforms (LinkedIn, Twitter,

Instagram and Facebook). These were complemented by an editorial and social media campaign sharing the hashtag #showsometicker.

The results

Our campaign was quickly and dramatically successful in winning Government support for an initiative that will alert many Australians of their risk of heart disease in time for them to be able to do something about it; and in raising awareness of heart disease risk more generally via the Heart Age Calculator.

#1 Objective: Pressure the Australian Government to include the Heart Health Check on the national Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS).

- Public tri-partisan support (Federal Government, Federal Opposition and the Greens) for more action on heart disease, including the need for Medicare-funded Heart Health Checks.
- A Federal Government promise to introduce a dedicated Medicare Benefits Schedule item number for Heart Health Checks by 1 April 2019.
- In addition, both major parties promised an estimated \$170 million in extra funding over five years for general practice to encourage GPs to perform Heart Health Checks.

#2 Objective: Prompt 50,000 Australians to visit the Heart Foundation website to complete the Heart Age Calculator in the first year.

- There were a staggering 120,000 Heart Age Calculator completes in the first two days, with 150,000 Heart Age Calculator completes before the end of the first week. And over 390,000 total Heart Age Calculator completes by the end of April. That is equivalent to 28% of the high-risk target audience. Today, over 1.2m Australians have completed the calculator.
- Heart Foundation website traffic increased by 270%.
- Almost 2,000 media stories ran across print, online, radio and TV – spreading important messages about heart disease to more than 20 million Australians.
- Calls to the Heart Foundation Helpline increased by 130%

The value of media exposure driven by the print & PR campaign was exceptional – for every dollar invested, the Heart Foundation benefited from \$13.33 value of media exposure. In total, the \$1.17million media investment generated a total earned media value of \$15.6 million; this equates to a media exposure ROI of over 1,200%.

For the \$1.17million investment, an estimated 9,100 lives will be saved by Heart Health Checks. This equates to an investment of just \$129 per life.

Modelling estimates that the campaign will prevent 76,500 heart events. This represents an efficient investment of just over \$15 per avoided heart attack. Put another way, each heart event costs the health system over \$76,000 in direct health costs, so for each \$15 invested we've potentially saved the health system \$76,000.

The economic cost of heart disease is phenomenal. A massive \$1.5 billion saving to the economy will benefit present and future generations. Every dollar invested in this campaign generates an incredible \$1,282 saving to the health system!

Conclusion

'Serial Killer' was a risky campaign, but we weighed this against the possible benefits; planned for any negative outcomes; and designed a campaign with maximum potential for success. Tapping into the popular fascination with true crime allowed our messages to cut through.