

Dear SOFII,

The beer mat is actually the reincarnation of a line I wrote that ran on a 24 sheet poster site overlooking the route of the Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras in 1993, which is the picture you have. The agency I worked for at the time – The Ball Partnership Sydney, now EURO RSCG, was always on the lookout for opportunities to help, so when Australian Posters gave us the use of some vacant sites the management offered one to Greenpeace.

I was a junior copywriter at the time and very keen to do something for a cause I believed in, so I worked overnight to crack the brief. It was a challenge, as we were going to be talking about dying and legacies at a time when AIDS was scything through the gay community.

At about 2am I came up with the notion of hope – the possibility of doing something good in this life and being rewarded with another, better life, after death. This angle felt like it would salve some of the pain felt by those confronting their mortality. It also aligned nicely with Greenpeace's anti-establishment stance as reincarnation is a concept that sits well outside mainstream religious thinking in Australia. I realised we needed to handle this in an irreverent way, though, taking it too seriously wouldn't sit comfortably with Greenpeace's secular values.

The connection with whales was easy; their protection is part of Greenpeace's brand heritage. I also liked the feel good fantasy embedded within it: the idea that if you're going to be reincarnated, it would be very cool to come back as something as wonderful as a whale. Finally, the irony of facing the possibility of being harpooned in your new life led nicely to the call to action. I experimented with different formulations of the line, and settled on one that I put into a layout and stuck up on the wall of my office the next morning.

Tom Moulton, my creative director at the time, came in for his morning catch-up, saw the line, added the word 'bloody', which beautifully reinforced the Greenpeace tonality, then took off to share it with the client, Richard Green, who loved it.

The poster ran for a month and then disappeared (although it picked up a bronze Lion at the Cannes Advertising Festival later that year). Twelve months on, and I'd moved to another agency when the Greenpeace team followed me up looking for more ideas for their bequest campaign.

Nick Housego had taken on responsibility for bequest marketing. He wanted a series of small space ads to send out to newspapers and magazines as fillers, so I conceived and wrote three, which I've included so you can add them to the exhibit if you like. My art director at the time, Jacqui Coates, did a lovely job of crafting them. As part of the exercise, Nick also decided to put the 'come back as a whale' line on beer mats, so I wrote the copy for the back at the same time. A heap of these got sent out to pubs around Sydney and a few ended up in boxes under someone's desk in the Greenpeace office, became 'souvenir' items and – it now turns out - spread all over the world.

Unfortunately, people moved on and no-one followed up the campaign, so there are no quantifiable results that I'm aware of. Nonetheless, I think we came up with an interesting strategic angle with the catch-line. I am delighted that it has turned up on SOFII all these years later, and chuffed by the praise you have given it.

In the 20 years since then, developing creative for good causes has become something of a passion. Now I own and run my own agency we aim to devote 20% of

our time each year to working with charities and NGOs at reduced rates. So if anyone reading this has any tough problems they'd us to look, please feel free to get in touch. We love a challenge.

My very best wishes to SOFII and all the fundraisers out there,

Alex France
Managing director and creative partner of Vitamin X