



Response to rant puts Sandilands in his place

Death by moral opinion



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KYLE Sandilands is such an inconsequential waste of space that I would normally be reluctant to expend a single millilitre of ink or pixel of web space on his unfortunate existence.

This week I made an exception, in the first instance because of the remarkably vile nature of his attack on one of our young female staff, a sexually threatening rant where he called her "a fat slag", talked about her breasts and her hair, and issued the creepy pledge: "Watch your mouth, girl, or I will hunt you down."

All this because she wrote an unremarkable news piece about the unpopularity of his new TV show.

I've decided to saddle up again today because there is an interesting broader lesson from the Sandilands episode.

Not to put too fine a point on it, the long-overdue commercial destruction of Kyle Sandilands shows that you can no longer be an abusive, hate-filled arsehole without facing consequences.

It has been a victory for public opinion and mainstream standards on two counts.

First has been the utter shredding of what little reputation this cretin still had, with some long-overdue collateral damage to the back end of his pantomime horse, Jackie O, who was elegantly described by the ABC's Mark Colvin as Sandilands' "cackling enabler".

Second has been the pace and breadth of Sandilands' abandonment by decent brands that had promoted themselves on his show, with whatever misgivings they had previously about his squalid and inane content being eclipsed by their desire to access his bafflingly large radio audience.

The list of advertisers that have dumped this disgraced show is quite staggering: Holden, Telstra, Fantastic Furniture, Toys R Us, Blackmores, American Express, Ford, Lexus, Blackberry, Olympus, Coles Online, Piazza D'oro.

As of deadline Myer, Target and Holiday Inn were the sole remaining advertisers, but they too were expected to follow suit and pull their cash. Some of the advertisers have not just shifted their support from *The Kyle and*



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Picture: CHANNEL 7/GLEN McCURTAYNE

Jackie O Show but the entire Austereo network.

The cost of Kyle's spray so far? Eight million bucks.

Not bad for 90 seconds of brain-dead radio.

Explain that to the chief financial officer, smart guy.

In the past Kyle has been a bit like the hydra, where his head has been chopped off and a new one has appeared in its place. After his many brief puntings from different shows, he pops up in a new guise soon after with renewed commercial support.

This time it looks almost unrecoverable. Even if a TV station or a radio station wanted to give him another platform, it now looks like no advertiser will take the risk of associating with

him. And that can only mean one thing. No show.

Things have now changed, and it is due in large part to the power of public opinion and the ease with which people can convey their unfettered disgust via social media.

It will be almost impossible for any of the aforementioned advertisers to creep back on to Kyle's show without being busted and then berated all over the land.

This week an organisation called change.org has played a lead role in publicising the names of 2Day FM's advertisers, then lauding them as they have abandoned their shows.

The applause has been shared across Twitter, with tens of thousands of people applauding Holden when it

became the first advertiser to ditch the show.

I wrote one tweet after the car-maker canned its ads saying "There's nothing like a Holden. Cop that, Kyle" and linking to the web address for our news.com.au coverage of the Holden boycott.

The tweet itself was seen by 12,000 people and by the end of the week the news story on the boycott had been read more than one million times.

For a brand that does the right thing, these are terrific numbers.

The flipside of this new power for social expression was felt by Qantas this week on an unrelated issue, with the airline's ill-timed decision to launch a promotion called "Qantas luxury",

whereby travellers could win a free pair of First Class pyjamas (whoopy-doo) if they wrote a tweet about what Qantas luxury meant to them.

And so the tweets began: "Qantas luxury is walking across the tarmac to find an airline that hasn't left 60,000 passengers stranded."

"Qantas luxury is working all your life for an airline only to be locked out."

And so on. An unmanageable disaster for a business that already has enough headaches.

If you get it right though, or show that you are listening to the community, it is a very effective tool.

The Sandilands episode has also been a powerful example of the free market taking care of things.

It was brought about by public disgust, expressed freely and vigorously on every possible platform, fuelled by some conventional news coverage and some fiery opinion pieces condemning the guy, culminating with meetings being held at more than a dozen of the country's biggest businesses, where mature executives made the level-headed decision that there would be none of their money spent where Kyle's mouth is.

You don't need regulations to knock him off, the public did it itself.

And that's the broader lesson for everyone who exists in the public domain, journalists included — if you ignore public opinion and mainstream standards, the mob will come after you too. That can only be a good thing.

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