

## **Purpose Disruptors Ireland Opening Statement Joint Oireachtas Committee on Environment and Climate Action**

1. I'm Laura Costello and I am here representing Purpose Disruptors Ireland today. Purpose Disruptors is a community-driven network of Marketing and Advertising insiders with a mission to catalyse the advertising industry's climate transition to align with the IPCC's 1.5 degree global warming target. The focus of our work is to help those in the industry to reimagine and reshape the role of advertising to support a thriving future. We drive this by facilitating collaboration and providing frameworks and tools to guide our industry in the right direction.

2. It is clear that advertising drives consumption and consumption contributes to climate change. Household consumption is responsible for 72% of global greenhouse gas emissions, making them key actors in reaching the 1.5 °C goal. The Hot or Cool Institute in Berlin found that the lifestyle footprint target for 2050 (0.7 tonnes of CO2 equivalent) is exceeded in all countries they researched. According to the EPA, emissions per capita in Ireland increased last year to 12.3 tonnes CO2 equivalent per person in 2021. To meet our targets this needs to reduce dramatically - to 0.7 tonnes by 2050. Not addressing the reduction in emissions from lifestyle and households puts the requirement to cut Ireland's emissions to net zero by 2050 at risk.

3. On the other hand, the IPCC has also made clear the enormous opportunity: "*Socio-cultural changes within transition pathways can offer Gigaton-scale CO2 savings potential at the global level.*" This means we need people to *want to* change, *en masse*. Advertising does more than just sell - it drives desire, creates culture and shapes society. It drives mass attitude and behaviour change. Advertising is a \$600 billion industry - it will grow to €1.23 billion in Ireland this year. Every day, virtually every human on the planet is touched and influenced by it. It's arguably the biggest engine of societal change in existence. As the architects of desire, the industry will play a vital role in determining whether the world will successfully transition towards a low-carbon, sustainable society.

4. The level of transformation we need is massive. The UN Environment Programme's Emissions Gap Report from October 2022 states that we require 'wide-ranging, large-scale and systemic transformation'. It goes on to say that 'the only way to limit the worst impacts of the climate crisis is a "rapid transformation of societies."' The ad industry needs to go through its own radical transformation in order for it to help accelerate systemic societal transformation.

5. We know what this paradigm shift requires. In the UK, Purpose Disruptors and Magic Numbers recently calculated the nation's Advertised Emissions for 2022. Borrowing from the idea of Financed Emissions, already established in the finance industry, Advertised Emissions are the greenhouse gas emissions that result from the uplift in sales generated by advertising. Things are going in the wrong direction - Advertised Emissions have risen by 11% from 2019 to 2022 to 208 million tonnes of CO2e. This is equivalent to 9 coal fired power plants. This means advertising is responsible for an extra 32% to the carbon footprint of every single person in the country. High carbon industries are driving this increase. While the same research has yet to be commissioned in Ireland, we know that consumption is

growing in a similar trajectory here with UK adspend predicted to rise by 9.2% this year versus Ireland's 10.9% rise.

6. We need to find ways to achieve steep reductions in these emissions at a rapid pace - to disrupt the purpose of advertising with new aspirational visions for tomorrow, supported by actions for *today*. Right now the change we see is focused on production and operations, it is slow and doesn't go deep into the heart of the creative work, the area where we are having the biggest impact on society. We are extremely concerned about this - the Ad Net Zero initiative found that 71% of people in advertising are worried about the negative impacts of our industry on the environment.

7. Purpose Disruptors' position is that our industry needs to take responsibility for reducing its impact and optimising the creative work it puts into the world. In order to make this industry transition faster and easier to manage, this science requires us to change what is advertised. This starts with doing less harm.

8. The skills in the advertising industry are essential for the radical transformation Irish society requires. It can accelerate the adoption of goods, services, behaviours and attitudes which are consistent with a profitable and progressive transition to a Net Zero economy. We have seen advertising's brilliance as a positive force in society on many fronts - saving lives with campaigns encouraging the use of seatbelts and Covid-19 safety measures.

9. The Advertised Emissions data shows us that the most effective way to achieve a reduction in these emissions is to restrict the highest carbon products in the most carbon intensive categories, for example fossil fuels, transport such as automotive and flying, as well as red meat. Taking the ban on cigarette advertising as an example, we can predict that if there was a ban on categories of high-carbon products and service categories (which has happened already in the likes of France with fossil fuels and Holland with meat), we would see a corresponding decline in carbon emissions.

10. The vast majority of people in Ireland have a desire to see the industry adapt to this potential too - in 2020 Purpose Disruptors Ireland and Behaviour & Attitudes found that, because of its influence, 90% think it is the advertising and creative industry's responsibility to encourage and normalise more sustainable behaviours.

11. Purpose Disruptors' position on the opportunity for the industry is that we are required to look beyond treating people as 'consumers' who buy things, and invite people to discover their agency as citizens, helping us all to adopt sustainable behaviours through its communications. This reframe can't be a few niche 'sustainability' focused agencies or campaigns - it needs to sit at the heart of the industry to achieve the scale and pace required. To begin, we need less investment in high-carbon campaigns and more investment in campaigns that will push us toward our 1.5 degree goal. By accelerating the position of doing less harm, we can then reapply the incredible creative effectiveness of the industry, with appropriate speed and scale, to more life-affirming outcomes for all.