



Ad Standards Community Panel
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AdStandards.com.au

Advertising Standards Bureau Limited
ACN 084 452 666

Case Report

1	Case Number	0128/19
2	Advertiser	Sony Interactive Entertainment Australia Pty Ltd
3	Product	Entertainment
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV - On Demand
5	Date of Determination	08/05/2019
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.3 - Violence Violence

2.6 - Health and Safety Within prevailing Community Standards

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The TV on Demand advertisement opens with a close up of a bullet, which the protagonist of the Game (Deacon St. John) is holding. The camera zooms out to show Deacon putting the bullet into his gun. The scene changes to show Deacon being chased by a Freaker wolf and being knocked off his bike. The screen flashes back to the original scene zooming out further to reveal a dead Freaker wolf. Deacon is then shown being knocked off his bike by the wolf. Another scene is shown where Deacon is in a fist fight with some Freaker/human enemies. The original scene is then shown again further zooming out to reveal dead bodies. Another shot is then shown of Deacon firing his cross bow at a barrel which explodes next to a group of armed Freaker/humans. The original shot is then shown a final time, further zoomed out to reveal a screaming Freaker standing in front of Deacon. Deacon stands up and lowers his gun and as he does so the Freaker lets out a screech which causes Deacon to raise his gun again. In the background a horde of Freakers begin to close in behind Deacon, and as Deacon realises this he begins to turn around before the advertisement ends. The voiceover throughout the advertisement states "One bullet left, who's it for? The strong? The weak? Or the hopeless? This world will come for you. And it will never stop. One bullet left."



THE COMPLAINT

A sample of comments which the complainant/s made regarding this advertisement included the following:

Encourage suicide

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complainant/s regarding this advertisement include the following:

Days Gone is a video game (the Game) set in a fantasy post-apocalyptic world where the human race has been decimated by a virus, leaving the majority of the world inhabited by mindless creatures called "Freakers".

The intention of the advertisement is to recreate the fantasy post-apocalyptic tone of the Game and to show how challenging and hostile it is being a survivor in that world. The central theme of the Game itself is that the protagonist is in "survivor-mode", forced to deal with various "kill or be killed" scenarios and this type of action is depicted in the advertisement.

Nowhere in the advertisement are images of suicide explicitly presented or depicted. To the extent that it may be implied at the end of the advertisement as one of the possible options which the protagonist faces, logically there would be no point to the Game if the protagonist made this choice (to essentially give up) or did anything other than fight back against adversity.

We consider the reasonable viewer would be familiar with this type of "survivor-mode/kill or be killed" tension and understand that in all likelihood the hero ultimately prevails, as is often depicted in media including films and television. We therefore consider that portraying the tension the protagonist faces in the way depicted in the advertisement is appropriate in the circumstances of a survivor-style videogame.

Moreover, the context of the advertisement is a fantasy world where zombie like creatures exist. We would expect the reasonable viewer to understand that the advertisement does not depict or reflect the real world and/or a person dealing with recognisable mental health issues.

The advertisement is intended for a mature audience. The Game is rated MA15+. The advertisement was shown on Channel Nine's on-demand platform post 8.30pm which was appropriate for the relevant audience and medium.



We consider therefore that the images presented in the advertisement are appropriate in the context of advertising a videogame and that the advertisement does not depict material that is contrary to Prevailing Community Standards (as per 2.6 of the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics).

Please note, this TV campaign is scheduled to end on 5th May 2019.

THE DETERMINATION

The Ad Standards Community Panel (Panel) considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics (the Code).

The Panel noted the complainant's concern that the advertisement appeared to encourage suicide.

The Panel viewed the advertisement and the noted advertiser's response.

The Panel noted that this TV on Demand advertisement is promoting the game 'Days Gone' and features a character loading a bullet into a gun. A voice over states "one bullet let who's it for? The strong? The Weak? Or the hopeless? This world will come for you. And it will never stop". A series of scenes depicting the protagonist fighting with a wolf, a person and zombie enemies are shown. The protagonist is then seen facing one zombie character, and then a hoard of zombie characters appear on the horizon. The voice over restates, "One bullet left". The words 'greatness awaits' are shown.

The Panel considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.3 of the Code. Section 2.3 states: "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised".

The Panel noted that the advertisement featured a number of violent and graphic scenes including a man being attacked by a wolf, a man arguing with another man and punching him in the face, two dead men on the ground, an explosion and a zombie-like character screaming.

The Panel noted the advertiser's response that the advertisement is intended for a mature audience and is only shown after 8:30pm.

The Panel considered that while the advertisement does feature realistic styled violence it was easily identifiable as taking place in the zombie apocalypse world of the game. The Panel considered that while the advertisement does contain graphic images, the product being advertised is a violent video game and the violence in the advertisement is stylised fantasy violence and is not realistic or detailed and is



justifiable in the context of this product.

In the Panel's view the violence portrayed in the advertisement was justifiable in the context of the product advertised and did not breach Section 2.3 of the Code.

The Panel considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.6 of the Code. Section 2.6 of the Code states: "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety".

The Panel noted the complainant's concern that the advertisement appears to encourage suicide of the character and that this could be damaging to children or those feeling isolated.

The Panel noted the advertiser's response that the advertisement does not explicitly mention suicide, and that in the context of a computer game the concept of suicide is not logical.

The Panel considered that there is a strong trope in zombie media of always keeping the last bullet for yourself, so that you can use it on yourself rather than becoming a zombie. The Panel considered that the two references in the advertisement to 'one bullet left' may be interpreted by some members of the community as a reference to suicide being an option.

The Panel acknowledged that there is concern in the community about references to suicide in the media and that community standards in this area would require the issue of suicide to be handled with sensitivity and not be portrayed flippantly. The Panel also noted that there is a high rate of suicide amongst teenage males and young men who would be one of the primary audiences for this game and that it would be concerning having a message that appears to show suicide as the only escape directly targeted at this demographic.

The Panel, however, considered that the trope of keeping a bullet for yourself would not be understood by all members of the community, and that there is no direct mention of suicide in the advertisement.

The Panel considered that the advertisement was set in the context of a fantastical apocalyptic scenario and that the reference to having one bullet left would be understood by most members of the community as referring to the character needing to decide which enemy he should shoot to escape.

The Panel considered that the advertisement did not appear to encourage suicide as a means of escape and did not depict material contrary to prevailing community standards on health and safety and did not breach Section 2.6 of the Code.



Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on other grounds, the Panel dismissed the complaint.

