



Case Report

1	Case Number	0136/17
2	Advertiser	Ubisoft P/L
3	Product	Toys and Games
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Poster
5	Date of Determination	12/04/2017
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.3 - Violence Weapons

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement under complaint is a portrait colour panel for the video game titled Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Wildlands. It depicts two fictional characters atop a mountain, surveying an industrial factory in the valley below, as well as the surrounding mountains. The characters are a part of a squad of soldiers (called Ghosts) and in the distance you can see a third member of the squad, parachuting. The two soldiers in the forefront of the creative are holding weapons. No weapons are pointing towards the viewer of the ad.

The advertisement also features three retail packs of the video game (PlayStation, Xbox, PC) indicating the platforms the game is available to be purchased on. Also featured is the game & company logo, tagline and consumer classification rating (MA15+).

THE COMPLAINT

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

I object to the campaign because it shows someone holding a hand gun in open view. I don't believe that it is appropriate for hand guns to be displayed on a poster at a bus stop. Children of all age would easily see this poster either as a passenger in a car, walking past or actually using the bus stop. Looking at the company's website there appears to be other images they could have used that did not display the hand gun.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The advertisement under complaint is a portrait colour panel for a video game titled Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Wildlands, where players play as members of the Ghosts, a fictional elite special operations team in the United States Army.

The advertisement is part of a wider outdoor advertising campaign with vendors JC Decaux, Adshel and APN placed across a variety of inventory nationally (JC Decaux & Adshel – Sydney, Melbourne & Brisbane only, while APN is nationally). This particular advertisement was a part of our JC Decaux campaign in Melbourne, which ran on Bus shelters in the city from February 28 - March 13, 2017. These advertisements were placed according to the inventory made available by the vendor, with sites not being chosen individually.

As stated above, the advertisement depicts two fictional characters atop a mountain, surveying an industrial factory in the valley below, as well the surrounding mountains. These fictional characters are a squad of soldiers, called Ghosts, who you will play in the video game. Being soldiers, they are depicted carrying military styled gear, such as headsets, microphones, backpacks and weapons.

The intention of the advertisement is to convey three of the games key features:

- Co-operative play - meaning players can team up online to form a squad of four players. This is signalled to the player via the creative featuring a team of soldiers on the image.*
- An open world adventure - which means that the game has a large sandbox where the player moves freely through a virtual world and is given considerable freedom in regard to how and when to approach particular objectives. This is signalled by the sprawling and varied landscape the creative illustrates. The creative is bright and colourful to highlight the beauty of the world the player will inhabit*
- That the game is a military action adventure game.*

The creative was also selected as it is the same creative used on the front pack of the game displayed at retail.

As you will be aware, the Outdoor industry is a self-regulating body overseen by the Outdoor Media Association (OMA). JC Decaux, as well as all other Outdoor vendors follow their guidelines on what's considered acceptable on their formats. In relation to the creative in question, JC Decaux reviewed the creative and assessed it against clause 2.3 of the AANA Code of Ethics (attached), "2.3 Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised". With respect to this, the creative was deemed to not breach this clause.

In respect to Violence specifically, while the creative does feature weapons, none of these are

pointed at the viewer of the ad, lessening impact. The creative does not show any blood, violence or other adult content. The image shows no suggestion of menace present and therefore we believe it complies with the guidelines.

Additionally, the creative does not feature any:

- *Discrimination or vilification*
- *Exploitative and degrading content*
- *Violence*
- *Sex, sexuality and nudity*
- *Adult Language*
- *Health and Safety concerns.*

Lastly, Computer and Video Games are classified by the Australian Classification Board, an official Australian Government agency. Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Wildlands has been classified MA15+ and is intended for audiences of 15 years of age and over.

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board (the "Board") considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics (the "Code").

The Board noted the complainants' concerns that the advertisement includes an image of a man with a hand gun which is alarming for children.

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

The Board 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 Board noted the poster advertisement was at a bus stop and is promoting an Xbox game called Ghost Recon – Wildlands. The image includes two characters on top of a mountain. They are part of the squad called ghosts. They are in military style gear with headsets, backpacks and weapons.

The Board noted the Practice Note to the Code which states that "The Board has also found that a strong suggestion of menace presents violence in an unacceptable manner and breaches this section of the Code."

The Board noted the depiction of characters from the game which is a military, special operations type of game. The Board considered that it is reasonable for the advertiser to include images of the characters and scenes to promote the game as long as the images are not excessively violent.

The Board noted that the men are both holding guns. One man appears to have his gun pointing toward something below and the man in the foreground has a hand gun pointing toward the ground.

The Board noted that the men are not seen harming anyone or damaging anything and in the Board's view the advertisement's suggestion of an imminent battle is justifiable and relevant to the product.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.3 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on other grounds, the Board dismissed the complaints.