



**Ad Standards** Community Panel  
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**AdStandards.com.au**

Advertising Standards Bureau Limited  
ACN 084 452 666

# Case Report

1	<b>Case Number</b>	<b>0190/18</b>
2	<b>Advertiser</b>	<b>Universal Pictures</b>
3	<b>Product</b>	<b>Entertainment</b>
4	<b>Type of Advertisement / media</b>	<b>TV - Free to air</b>
5	<b>Date of Determination</b>	<b>24/04/2018</b>
6	<b>DETERMINATION</b>	<b>Dismissed</b>

## ISSUES RAISED

2.3 - Violence Causes alarm and distress to Children

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The television advertisement features scenes from the upcoming movie Truth or Dare which includes teenagers playing the game 'truth or dare' with references to supernatural themes.

## THE COMPLAINT

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

*An inappropriate and confronting trailer for this rubbish movie during a family TV show. Commonsensemedia.org describes this film as "it promises to be a graphic slasher movie that won't be a good fit for young viewers or anyone squeamish. Expect gory deaths, strong language, and sexual content".*

*Whoever at the 9 network scheduled this as during this time slot should be fined.*

*Scared my daughter who was on her way to bed*

## THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE





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

*The below response is in relation to the complaints received regarding the UNIVERSAL PICTURES advertising for TRUTH OR DARE, specifically in regards to the TVC advertisements depicting violence which has caused offence to some viewers.*

*Universal Pictures International Australasia adhere to the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics.*

*Section 2.3 of the Code states "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised."*

*Truth or Dare is a supernatural thriller film which contains numerous scenes which could be scary in nature. It would therefore be reasonable to justify that our advertising materials have been produced within the context of the product being advertised.*

*Universal Pictures strive to advertise films of this content in a manner that remains appropriate for all consumers.*

*All advertising content from Universal Pictures is broadcast on FTA TV once rated by the Commercials Advice Board which is industry compliant with the advertising standards code of conduct.*

*To ensure due diligence, prior to activity going live IMD (on behalf of Universal Pictures) liaises with CAD to obtain approval on the TRUTH OR DARE TVC spots.*

*Universal Pictures produced a number of TV spots for the TRUTH OR DARE TV campaign and each spot was classified by CAD - the TV spots in question received a J rating (attached).*

*In this instance, we obtained CAD clearance to display the advertisement according to the guidelines provided for a J rating.*

*The following approval was obtained by Universal Pictures from CAD:  
Parental Guidance/Warning "J" Definition: Parental Guidance Recommended/Care in placement May be broadcast at any time of day, except during P and C programs or adjacent to P or C periods. Exercise care when placing in programs principally directed to children*

*The above CAD guidelines were adhered to and the spot was cleared for broadcast at*



*any time of day except in P or C rated programming.*

*Universal Pictures and MediaCom exercised care with the planning and selection of the TV schedule and focused on programming that skews 18+.*

*Please also note that all advertising materials for this film have displayed the CTC (Check the Classification) logo for the required duration.*

*We apologise for any distress caused and would like to reassure all parties involved that we have adhered to all required standards and the industry code of conduct in relation to the advertising materials and placements for this film.*

## **THE DETERMINATION**

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

The Panel noted the complainants’ concerns that the advertisement features frightening scenes that are inappropriate for the timeslot of a family television program in which it aired.

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

The Panel noted that there were two versions of this television advertisement which featured similar scenes from the movie Truth or Dare. The Panel noted that the advertisement received a J rating by FreeTV. The FreeTV Code of Practice states that a J commercial is a subsection of the Parental Guidance classification, and may contain careful presentations of adult themes or concepts which are mild in impact and remain suitable for children to watch with supervision. The Code also states that J commercials may be aired at any time of day, exception during preschool/children’s programs, and that care should be taken when placing in programs principally directed to children ([http://www.freetv.com.au/media/CAD/Placement\\_Codes.pdf](http://www.freetv.com.au/media/CAD/Placement_Codes.pdf)).

The Panel considered whether the advertisement’s two versions were 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 the complainants’ concerns that the advertisement contained scenes of violence and scary scenes that scared their children. The Panel noted that the complainants’ saw the advertisement in evening viewing times.

The Panel noted that this television advertisement features scenes from the upcoming



movie Truth or Dare which includes teenagers playing the game 'truth or dare' with references to supernatural themes. The Panel noted that there are several scenes of characters' drinking and kissing, and several scenes with the characters' showing unnatural expressions with black eyes and smiling mouths.

The Panel noted the advertiser's response that the film is a supernatural thriller and that scary scenes and violence are therefore justifiable in context.

The Panel considered whether the advertisement showed violence or horror themes, and noted that although there is no specific violence in the advertisement there is a sense of menace and horror themes. The Panel considered that the advertisement was for a supernatural horror film and therefore horror themes were relevant to the product. The Panel considered that the level of the horror themes was mild and not inappropriate given the parental guidance recommended classification of the advertisement.

The Panel considered that the advertisement is suspenseful rather than graphic but noted that some scenes in conjunction with the audio background may be frightening for children.

The Panel noted the advertiser's response that the advertisement placements were targeted towards a people 18+ audience demographic. The Panel considered that the advertiser should ask for the advertisement to be placed in a later timeslot if the target is 18+.

The Panel noted the Practice Note to Section 2.3 of 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 Panel noted that the advertisement is fairly menacing and features several scenes of people in distress, however the Panel considered that the sense of menace was not excessive for the parental guidance classification of the advertisement.

The Panel also noted that there is no specific violence in the advertisement that breaches the Code of Ethics and the horror themes in the advertisement are mild, which is consistent with the parental guidance recommended classification of the advertisement.

The Panel considered 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 Panel dismissed the complaints.

