



Case Report

1	Case Number	0193/15
2	Advertiser	Universal Pictures
3	Product	Entertainment
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Poster
5	Date of Determination	27/05/2015
6	DETERMINATION	Upheld - Modified or Discontinued

ISSUES RAISED

2.6 - Health and Safety Within prevailing Community Standards

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This poster advertisement features a Google search with "Laura Bar" typed in the search field. The drop down menu includes the following options: "Suicide, party photos, passed out video, boyfriend, bullied, possession".

The background is black and the text is white. At the bottom of the advertisement it reads, "April 30, Revenge comes online. Unfriended".

THE COMPLAINT

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

I feel that it is inappropriate for youngsters to read that, specifically suicide, passed out, bullied and possession.

If the media doesn't even report on suicides or attempted suicides, I don't think it is appropriate for that to be on print as an ad for a movie. I'm sure there are other features of the story that can be highlighted instead.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The complainant outlines that as the media are unable to report on suicide incidences, then the word 'suicide' shouldn't be printed on a movie poster.

We can assure that the poster artwork, and all advertising materials, for UNFRIENDED adhere to the legal advertising guidelines. The check the classification logo was placed on the poster material initially, and was promptly updated with the formal MA 15 + Strong themes, violence and coarse language classification as soon as the film was classified. Universal Pictures Australia does not condone the strong themes, violence and coarse language of the film outside of the purely fictional viewing experience and have adhered to all regulatory guidelines accordingly.

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board (“Board”) considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (the “Code”).

The Board noted the complainant’s concern that the advertisement features the word suicide which is against prevailing community standards.

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

The Board considered 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 Board noted that this poster advertisement for a movie called, ‘Unfriended’ features a screenshot of a Google search on the name ‘Laura Bar...’ and one of the drop down options reads, ‘Laura Barns suicide’.

The Board noted the advertiser’s response that the content of the advertisement adheres to ‘legal advertising guidelines’.

The Board noted that there is strong community concern around the issue of suicide and the link between cyber-bullying and self-harm.

The Board noted the Australian Press Council’s Standards Relating to Suicide, 2011 (<http://www.presscouncil.org.au/document-search/standard-suicide-reporting/>) which provides:

“Published material relating to suicide should be accompanied by information about appropriate 24-hour crisis support services or other sources of assistance with these problems...”

The Board noted that research has shown that mention of the word ‘suicide’ has been shown to be a trigger to some members of the community

(<http://www.livingisforeveryone.com.au/uploads/docs/LIFE-research-web.pdf>, page 23).

The Board noted that the use of the term 'suicide' in the advertisement is in the context of a movie promotion and a minority of the Board considered that its use in this context and the relevance of the word to the theme of the movie was not inappropriate and did not breach Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety.

The majority of the Board however noted that as well as the word 'suicide' the other Google search references included 'party photos' and 'boyfriend' and considered that by displaying the word 'suicide' in this context it trivialises and normalises an issue which is serious.

The majority of the Board noted that whilst there is no obligation for the promoter of a movie to provide information about appropriate support services for anyone concerned about the issue of suicide in the Board's view it is not appropriate to display this word in an advertisement without providing support services information and in the absence of support information in the context of this advertisement, the concept of suicide can be seen as attractive an option as being at a party or with your boyfriend.

The majority of the Board considered that the use of the word 'suicide' in the advertisement was a depiction of material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety around mental health issues.

The Board determined that the advertisement did breach Section 2.6 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement did breach the Code the Board upheld the complaint.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE TO DETERMINATION

All marketing for Unfriended on behalf of the Universal Pictures Theatrical Department has ceased and the posters are no longer in market.