



Ad Standards Community Panel
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Advertising Standards Bureau Limited
ACN 084 452 666

Case Report

1	Case Number	0194/19
2	Advertiser	Roadshow Films
3	Product	Entertainment
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Transport
5	Date of Determination	10/07/2019
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.3 - Violence Causes alarm and distress
- 2.3 - Violence Causes alarm and distress to Children
- 2.3 - Violence Weapons

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This transport advertisement for Child's Play features a doll with red eyes wearing a striped shirt and overalls with the word 'Buddi' embroidered on them. The doll is holding a knife. Empty Buddi doll packages can be seen in the background and the words 'Time to Play' are in the top right-hand corner and details of the movie are at the bottom.

THE COMPLAINT

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

I'm horrified that such content is permitted in a public space. It's scary to look at and highly inappropriate for a bus. If such things cannot be advertised on tv why should they be allowed on a bus

My young child was frightened and asked why the doll was holding a knife. These ads are in places children would see and are frightening. I should not have to explain a





frightening image to my child on the way to school.

It is a frightening image and not suitable for any children. Given the rating of this movie the advertising of this should be kept to places where adults and those old enough to find the information can do so themselves. It should not be forced upon small innocent children or anyone for that matter.

The ad resonates with young children as a horror film that they are extremely frightened off. This film is a 'part 2' so the children are well aware of Chucky the Doll and have suffered extremely from anxiety. Now that this ad is running for the part 2 - my son is extremely anxious and scared - the ad running is too high in visibility for young children. He has even asked why they have to make films like this - please remove these ads from buses that are in a school hours, and all TV programming. He loves to watch The Voice but now is highly stressed because he thinks the commercial will run (even a PG version is frightening as the children know the content.)

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The outdoor creative contains no discriminatory material, strong or obscene language, nudity, no material contrary to health and safety standards or supernatural themes. The creative depicts a doll holding a knife (which could potentially be seen as scary) however this is the main character from the film being advertised and accordingly unavoidable. The creative was also approved by all outdoor media suppliers prior to us going to print/ booking the sites.

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 complainants' concerns that the advertisement:

- features a frightening image of a doll holding a knife;
- is too scary for display in areas where children are likely to view it;
- is for a movie rated MA which is not appropriate to advertise where children can see it.

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

The Panel noted that this transport advertisement was promoting the movie 'Child's



Play'. The Panel noted that the advertisement features a static image of a doll with red eyes holding a knife. Details of the movie are displayed along with the tagline 'time to play'.

The Panel noted the complainants' concerns that it is inappropriate to advertise a movie rated for adults to a child audience.

The Panel acknowledged that some members of the community would prefer for this type of product not to be advertised where children are likely to see it, however considered that this product is legally able to be advertised in a public space. The Panel considered that the provisions of the Code do not cover the placement of advertisements and that it was only able to consider the content of the advertisement itself.

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 the complainants' concerns that the advertisement features a scary image which would be particularly frightening to a young audience.

The Panel considered that the doll in the advertisement was holding what appears to be a large knife, but considered that this knife was not being held in a threatening position which indicated the doll was attacking anyone. The Panel considered that there was no blood or gore in the advertisement and no actual violence depicted. The Panel considered that the dark colours of the advertisement, combined with the red-eyed-doll holding a knife did give the advertisement a menacing tone, but considered that the low level of menace was justifiable in the context of an advertisement for a horror movie.

In the Panel's view there was no violence portrayed in the advertisement, and that the menacing tone was justifiable in the context of the product advertised and did not breach Section 2.3 of the Code.

The Panel 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 Panel noted the advertisement may raise a concern regarding the doll holding a knife dangerously and that this could be considered to undermine knife safety messages.

The Panel acknowledged that the issue of safe handling and storage of knives is



important to most members of the community and that most members of the community would consider it unsafe for children to hold knives.

The Panel however considered that most people, even children, viewing the advertisement would understand the character to be a doll and not a child. The Panel considered that the doll character in the advertisement was not depicted in an aspirational manner, and that the advertisement was not encouraging children to pick up knives or hold knives in a threatening manner. The Panel considered that the depiction of the doll in the advertisement would not undermine important health and safety messages around knife safety.

In the Panel's view the depiction of the doll holding a knife was not a depiction that would be contrary to prevailing community standards on health and safety. The Panel determined that the advertisement 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 complaints.

