



Ad Standards Community Panel
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AdStandards.com.au

Advertising Standards Bureau Limited
ACN 084 452 666

Case Report

1	Case Number	0195/19
2	Advertiser	Roadshow Films
3	Product	Entertainment
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Billboard
5	Date of Determination	10/07/2019
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.3 - Violence Causes alarm and distress to Children

2.3 - Violence Weapons

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This billboard 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:

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.

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 does contain an image of a doll, however this is the main character in the movie being advertised and accordingly unavoidable.

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 which is too scary for display in areas where children are likely to view it.

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

The Panel noted that this billboard 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 complainant's concern 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 complainant's concern that the advertisement features an image of a doll holding a knife 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 complaint.

