



**Ad Standards** Community Panel  
PO Box 5110, Braddon ACT 2612  
P (02) 6173 1500 | F (02) 6262 9833

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Advertising Standards Bureau Limited  
ACN 084 452 666

# Case Report

1	Case Number	0210/19
2	Advertiser	Roadshow Films
3	Product	Entertainment
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV - Free to air
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

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement has five versions and is promoting the movie 'Annabelle Comes Home'.

## THE COMPLAINT

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

*We are watching a family movie with small children & I don't want to see this on my television.*

*Shows disturbing images of possessed doll that is impossible to unsee. Due to spontaneity of advertising it does not give sufficient warning to switch off. Horror images should not be advertised at any time. I am an adult who cannot watch horror movies but this gave me no choice but to see. Images such as these gave me anxiety and feelings of unease and suspense when I was watching tv to unwind.*



*They are far too graphic & really frightening. Extremely frightening & are not appropriate for free to air tv.*

## **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE**

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

*The complaint relates to television advertising for the theatrical release of ANNABELLE COMES HOME. The film release a classification rating of M for theatrical release.*

*The television spots contains no discriminatory material, strong or obscene language, nudity, no material contrary to health and safety standards – they do depict some violence and contain scary/ supernatural themes – all spots received an “M” CAD classification as a result of this.*

## **THE DETERMINATION**

The Ad Standards Community Panel (Panel) considered whether the series of versions collectively forming this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics (the Code).

The Panel noted the complainants' concerns that the advertisement promoting the movie “Annabelle Comes Home” is:

- far too graphic and frightening
- inappropriate to be advertised at a time when children can see
- can create feelings of unease and suspense in viewers

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

The Panel noted the five versions of the advertisement and that each version had been given an ‘M’ rating by ClearAds meaning that the advertisement “May be broadcast during the following hours, except during P and C programs or adjacent to P or C periods:

Weekdays (schooldays):

o 7.30pm – 6.00am

o 12 noon - 3.00pm (see Note 1)

Public Holidays, Weekdays (school holidays) & Weekends:

o 7.30pm – 6.00am”

([http://www.freetv.com.au/media/CAD/Placement\\_Codes.pdf](http://www.freetv.com.au/media/CAD/Placement_Codes.pdf))

The Panel noted that it is not possible to identify which version of the advertisement was the subject of individual complaints and as such proceeded to consider the



content of all versions in adjudicating these complaints.

The Panel noted the complainants' concerns that it is inappropriate to advertise horror movies to a child audience.

The Panel acknowledged that some members of the community would prefer for this type of product not to be advertised at a time when children are likely to see it, however considered that this product is legally able to be advertised in a public space and was played at times consistent with its rating. 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 that there are five 15 second versions of this television advertisement.

Version One features:

- a girl looking at a large doll
  - the girl's voice as a voice over saying "She's possessed the artefact room" - a door creaks open to show the doll standing behind it
  - another girl says, "who, Anabelle?"
  - a figure wearing a horned helmet turns its head
  - a woman and two girls crouch together
  - a woman in a dark room sees a large coin fall to the floor, she holds the hand up which joins another coin to form the glowing eyes of a creature. The woman screams.
- Version Two features: - a girl whispering "I let her out", another girl asking "who" and the first responding "Anabelle".

- a door creaks open to show the doll standing behind it
- a woman runs down a hallway
- a figure wearing a horned helmet turns its head
- a shadow of a girl on a wall which transforms into a shadow of a taller cloaked figure
- a voice over stating "She will awaken every evil in the Conjuring Universe"
- a group of people with coins on their eyes, one of whom holds a lantern
- a group of people seen through a car windscreen
- a woman screaming
- a man lying on the road
- a man holding a cross
- a girl pulling bedsheets over her head to see a doll lying under the sheets, a figure emerges from behind the doll and screams as she moves towards the girl.



Version Three features: - an image of a door on which are signs saying “Danger! Do not touch anything!” and “The Warrens Consultants of Demonology Witchcraft”  
- the sounds of someone screaming and saying “Help! Help me please! What is happening?! No! No!”.

Version Four features:

- a close up view of a doll’s face
- an image of a woman picking up the doll
- a sign saying “The Warrens Consultants of Demonology Witchcraft”
- a girl unlocking a door and opening it
- a girl whispering “I let her out”, another girl asking “who” and the first responding “Anabelle”
- a typewriter writing the words ‘miss me?’
- a shadow of a girl on a wall which transforms into a shadow of a taller cloaked figure
- a girl pulling bedsheets over her head to see a doll lying under the sheets, a figure emerges from behind the doll and screams as she moves towards the girl.

Version Five features:

- a large doll in a cabinet and a girl opening the cabinet door
- a girl whispering “I let her out”, another girl asking “What else did you touch?” and her response “everything”
- a woman in a dark room holds up a large coin which joins another coin to form the glowing eyes of a creature and the woman screams
- a young voice asking “can Anabelle come out to play?”
- a woman and two girls crouching together
- a group of people seen through a car windscreen
- a girl looks at her reflection in a television screen and sees a woman walk into the background, as she turns a dark figure grabs the woman and drags her away.

The Panel noted the complainant’s concerns that the advertisement is far too graphic and frightening and could create feelings of unease and suspense in viewers.

The Panel noted that the Practice Note for the Code states:

“The Community Panel has also found that a strong suggestion of menace presents violence in an unacceptable manner and breaches this section of the Code.”

The Panel considered the first version of the advertisement.

The Panel noted that the scenes were fleeting and that there was no blood or gore in this version of the advertisement. The Panel considered that most scenes in this version of the advertisement would be considered suspenseful, rather than violent. The Panel considered the music, sound effects and dialogue added to the suspenseful tone of the advertisement.

The Panel considered that the inclusion of supernatural elements, such as the word ‘possessed’, the figure wearing the helmet, and the creature with coins for eyes, were frightening but not violent. The Panel considered that the people in this version of the



advertisement appeared scared, but no-one was hurt or directly threatened.

Overall, the Panel's considered that the tone of this version of the advertisement was suspenseful and frightening, however did not contain overt violence. The Panel considered that the level of menace was not excessive in the context of an advertisement for a horror movie. In the Panel's view the menace portrayed in Version One of the advertisement was justifiable in the context of the product advertised and did not breach Section 2.3 of the Code.

The Panel considered the second version of the advertisement.

The Panel noted that the scenes were fleeting and that there was no blood or gore in this version of the advertisement. The Panel considered that most scenes in this version of the advertisement would be considered suspenseful, rather than violent. The Panel considered the music, sound effects and dialogue added to the suspenseful tone of this version of the advertisement.

The Panel considered that the inclusion of supernatural elements, such as the door opening with on its own, the shadow transforming, and people with coins for eyes, were frightening but not violent.

The Panel noted the scene at the end of this version of the advertisement where a figure moves towards a girl under the covers of the bed. The Panel considered that this version of the advertisement does not show if the girl is attacked or harmed, but there is a suggestion that the girl is being attacked. The Panel considered that this scene was threatening and could be considered violent.

Overall, the Panel's considered that the tone of this version of the advertisement was suspenseful and frightening, and contained a low level of violence. The Panel considered that the level of menace was not excessive in the context of an advertisement for a horror movie. In the Panel's view the violence and menace portrayed in Version Two of the advertisement was justifiable in the context of the product advertised and did not breach Section 2.3 of the Code.

The Panel considered the third version of the advertisement.

The Panel noted that there was no blood or gore in this version of the advertisement, and while a frightened girl is heard she is not seen. The Panel considered whilst the girl sounded scared, she did not seem as though she was in pain or being harmed. The Panel considered that the frightened screams of the girl did constitute menace, but not overt violence.

The Panel considered that the level of menace in this version of the advertisement was not excessive in the context of an advertisement for a horror movie. In the



Panel's view the menace portrayed in Version Three of the advertisement was justifiable in the context of the product advertised and did not breach Section 2.3 of the Code.

The Panel considered the fourth version of the advertisement.

The Panel noted that the scenes were fleeting and that there was no blood or gore in this version of the advertisement. The Panel considered that most scenes in this version of the advertisement would be considered suspenseful, rather than violent. The Panel considered the music, sound effects and dialogue added to the suspenseful tone of this version of the advertisement.

The Panel considered that the inclusion of supernatural elements, such as the girl's shadow transforming and the sign saying "The Warrens Consultants of Demonology Witchcraft", were frightening but not violent.

The Panel noted the scene at the end of this version of the advertisement where a figure moves towards a girl under the covers of the bed. The Panel considered that this version of the advertisement does not show if the girl is attacked or harmed, but there is a suggestion that the girl is being attacked. The Panel considered that this scene was threatening and could be considered violent.

Overall, the Panel's considered that the tone of this version of the advertisement was suspenseful and frightening, and contained a low level of violence. The Panel considered that the level of menace was not excessive in the context of an advertisement for a horror movie. In the Panel's view the violence and menace portrayed in Version Four of the advertisement was justifiable in the context of the product advertised and did not breach Section 2.3 of the Code.

The Panel considered the fifth version of the advertisement.

The Panel noted that the scenes were fleeting and that there was no blood or gore in this version of the advertisement. The Panel considered that most scenes in this version of the advertisement would be considered suspenseful, rather than violent. The Panel considered the music, sound effects and dialogue added to the suspenseful tone of this version of the advertisement.

The Panel considered that the inclusion of supernatural elements, such as the creature with coins for eyes, were frightening but not violent.

The Panel noted the scene at the end of this version of the advertisement where a woman in the background is grabbed and dragged away by a dark figure. The Panel considered that this would constitute violence. The Panel considered that the action happens in the background and is very fleeting and that it is not known who the



woman was or if she was harmed.

Overall, the Panel's considered that the tone of this version of the advertisement was suspenseful and frightening, and contained a low level of violence. The Panel considered that the level of menace was not excessive in the context of an advertisement for a horror movie. In the Panel's view the violence and menace portrayed in Version Five of the advertisement was justifiable in the context of the product advertised and did not breach Section 2.3 of the Code.

Finding that each version contained a level of violence that was justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised, the Panel determined that the Advertisement as a whole 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 complaint.

