



Ad Standards Community Panel
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AdStandards.com.au

Advertising Standards Bureau Limited
ACN 084 452 666

Case Report

1	Case Number	0214/18
2	Advertiser	IAG Insurance
3	Product	Insurance
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV - Free to air
5	Date of Determination	09/05/2018
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.3 - Violence Causes alarm and distress
- 2.3 - Violence Causes alarm and distress to Children
- 2.3 - Violence Cruelty to animals
- 2.3 - Violence Violence
- 2.4 - Sex/sexuality/nudity S/S/N - general

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement features scenes of people providing assistance across Australia set to the Hunter's and Collector's song 'Throw your arms around me'. The scenes include:

- people running into a car in pouring rain
- a surfer coming to the aid of a struggling swimmer
- a mother putting a bandage on her daughter's arm
- an NRMA van providing assistance to a woman whose car has broken down
- a firefighter rescuing a koala and giving him water
- a person in a wheelchair crowd-surfing at a concert
- a group of people pushing against the side of a train to free a person who was trapped between the train and the platform
- people assisting at a house that has been damaged in a storm



THE COMPLAINT

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

The wording and the slowing down of the song makes it creepy and sinister - sends shivers down my spine - words like " I will come for you at nighttime" and "I will squeeze the life out of you". To me it conjures up images of abuse

This is very offensive as the firefighter is trying to save the Koala.

I feel the song choice is inappropriate and trauma inducing for child sex abuse victims and those survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

The lyrics are totally inappropriate for insurance. Lines like 'Squeeze the life outta you', 'I will kiss you in four places' and 'shed your skin and lets get started' are more than merely creepy and in fact are offensive.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

NRMA Insurance's response to complaint number 0214/18

1. About NRMA Insurance

NRMA Insurance has a history of helping Australians in times of need since 1925. We are a trusted provider of insurance products in NSW, QLD, the ACT and TAS, and part of the Insurance Australia Group (IAG). IAG is a leading general insurer in Australia and New Zealand and the founding member of the Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience and Safer Communities.

NRMA Insurance has played a role in the community since its inception, working on the issues of community safety, disaster recovery and mitigation. NRMA Insurance is also a proud sponsor of the NSW and QLD State Emergency Services (SES).

2. Background to the TV Ad and the Song

The one-minute television advertisement featuring the song "Throw Your Arms Around Me" (TV Ad) is part of a broader campaign that aims to pay tribute to NRMA



Insurance's iconic heritage as a beacon of "HELP" since 1925.

In order to reclaim this proud heritage, we created a campaign that features the words "Help is who we are" which showcases Australians in everyday moments of help, both big and small. These moments include a fire service volunteer saving a koala during a bushfire (inspired by the true story from 2009 of Sam the koala) and a group of train commuters lifting a train off a trapped fellow passenger (inspired by the true story from 2014 in Perth).

These scenes are accompanied by a powerful and contemporary version of the iconic Australian song "Throw your arms around me" by Hunters & Collectors, re-interpreted by young Australian artist Ayla, with the characters from the scenes singing along to the song. We felt this reimagined cover version of the song perfectly complemented the TV Ad's scenes of Australians helping and caring for each other in the face of adversity.

We understand that the original song (which has been described as "Australia's secular hymn") is a love song. However, we are of the strong view that with the powerful and captivating imagery, the song perfectly complements the notion of "Help is who we are", and of putting your arm around a fellow Australian in need.

3. Description of the TV Ad

The TV Ad depicts several everyday moments of help, and ends with the words, "Help is who we are" followed by "NRMA Insurance. Since 1925".

The "HELP" related scenes are accompanied by the Ayla version of the Hunters & Collectors song "Throw your arms around me" as follows:

- "I will come for you at night time" – a mother checks on her children during a violent storm to ensure they are safely in the car.*
- "I will raise you from your sleep" – a surfer helps another surfer who has been hit in the head by his board and is temporarily dazed.*
- "I will kiss you in four places" – a mother comforts her child who has scraped her arms, giving her a kiss on the forehead as she dresses her wounds.*
- "As I go running along your street" – an NRMA Roadside Assist vehicle comes to the aid of a stricken motorist on a country road.*
- "I will squeeze the life right from you" – a fire service volunteer hugs a koala while squeezing his water bottle to help hydrate the koala.*
- "You will make me laugh and make me cry" – a man in a wheel chair is lifted by fellow concert-goers at a festival.*
- "We will never forget it and we may never meet again" – a crowd of commuters work together to lift a train off a stricken passenger.*
- "So shed your skin and let's get started/and you will throw your arms around me" – an NRMA Insurance representative, the SES and other volunteers and community*



members assist during a post-storm clean-up event. The TV Ad then returns to the mother from the first scene with her arm around her young daughter while talking to an NRMA Insurance representative.

4. Feedback in relation to the TV Ad

We have been delighted with the positive response we have received from NRMA Insurance customers, the general public and NRMA Insurance/IAG staff members in relation to the TV Ad. We provide a sample of that feedback below:

"I love this so much. It's exactly why I come to work every day - to help people. I am so happy that our external advertising is starting to match our internal culture again. It's really motivating." – (Public comment from the TV Ad article on campaignbrief.com).

"When [Missy Higgins] performed the song she dedicated it to her children and said the passion in the song is the same passion and love she has for her children...I love the commercial :)" - Chantelle (IAG Staff Member).

"Incredible and moving advert, makes me feel proud to be a part of IAG, fabulous song choice too!" - Aiesha (IAG Staff Member).

"I just wish to thank you for your TV ads. Sick to death of dumbed down ads for all sorts of products on the TV. Great song to use in your ads and gets across a good message. If my vehicle was[n't] covered by your company I would be looking at changing company. Great ads." – Trevor (NRMA Insurance Customer).

5. The Complaints

The three complaints received by Ad Standards allege that the TV Ad:

- Presents or portrays violence and cruelty to animals (Section 2.3 of the AANA Code);
- Presents or portrays violence (Section 2.3 of the AANA Code); and
- Does not treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience (Section 2.4 of the AANA Code).

The complaints specifically reference the following issues:

- That the TV Ad is offensive as it suggests cruelty to animals;
- That the TV Ad may be a trigger in relation to sexual abuse and stalker victims; and
- That the song used in the TV Ad is inappropriate for the insurance category.

6. NRMA Insurance's Submission

For the reasons below the complaints should be dismissed.



6.1 Discrimination or Vilification (Section 2.1 of the Code)

There is no discrimination or vilification depicted in the TV Ad.

6.2 Exploitative and Degrading (Section 2.2 of the Code)

There is no exploitative or degrading content depicted in the TV Ad.

6.3 Violence (Section 2.3 of the Code)

We note that section 2.3 of the Code states: “Advertising or Marketing Communication shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised.”

NRMA Insurance does not condone or tolerate violence of any kind and we strongly assert that the TV Ad does not contravene this section of the Code.

A. Animal Cruelty

One of the complaints relates to the scene where a fire service volunteer is shown squeezing a bottle of water to help hydrate a koala in need during a bushfire. This scene was inspired by the iconic photograph of a fire service volunteer trying to save a koala’s life during the 2009 Victorian bushfires. The complainant asserts that the TV Ad is offensive as the song lyrics played and sung during this scene are, “I will squeeze the life right from you”. These particular song lyrics were not intended to be taken literally, rather this section of the classic song was meant to be interpreted together with the visuals of the fire service volunteer gently holding and singing to the koala while trying to save its life by providing it with water. We note the firefighter is at all times seen to be acting in a caring, selfless and protective way towards the defenceless koala, and that the scene does not present or portray any violence. We strongly believe that most members of the community would understand this to be the key intention and purpose of this scene in the TV Ad.

In relation to how the koalas were treated on set, we note that they were sourced via a private Zoo who are licensed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment Victoria. Zoo handlers were on set at all times to monitor the koalas and we adhered to the Zoo’s strict guidelines in relation to the koalas’ health and safety requirements at all times.

B. Evocation of sexual abuse/stalker trauma

We note that one of the complainants asserts that the song used in the TV Ad may trigger trauma recall in relation to sexual abuse and stalker victims.

We note that the lyrics, “I will come for you at night-time/I will raise you from your sleep/I will kiss you in four places/As I go running along your street/I will squeeze the life right from you”, are paired with gentle and caring “HELP” related scenes of a mother checking on her children during a storm, a surfer assisting another injured



surfer, a mother kissing her young daughter, a young woman in a car and a fire service volunteer saving a koala during a bushfire. The TV Ad in no way presents or portrays sexual related violence, trauma or stalking of any kind. We strongly believe that most members of the community would not associate the TV Ad with any sexual abuse/stalker-related themes.

We further note that the previous Ad Standards decision (308/00) and the research report commissioned by Ad Standards in May 2009 on Community Perceptions on Violence in Advertising supports our view that no depiction of violence (neither cruelty to animals nor sexual related violence) has occurred in the TV Ad.

C. Offensive Lyrics

We note that one of the complaints referenced the lyrics of “I will squeeze the life right from you” as being offensive and inappropriate (we assume because they were deemed to present or portray violence). Please see our response in 6.3A above which confirms that this scene at no time presents or portrays any kind of violence.

For the reasons expressed above, we hold the strong view that the TV Ad does not breach section 2.3 of the Code.

6.4 Sex, sexuality and nudity (Section 2.4 of the Code)

We note that section 2.4 of the Code states: “Advertising or Marketing Communication shall treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience.”

A. Evocation of sexual abuse/stalker trauma

Please see our response in 6.3B above which confirms that the TV Ad at no time presents or portrays any kind of sexual related violence, trauma or stalking.

B. Offensive Lyrics

We note that one of the complaints referenced the lyrics of, “I will kiss you in four places” and “Shed your skin and let’s get started”, as being offensive and inappropriate (we assume because they were deemed to not treat sex/sexuality with sensitivity). As discussed above, these lyrics are paired with the gentle and caring “HELP” related scenes of a mother kissing her young daughter and a post-storm clean-up event. The TV Ad in no way presents or portrays sexual or otherwise inappropriate or offensive behaviour of any kind.

In light of the arguments above, we strongly assert that the TV Ad does not contravene section 2.4 of the Code.

6.5 Language (Section 2.5 of the Code)

There is no strong or obscene language used in the TV Ad.

6.6 Health and Safety (Section 2.6 of the Code)



The TV Ad does not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety.

We note that the production company employed a safety supervisor to consult with and supervise all aspects of safety for the cast and crew on set.

*6.7 Distinguishable as advertising (Section 2.7 of the Code)
The TV Ad is clearly distinguishable as advertising.*

6. Closing submission

We thank Ad Standards for the opportunity to provide these submissions in relation to the complaints and respectfully request Ad Standards dismiss these complaints.

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’ concern that the advertisement features violence and sexual references.

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

The Panel noted that this television advertisement features scenes of people providing assistance across Australia set to the Hunters and Collector’s song ‘Throw your arms around me’.

The Panel considered whether the advertisement breached 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’ concern that the advertisement was promoting cruelty to animals by showing the koala with the lyrics ‘I will squeeze the life out of you’.

The Panel noted the advertiser’s response that the song lyrics were not intended to be taken literally and that the purpose of the scene was to depict the koala being cared for.

The Panel considered that the line ‘I will squeeze the life out of you’ with the vision of the koala was an odd choice, however considered that the lyrics did not relate to what was being depicted on the screen.



The Panel considered the koala was shown being cared for by a firefighter in a compassionate manner and there is no suggestion that the koala is in any danger or at risk of being hurt.

The Panel considered that the koala scene does not depict violence and does not breach Section 2.3 of the Code.

The Panel then considered the complainants' concern that the advertisement contains lyrics which are suggestive of domestic and sexual violence, in particular the lines 'I will come for you at nighttime/ I will raise you from your sleep / I will kiss you in four places / As I go running along your street / I will squeeze the life out of you.'

The Panel considered the lyrics of the song relate to the intensity of sensual love between two lovers and its fleeting nature and considered that the lyrics themselves may be sexual but are not suggestive of violence. The Panel considered that the lyrics are not the focus of the advertisement and that the overall theme of the advertisement is caring, not violent.

The Panel considered that the imagery included images of help and hope and considered that these images would not be considered distressing or alarming for most members of the community.

In the Panel's view the advertisement did not contain violence and did not breach Section 2.3 of the Code.

The Panel then considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.4 of the Code. Section 2.4 of the Code states: "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience".

The Panel considered that this advertisement was given a 'G' rating by CAD and that this meant that it would be viewable by a general audience, which would include children.

The Panel noted the complainant's concern that the advertisement featured highly sexualised lyrics, in particular 'I will kiss you in four places' and 'shed your skin and let's get started.'

The Panel considered that the advertisement did not contain any sexualised images and the overall impression of the advertisement is one of hope and compassion.'

The Panel acknowledged that the lyrics of the song are sexualised, however considered that in the context of the images used the words of the song are less likely to be interpreted literally. The Panel noted that advertiser's may use iconic songs and music to appeal to audiences, but the lyrics of such songs would not necessarily be a



focus of the advertisement, or be considered as a direct narrative of an advertisement.

The Panel considered that the lyrics in the song were not sexualised and in the context of the advertisement were not inappropriate for a broad audience that would include children.

The Panel considered that the advertisement did treat the issue of sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant broad audience and determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.4 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on other grounds, the Panel dismissed the complaints.

