



Case Report

1	Case Number	0358/16
2	Advertiser	Roadshow Film Distributors Pty Ltd
3	Product	Entertainment
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Poster
5	Date of Determination	24/08/2016
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.5 - Language Inappropriate language
- 2.6 - Health and Safety Within prevailing Community Standards

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This 'standee' advertisement is a large poster which is used in cinemas to promote the new movie, "Suicide Squad". It features the name of the movie in bold green letters in the centre with images of the characters and the actors' names.

THE COMPLAINT

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

I wish to make a complaint about the inappropriate material that was displayed next to the children's play area in the foyer of Event Cinemas Kotara.

On a recent visit to my local cinemas with my 3 year old son I was disgusted to see a large three dimensional poster for the movie "Suicide Squad" next to the children's play area. The images on the poster were horrific and incredibly frightening for young children.

As a clinical psychologist who specialises in the treatment of psychological disorders I was very alarmed and dismayed that such neglect had been shown in the placement of this material. Small children frequently visit these cinemas which are in a high traffic area for young families. The images shown on these posters (M-rated) are not suitable for young

children. I have treated young children who have suffered from anxiety, including disturbed sleep, bed-wetting, school avoidance and recurrent nightmares from exposure to images such as these. As an entertainment service provider for families, Event and Village Roadshow should know better.

The title of the film is also grossly inappropriate for public display. I am sure that Event would be aware of the high rates of suicide in young people in the Hunter region, and Australia more broadly, and the great efforts currently being exerted in the health profession to address this. Suicide is hardly an entertaining subject for the families affected by it.

I have contacted both Event and Village Roadshow to ask that these posters be taken down immediately so there is no chance that children or families will be exposed to them.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

Suicide Squad is a superhero film that released in Australia on August 4. The movie is based on a long-running and hugely popular DC comic book franchise created in 1959, whereby a secret US government agency recruits a team of the world's most dangerous incarcerated super villains and sends them on missions to defeat enemies too powerful for regular army forces.

The complaint relates to "standee" creative that has been used to promote the film in the foyers of cinemas where the film is being shown. The creative has a comic-book feel about it and features the main characters, the title of the movie and release date information. There are words used such as POW to emphasis the link back to the comic book franchise and words such as HAHA next to the Joker character which is a well know phrase associated with his character. All characters are fictional and illustrated using bright colours in the artwork. The title of the movie SUICIDE SQUAD appears in the centre of the characters and is in reference to the movie title itself.

The "Standee" creative was supplied to cinemas across Australia prior to the film's release. Each cinema then decides what films they would like to promote with standees, where exactly this is displayed and for how long, that is if they choose to display the standee at all.

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 concerns that the advertisement features the word 'suicide' which is not appropriate for children to be exposed to and the accompanying images are

frightening and also inappropriate for children.

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

The Board 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 Board noted this poster advertisement is on display in cinemas to promote the new movie, 'Suicide Squad' and features images of the cast as well as the name of the movie in bold letters.

The Board noted it had recently dismissed complaints about similar advertising on transport for the same movie in case 0312/16 where:

"The Board noted that the advertisement appears on the side of a bus and has the words, 'suicide squad' and 'ha ha ha' written across stylised cartoon images from the film. The Board considered that the cartoon-like image on the side of bus would be attractive to children and acknowledged that unlike a television commercial, cannot be 'turned off'.

The Board noted the advertiser's response that there are words used such as 'POW' to emphasis the link back to the comic book franchise and words such as HAHA next to the Joker character which is a well know phrase associated with his character and that all characters are fictional and illustrated using bright colours in the artwork.

The Board noted that the use of the term 'suicide' in the advertisement is in the context of a movie promotion and in this case 'Suicide Squad' is the name of the movie...

...The Board acknowledged that there is strong community concern around the issue of suicide and considered that some members of the community could be upset by the use of the word in any context but noted that the reference to suicide in the advertisement is a reference to the name of the movie."

The Board noted that the current advertisement features images of the cast of the movie, 'Suicide Squad' and considered that consistent with its previous determination in cases 0312/16, and in case 0351/16, the advertisement is clearly promoting a superhero movie and the use of the word 'suicide' as part of the movie's name is not of itself a portrayal of violence.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.3 of the Code.

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.5 of the Code. Section 2.5 of the Code states: "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall only use language which is appropriate in the circumstances (including appropriate for the relevant audience and medium). Strong or obscene language shall be avoided".

The Board noted the complainant's concern over the use of the word 'suicide' in an advertisement.

The Board noted in a previously upheld a complaint about an advertisement which featured

the word suicide (case 0193/15) however, in that case the word was a descriptor and not the name of a movie, and the Board considered that it trivialised and normalised an issue which is serious. In the current case however, the Board noted that the word 'suicide' is part of the movie's name and considered that the use of this word in the superhero movie name context is not strong, obscene or inappropriate.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.5 of the Code.

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 the complainant's concerns that the word 'suicide' in the advertisement is not appropriate for children to see.

The Board acknowledged that the word 'suicide' could be confronting to some members of the community due to their own personal experience however the Board considered that in the context of the name of a movie the word 'suicide' is not likely to encourage copycat behaviour and the manner in which the word is used is not inappropriate.

The Board considered that the advertisement did not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards.

The Board 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 Board dismissed the complaint.