



Case Report

1	Case Number	0384/17
2	Advertiser	Roadshow Films
3	Product	Entertainment
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV - Free to air
5	Date of Determination	13/09/2017
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

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

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

There are 10 versions of this television advertisement promoting the new horror movie, IT, each featuring scenes taken from the movie with a boy's voice narrating. We see various children in different environments: standing in a field, cycling down the centre of the street, in a classroom, a young boy in a yellow raincoat chasing a paper boat as it floats down the street to a drain. The onscreen text states that movie is rated MA15+ and contains strong horror themes and violence.

THE COMPLAINT

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

The content of the ad is frightening to children. The clown face is frightening and the implying of child going missing is also scary to children.

This timeslot is inappropriate for horror movie advertising. It should not be allowed.

The Block is a family entertainment show that we enjoy watching with our young children on Sunday night. A movie that shows a clown enticing young children into drains to kill them is

not a "family" themed commercial. It can be considered terrifying!!! It is 2 weeks in a row now on a Sunday evening in a time slot that is NOT appropriate.. I do not want my children crying all night AGAIN!!

The Block is a family show that my kids watch, it is inappropriate to show ads for horror movies during a family show and at an early time of the evening, just after 8pm. I don't want my kids exposed to horror movies.

Ad was shown during Survivor on Ch10 - highly inappropriate when children are watching.

Particularly disturbing for my son who has a fear of horror movies and suffers anxiety. I'm not sure why Ch10 are allowed to show this ad at this time but it shouldn't be allowed.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

From the information provided in the response, we can ascertain that the IT key number that ran during Survivor is ITK20504/30.

This particular advertisement received a J CAD rating from FreeTV. The advertisement contains no violence, no discriminatory material, exploitative or degrading material, strong or obscene language, nudity, or material contrary to health and safety standards. The advertisement does contain scary and supernatural themes, however this is only in the last 5 secs of the ad which is relevant to the Film being advertised which is of the horror genre and accordingly unavoidable.

Additional Response

There have been multiple complaints, and some complaints are missing programming information. I have sent you all spots that have been used for the campaign so far and detailed these below along with the associated CAD rating. Please note that all key numbers have been used in accordance to the FREE TV guidelines I.e. So M rated spots placed post 8.30pm etc.

<i>Pre Launch "Friends"</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>ITK20466/30</i>	<i>M</i>
<i>Pre Launch "Stay Together"</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>ITK20467/30</i>	<i>M</i>
<i>Pre Launch "Fear It"</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>ITK20468/30</i>	<i>M</i>
<i>Pre Launch "Monsters"</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>ITK20470/15</i>	<i>PG</i>
<i>Pre Launch "Kids"</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>ITK20504/30</i>	<i>J</i>
<i>Pre Launch "Phenomenon"</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>ITK20511/30</i>	<i>PG</i>
<i>Pre Launch "Friends"</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>ITK20516/15</i>	<i>M</i>
<i>Pre Launch "Stay Together"</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>ITK20517/15</i>	<i>M</i>
<i>Pre Launch "Kids REV"</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>ITK20553/15</i>	<i>PG</i>

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 complainants’ concerns that the advertisement depicts material from a horror movie which is frightening and not appropriate for children to view.

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 that there are nine versions of the advertisement, each featuring scenes from the new movie, ‘IT’ which is currently airing in cinemas.

The Board noted the advertisements had received different ratings from CAD based on their content (http://www.freetv.com.au/media/CAD/Placement_Codes.pdf). The Board noted the advertiser’s response that each version of the advertisement had been aired in accordance with its rating.

The Board noted the PG versions of the advertisement. The Board noted that these versions are narrated by a child using a child’s perspective and considered that although this narrative and the background music are suspenseful, the actual content of the advertisement is not visually graphic and there are no scenes of violence or horror shown.

The Board considered that consistent with previous determinations for similar advertisements, (0448/14, 0211/15, 0310/16) the images in the PG rated advertisements are suspenseful rather than violent, are clearly presented in the context of excerpts from a movie, and are not inappropriate in the context of the product advertised.

The Board then noted the J rated advertisement which can also be aired in PG rated time slots but with care. The Board noted that the content of this advertisement is similar to the PG rated versions but with the addition of a scene showing children looking scared, and scenes where a red balloon floats unaided through a classroom. The Board noted the scene showing the scared looking children is brief and we don’t see what it is they are scared of. The Board acknowledged that using a child’s voice to narrate the advertisement does tap in to children’s fears, particularly as the voiceover states that you won’t always be protected and cared for, but considered that the actual visuals are not graphic or violent and the advertisement is clearly promoting a movie and not a real event. The Board considered that the content of the J rated advertisement was justifiable in the context of the product advertised and the relevant time slot the advertisement was aired during.

The Board noted the content of the five M rated versions of the advertisement. The Board noted it had previously upheld complaints about an M rated advertisement for a horror movie in case 0266/16 where:

“The Board noted all 5 M-rated versions include scenes such as human-like shapes coming

through walls or appearing in mirrors, a girl levitating and then thrown against a wall, a girl crying in bed and a girl standing in a room full of crucifixes and trying to get out of a locked room while crying and reaching out to her mother. The Board noted that all the scenes used in the advertisement are taken from the advertised movie but considered that the declaration that the movie is based on a true story means that the footage appears more realistic rather than just a normal horror movie based on fiction. The Board noted the use of crucifixes rotating on their own accord and considered that this is suggestive of *The Exorcist* and although it could be viewed as a clichéd scene in the Board's view the focus on the young girl's reaction to the crucifixes is distressing. The Board considered that each version of the M-rated advertisement contains content which would cause alarm and distress to children and in the Board's view would also cause alarm and distress to many adults."

The Board noted it had also previously dismissed similar complaints in case 0211/15 where:

"The Board noted there are two television advertisements featured and that they both contain scenes from the movie including supernatural themes and vision of a young girl in one and a young boy in the other. The details of when the movie is to appear in Cinemas are seen at the end...

...The Board noted that whilst some of the images used in the advertisement do depict supernatural activity, these scenes are relevant to the movie and are clearly presented in the context of excerpts from the movie.

Noting the CAD rating and that the advertisement includes quite stylised and unrealistic images, the Board considered that the advertisement presented violence in a manner which is justifiable in the context of the product advertised and did not breach Section 2.3 of the Code."

The Board noted that the scenes from the movie included in the current M rated advertisements are more graphic with regards to the horror element that those scenes included in the PG and J rated versions.

The Board noted the M rated versions of the advertisement with the Key Numbers ITK20516/15M and ITK20466/30M. The Board noted these versions open with an adult male voice asking a young boy where he is going and considered that the depiction of the speaker - a clown holding a bunch of balloons which slowly rise to reveal his face - is scary and likely to cause alarm to some members of the community. The Board noted however that the advertisement is rated M and considered that the depiction of the clown, the scenes showing children running away from something unseen, children screaming, and the horror-movie style background music are all relevant to the advertised product and not inappropriate for the relevant M audience.

The Board noted the M rated versions of the advertisement with Key Number ITK20517/15M, ITK20467/30M and ITK20468/30M. The Board noted the scenes in these versions include a clown's face being revealed to children watching an old home-movie in a dark room, a young girl levitating, bodies floating past children in a sewer, a clown appearing behind a young boy and grabbing his throat, a clown on television with a group of children chanting, "Kill them all", and blood dripping on to a boy's notebook from his ceiling. The Board noted that advertisers can choose which scenes to use to promote their movie and considered that although these scenes are all brief and are clearly in the context of a movie in the Board's view they are just within the bounds of what is acceptable for an M rated

advertisement and advertisers should take care in selecting appropriate content as not all adults are comfortable with scenes of horror and suspense.

The Board acknowledged that some members of the community would prefer that horror movies not be advertised at all but considered that in this instance the content of all versions of the advertisement depict or portray violence in a manner which is justifiable in the context of the product advertised.

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

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