



Case Report

1	Case Number	0418/17
2	Advertiser	Roadshow Films
3	Product	Entertainment
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Outdoor
5	Date of Determination	27/09/2017
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

The complaint relates to outdoor activity for IT, a horror movie that received an MA15 rating for release and shows a boy in a rain coat and a clown holding a balloon. they are facing eachother. The word's "you'll float too" are at the top of the image.

THE COMPLAINT

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

Let's be clear - this objection is not to the movie "IT", but rather to the display of this particular ad in public.

Reasons this ad is objectionable:

1) this ad cheapens human life (see reasons below). When the value of a human life is reduced, people treat one another (and even themselves) with less love and respect. The long term effects of this will be disastrous and widespread.

2) this ad sends a scary message to children-not just the scariness of the movie itself, and of the image in the ad, but it also sends children the message that adults make movies about children being murdered and that other adults actually want to see these kind of movies (the existence of the ad implies that at least some viewers will respond to it by seeing the movie).

this will undermine children's sense of safety in the world. It is one thing to teach children about stranger danger (they need to know) but it's a different matter to advertise child murder in a public place.

3) this ad psychologically damages children by mixing up images of the worst possible danger (loss of life) with images of a happy childhood (balloons and clowns).

Cheapens human life

- the ad cheapens human life by making the murder of children (and decomposition of their bodies, until they will eventually float) a matter of entertainment.

- murder of children should be something we fight against, and protect children from, not something we give our attention to as a matter of entertainment in our idle hours ("relaxation time").

- humans are complex but one thing they have in common is a strong drive to fit in w their social environment. if the billboard says "it's ok to state in public that child murder (and children being terrified) is entertaining to adults" then people will internalise that message, begin to accept and even begin to repeat it in an attempt to fit in with their external environment. I cannot emphasise strongly enough that billboard advertising has an enormous influence on the mind & psyche of every person who sees it. In your role at ASB of Australia, you carry a grave responsibility to determine the course and quality of our society. Your power and responsibility at ASB is God-like.

My children (7 and 10) are having nightmares as this billboard is along our route every day from Sherwood to Toowong, and is exacerbated by the television trailers. They are fearful of being taken by clowns, and wont walk along the street now to friends houses just around the corner. It is instilling fear in my children and altering their behaviour.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

From the description that the complainant had provided it sounds like this is in relation to bus shelter activity. The advertisement features a boy in yellow raincoat and a clown bending down giving the boy a balloon. The image is of a slightly scary/ supernatural nature which is relevant to the movie being advertised. All outdoor creative was approved by media supplied in conjunction with the OMA before being printed.

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 characters 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 in conjunction with the poster there are currently television and other advertising being aired as part of the movie promotion.

The Board noted that this advertisement is as poster advertisement featuring an image of a boy in a yellow raincoat facing the clown from the movie. The clown is holding a red balloon on a string. The words "IT" and "You'll float too." Appear at the top of the poster.

The Board noted it had recently considered a poster advertisement for the movie Annabelle Creation – Roadshow 0365/17 where a young girl is sitting at a table across from a scary looking doll. In that case the Board noted that

..." The Board noted in the current advertisement that the doll's face is creepy but considered that there are no weapons depicted in the advertisement and no suggestion of a violent act having been, or about to be, committed. The Board acknowledged that some members of the community would prefer that horror movies were not advertised but considered that in this instance, whilst the doll is creepy, in the Board's view the overall impact of the advertisement is not strong or inappropriate in the context of a movie promotion which can be viewed by a broad audience."

Similarly in the current case for the movie IT the Board noted that there is no act of violence or threat to the boy being shown but considered that the tone is sinister and scary. The Board noted that the relationship to the television advertisements does increase the sinister nature of the image but on its own, the poster does not portray violence that is unjustifiable in the context of the product being advertised.

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 the poster advertisement does 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.

