



## **CASE REPORT**

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| 1. Complaint reference number | 524/08                                    |
| 2. Advertiser                 | Sony Computer Entertainment               |
| 3. Product                    | Toys & Games                              |
| 4. Type of advertisement      | TV  |
| 5. Nature of complaint        | Violence Cruelty to animals – section 2.2 |
| 6. Date of determination      | Wednesday, 17 December 2008               |
| 7. DETERMINATION              | Dismissed                                 |

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT**

This television advertisement from Sony Computer Entertainment for its Playstation 3 Little Big Planet game begins with "Murray Cullen" introducing himself and describing the game he made - "The Murray Cullen planet" - using the game advertised. It shows a toy worm moving along a series of obstacles. When it comes to a toy dog, the dog explodes. Murray describes the elements of the game as the worm moves along and as the worm gets to the dog he says "Watch this.. and he blows up. Of course he's not the real dog, he was hit by a car." A voiceover then says "Get Little Big Planet for free when you buy a Playstation 3. Gaming just changed forever". The advertisement ends with the Playstation logo and the little big planet web address.

## **THE COMPLAINT**

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

*The ad has a man who had designed a game and part of it was blowing up a dog. It is apparently ok because it wasn't the real dog. Not ok. This is disrespectful of animals and very awful that this is how we are showing kids to behave and treat animals.*

## **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE**

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complaint/s regarding this advertisement included the following:

*The Littlebigplanet game is one where you are able to create your own levels and worlds from whatever subject matter you choose. So from young to old, you can create something that appeals to your own sense of fun.*

*Although you are correct in stating that the animated dog does in fact blow up in this animated game, please note that there was no intention to endorse cruelty to animals. Like in many video game genre's today, your goal is to overcome obstacles. In this case it does happen to be an obviously animated dog made out of cardboard in the context of two little boys wreaking havoc in a world their parents created.*

*We hope that you understand that this does not mean that Sony or it's agencies condone any sort of animal cruelty or cruelty of any sort. The games we create are meant to bring adventure and imagination to life for consumer's entertainment and we hope that you understand that we meant no offence.*

*Please note that the advertisement you are referring to is no longer on-air.*

## **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 concern expressed by the complainant that the depiction of the animated dog being blown up could encourage cruelty to animals.

The Board considered the application of Section 2.2 of the Code, relating to violence.

The Board considered the complainants' concerns may have been directed more towards the nature of the product, rather than the advertisement itself. The Board considered that the animated scenes were clearly unrealistic and not intended to represent a real dog being blown up. The Board considered the advertisement was not condoning cruelty to animals and was not a depiction of "violence" as most members of the community would understand it.

The Board found that the reference to the real dog being hit by a car was fleeting and not suggestive of cruelty to animals.

In any case, the Board noted that the scenes shown in the advertisement were made using the game software being advertised and the Board considered the scenes were justifiable in the context of the gaming product. The Board therefore found no breach of Section 2.2 of the Code.

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