



CASE REPORT

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| 1. Complaint reference number | 61/10 |
| 2. Advertiser | Canberra Institute of Technology |
| 3. Product | Education |
| 4. Type of advertisement | Transport |
| 5. Nature of complaint | Violence Community Service advertising – section 2.2
Other - Causes alarm and distress to children |
| 6. Date of determination | Wednesday, 24 February 2010 |
| 7. DETERMINATION | Dismissed |

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This transport advertisement depicts a 'zombie' with his head pulled off his neck. The caption reads: “Bachelor of Games and Virtual Worlds.”

THE COMPLAINT

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

I was travelling to school with my two young children who were very distressed by the image, asking my why the man had pulled his head off his body and whether their heads could be pulled by there body.I feel the image is graphic and violent, and not suitable to be displayed where it can be inflicted on young children (and those with a queasy stomach). It was actually on a bus that was taking children to school.I'm sure the ad is very engaging for adults or gamers who can make a judgement about whether they expose themselves to this type of material, but I feel it is definitely not appropriate to be displayed in a public area.

Its just not tasteful, and kids and youth use buses. My (4 and 6 year old) kids were scared just looking at it.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

I write in response to the advertising complaint reference 61/10 made to the Advertising Standards Bureau on 27 January 2010. The complaint made refers to the AANA Code of Ethics under sections:

2.2 “Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised; and,

“Other” – causes alarm and distress to children”.

The advertisement in question relates to the promotion of a new Bachelor Degree, specifically, “Bachelor of Games and Virtual Worlds (Programming)” as delivered jointly by the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT), and the Academy of Interactive Entertainment (AIE) in Canberra, ACT.

The advertising to which the complaint refers, relates to the outdoor advertising of a banner on Canberra buses, including 8 (eight) bus backs and 6 (six) bus sides commencing on 19 January and finishing on 19 February 2010.

CIT and AIE (Canberra) do not use an advertising agency or media buyer in general. However, in this instance CIT commissioned Zoo Advertising, a Canberra advertising agency to develop creative concepts for the promotion of the degree. CIT and AIE then took those creative concepts and developed them into the relevant media buys/concepts, including outdoor advertising on buses.

CIT and AIE wanted to make an impact for this brand new degree course. Therefore a 'cut through' advertising campaign was agreed on with a commencement date for new students of February 2010.

CIT and AIE's target market for this degree is 18 to 30 years plus who are already likely to be working in the gaming and simulation industries in the ACT and regional areas. Many of the likely students would have already graduated from the Academy of Interactive Entertainment (AIE), and would likely already have existing gaming-related qualifications, such as an Advanced Diploma. Others would most likely be finishing school, or completing a gap year in their education, and who have a passion for gaming or maths.

This target market of 18 to 30 years spends a great deal of their time in the gaming and simulation areas, either in a personal capacity, or professionally. They have had a great deal of exposure to a wide variety of imagery associated with the gaming industry, and in that respect would clearly identify and respond to imagery with connotations of games and virtual worlds.

The advertising campaign aims to gain the attention of an audience who would identify with the gaming industry. The 'Zombie' is a copyright image of a stylized 'monster' lifting its head off in a style reminiscent of a 1950s schlock-horror movie. Please see attached images.

A factor in the choice to use bus sides and bus backs in Canberra (only) was so that it could be targeted to bus routes such as the inner city of Canberra, where it was likely the target market would reside.

Under Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics the imagery used by CIT and AIE for this advertising campaign was highly stylized and relevant to the context and audience for which it was intended. Also the public place of supernatural images is now commonplace, as witnessed on the cover of The Canberra Times newspaper on Monday 8 February 2010, which features the image of a snarling werewolf (promoting an upcoming movie). This newspaper is the main newspaper for the ACT and regional areas, and is circulated in the thousands, throughout the ACT and NSW, delivered through retail outlets and home delivery.

The 'Zombie' campaign has received a very positive response from within CIT and AIE, including from staff and existing students. The choice of media has been vindicated by the success in the recruitment of students for the delivery of this Bachelor's Degree in the Australian Capital Region. Further it is expected that this degree would be launched in the coming year/s in NSW and Victoria.

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 is scary for children and was an unsuitable graphic for an outdoor advertisement where the audience cannot be restricted to the target audience.

The Board noted the advertiser's response that the target audience was for those aged 18 - 30 years olds who are interested in obtaining a qualification for entry into the gaming industry. The zombie is a copyright image of a stylised monster lifting its head off in a style reminiscent of a 1950's schlock-horror movie.

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of section 2.2 of the Code. Section 2.2 of the Code 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 viewed the advertisement and noted that the advertisement was displayed on buses in Canberra only and targeted to inner city bus routes, where it was likely the target market would reside. The Board noted that the image is fanciful, unrealistic and is relevant to the product. The Board considered that some people might find the advertisement unpleasant but considered that most people would not consider it inappropriate. The Board agreed that the advertisement did not depict strong violence, that the depiction was relevant to the product and that the advertisement was not in 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.