

Case Report

1. Case Number :	0168-25
2. Advertiser :	Bravehearts Foundation
3. Product :	Community Awareness
4. Type of Advertisement/Media :	TV - Free to Air
5. Date of Decision:	6-Aug-2025
6. Decision:	Dismissed

WARNING

This case report includes references to child sexual abuse which some people may find distressing. If you need to talk to someone you can reach out for help by contacting Lifeline on 13 11 14.

ISSUES RAISED

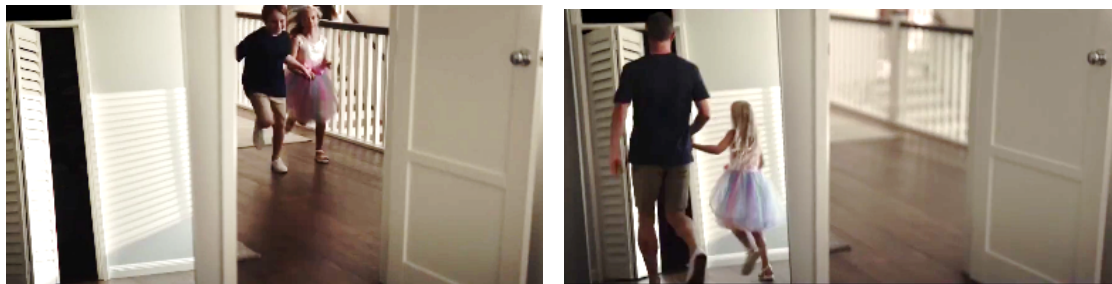
AANA Code of Ethics\2.1 Discrimination or Vilification

AANA Code of Ethics\2.3 Violence

AANA Code of Ethics\2.6 Health and Safety

DESCRIPTION OF ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement features a boy and girl playing in a playground, swimming pool and at a party. The boy signals for the girl to come with him. They hold hands and run into a bedroom. In the mirror you see a man holding the girl's hand and walking into a wardrobe. The man closes the wardrobe door. The text "grooming hides behind harmless. 79% of child sexual abuse survivors knew their abuser" is shown on screen.



THE COMPLAINT

Comments which the complainant/s made regarding this advertisement included the following:

BRAVE HEARTS. I get extremely distressed every time I see this add I immediately feel distressed again and memories come flooding back I want it to stop . Change the add so that you do not see a little one being taken behind a door. There must be another way to advertise this WITHOUT SHOWING A MAN GOING BEHIND A DOOR!!!! PLEASE DO NOT SHOW THIS ADD ANYMORE

I'm a victim. This add shook me to my core. I couldn't sleep last night at all You must take this down. Also think about the recent victims and parents who are going through just finding out their partners have been doing this to their child! Take it down.

The advertisements are portraying children imaginatively playing and then making the jump that these playing as children lead boys to be predators as adults. It is wrong, offensive in so many ways and could stop parents allowing children to play as well as thinking their sons are pedaphiles if they play things like hide and seek

The ad showed a male leading a young girl into a walk-in wardrobe. It is shown during the day, which is a time that many children are watching television. My young daughter has seen the ad and I am concerned because she would not understand the context of the ad, and that it is actually normalising this behaviour to children who cannot understand the message behind the ad. There is no voice-over explaining not to ever go into a private space with a man.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

Bravehearts has been operating since 1997 with he dedicated focus on providing prevention and treatment of child sexual abuse. In April 2023 The Australian Child Maltreatment Study was released showing a staggering one in 4 Australian had been sexually abused as a child. A notoriously difficult subject to talk about as it is shrouded in shame , secrecy and silence. Bravehearts was fortunate enough to have access to Pro Bono advertising production and placement. After exhaustive research by the production company with the National Office of Child Safety and survivor groups it was agreed that the focus on our national campaign would be grooming. In over 79% the victims knew their abuser, this means that in more cases the abuser is known and trusted by the family, it is not about stranger danger, in fact Grooming hides behind harmless and has a certain set of ongoing intentional behaviors that are used to groom not only the child but also the adults around the child, it would be the first

advertising of its kind in Australia. We do not believe that the commercial breaches any of the standards a listed and does not show any nudity, sexual reference or has any dialogue at all. People must be able to understand and recognise these behaviors so they can act to protect children. In the most recent news cycle here have been significant cases of child sexual abuse perpetrated in child care centre settings which have been far more distressing for parents and also victim survivors. If these behaviors are not displayed then the protective public cannot assist to protect children.

THE DECISION

The Ad Standards Community Panel (the Panel) considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics (the Code).

The Panel noted the complainants' concerns that the advertisement:

- depicts discrimination against males
- contains material relating to abuse which causes alarm and distress to viewers
- normalises predatory behaviour without showing appropriate safety messaging.

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

Section 2.1: Advertising shall not portray or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, disability, mental illness or political belief.

The Panel noted the Practice Note to Section 2.1 provides the following definitions:

- *Discrimination – unfair or less favourable treatment.*
- *Vilification – humiliates, intimidates, incites hatred, contempt or ridicule.*
- *Gender – refer to the attributes, roles, behaviours, activities, opportunities or restrictions that society considers appropriate for girls or boys, women or men. Gender is distinct from 'sex', which refers to biological differences*

The Panel considered that the aim of the advertisement is to raise awareness among families about grooming behaviour. The Panel considered that the intent of the ad was not to suggest that all men are predators. The Panel considered that the ad did not portray men as receiving unfair or less favourable treatment, and did not incite hatred or contempt for all men.

The Panel considered that the advertisement did not discriminate against or vilify a person or section of the community on account of gender.

Section 2.1 conclusion

The Panel found that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.1 of the Code.

Section 2.3: Advertising shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised.

Does the advertisement contain violence?

The Panel noted the complainants' concerns and empathised with survivors of sexual abuse. The Panel noted that the advertisement aimed to raise awareness of a serious issue and acknowledged that the scene where the boy transforms into a man conveyed a sense of threat and violence.

Is the violence justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised?

The Panel noted the Practice Note for this section of the Code which states

"Although the depiction of violence in an advertisement may be relevant to the story being told in the advertisement, any violence must also be justifiable in the context of the product being advertised, or else will be in breach of this section of the Code;

Sexual violence is not acceptable under any circumstances;

Graphic depictions of violence or the consequences of violence may be justified by the community safety message involved."

The Panel considered that the advertisement used the transformation from child to man to capture viewer's attention. The Panel acknowledged the potential impact such imagery may have on survivors, however, they recognised that the purpose of the advertisement was to raise awareness and prevent child sexual abuse. The Panel considered that the level of violence portrayed was justifiable in the context of promoting the organisation's message.

Section 2.3 conclusion

The Panel concluded that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.3 of the Code.

Section 2.6: Advertising shall not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety.

The Panel noted the Practice Note for this section of the Code includes:

"This rule is not intended to prevent advertisers from depicting unsafe behaviour as a means to demonstrate potential negative effects, such as an advertisement for road safety depicting someone driving in a car after drinking alcohol."

The Panel noted the complainants' concerns that the advertisement did not include a trigger warning or clear messaging which would be understood by children.

The Panel noted the advertisement deals with sensitive issues that may be confronting and triggering for survivors of abuse and their families. The Panel considered, however, that the overall aim of the advertisement is to raise awareness and prevent child sexual abuse. The Panel also noted that the advertisement concludes with a link to additional information on how to identify grooming behaviours.

The Panel considered that the importance of the message meant that the content of the advertisement aligns with Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety.

Conclusion

Finding that the advertisement did not breach any other section of the Code the Panel dismissed the complaints.