

Case Report

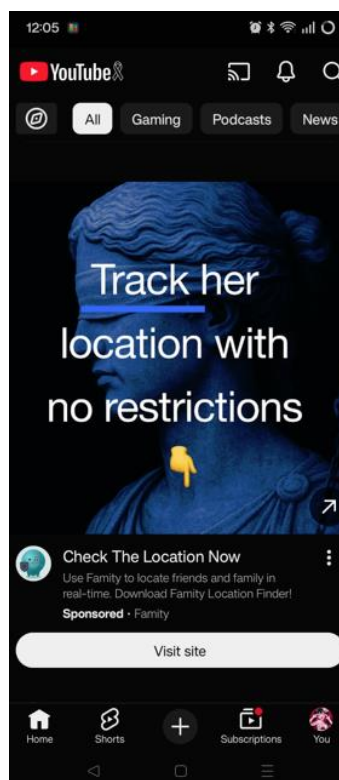
Case number: 0004-26
Advertiser: Family
Medium: YouTube
Decision date: 14-Jan-2026
Decision: Breach
Action: Ad removed

ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE COMMUNITY PANEL

- AANA Code of Ethics - 2.1 Discrimination or Vilification - breach
- AANA Code of Ethics - 2.3 Violence - breach
- AANA Code of Ethics - 2.6 Health and Safety - breach

AD DESCRIPTION

This YouTube ad features an image of a blue female statue in the background and the words 'Track her location with no restrictions'. Smaller print reads, 'Use Family to locate friends and family in real-time. Download Family Location Finder!'



SUMMARY

Complaint

A complaint was received on the grounds that the ad was disturbingly suggestive of keeping track of potential female victims in abusive situations.

Advertiser response

The advertiser responded that it's our Service allows family and friends to share their live location with each other based on their consent. The ad was not intended to promote any violence or unsafe behaviour. The ad contains the phrase, 'Check the location now. Use Family to locate friends and family in real time. Download Family Location Finder!' When clicking on the link customers are redirected to its website where it is further clarified that the emphasis is on safety, not on violence or dangerous behaviour. Its terms and conditions make it clear that tracking is consensual, and that using this service for nefarious purposes is not permitted.

The ad does not depict violence and does not depict or suggest unsafe or unhealthy behaviour.

A copy of the advertiser's full response is included as Appendix A.

Decisions

The Panel found that the ad was in breach of the following sections of the AANA Code of Ethics:

- Section 2.3 of the AANA Code of Ethics, as the ad had a strong sense of menace and coercive control,
- Section 2.6 of the AANA Code of Ethics, as the ad was suggestive of behaviour that was considered unhealthy and unsafe by community standards.

The Panel also considered section 2.1 of the AANA Code of Ethics, with the majority finding that the ad breached this section, as the ad could be considered as discriminatory against women, by suggesting that they need to be tracked and monitored.

ASSESSMENT AND DECISIONS

Section 2.1 (AANA Code of Ethics): Advertising shall not portray people 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 Practice Note defines discrimination and vilification as:

Discrimination: unfair or less favourable treatment

Vilification: Humiliates, intimidates, incites hatred, contempt or ridicule

The Practice Note further states:

Harmful gender stereotypes are unacceptable because they perpetuate unconscious bias and rigid norms of femininity and masculinity that shape what it means to be a girl, woman, boy or man.

Panel assessment

The Panel considered that the advertiser's service appears to be intended to allow families to keep track of where their loved ones are. The Panel considered that this would include husbands, wives, children, grandparents and any other extended members of families as the situation may be.

However, the Panel noted that the ad communicated as strong message of tracking female members of the family only, as was clear from the wording 'Track her location with no restrictions.' The Panel considered that this could perpetuate an unconscious bias that women need to be tracked and monitored and cannot conduct their lives independently. The Panel considered that the image, which resembles the blindfolded Lady Justice, exaggerated this message, and reinforced the suggestion that women could be kept in the dark and tracked.

While the minority of the Panel did not believe that this amounted to discriminatory depictions or vilification of women, the majority held the view that the image, coupled with the encouragement to 'Track *her* location ...' implied less favourable treatment of women in a manner that was contrary to community expectations.

Panel decision

The Panel, therefore, concluded that the ad breached section 2.1 of the AANA Code of Ethics.

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

The Practice Note states:

Section 2.3 prohibits the use of violent content unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised. 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.

Graphic depictions of violence or a strong suggestion of menace have been found to present violence in an unacceptable manner especially when visible to a broad audience which includes children.

Panel assessment

The Panel considered that domestic violence and coercive control is of significant community concern. The Panel considered that the ad emphasised the ability to track a woman's location with no restrictions, as opposed to tracking family members to ensure their safety.

While the Panel acknowledges the advertiser's submission the blindfold is meant to reference a woman who is unable to see her family (presumably because she is not using this app), the Panel considered that the likely interpretation of this image and the wording would be that the woman is 'blind' to the fact that she is being tracked, and could even suggest lack of consent, which contributes to the sense of malice.

The Panel considered that the accompanying wording ‘Use Family to locate friends and family in real-time. Download Family Location Finder!’ did not reduce the sense of malice or the general tone of tracking a woman regardless of whether she consented or was aware of the fact that she was being tracked.

The Panel concluded that this sense of malice and the tone of coercive control was contrary to community standards on violence.

Panel decision

On this basis, the Panel found that the ad breached section 2.3 of the AANA Code of Ethics.

Section 2.6 (AANA Code of Ethics): Advertising shall not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety.

The Practice Note states:

Section 2.6 requires that advertising must not depict content that would encourage or condone unhealthy or unsafe behaviour having regard to Prevailing Community Standards.

Panel assessment

The Panel considered that the advertised product appears to be intended to promote family safety and allow family or friends to monitor each other’s movements in an environment where consent has been given for this kind of purpose. However, the Panel considered that the overall tone and likely interpretation of the ad was more sinister, and that it created an impression that this product is intended, and would allow, the user to track a woman’s location without her knowing and with no restrictions on such unwanted behaviour.

While the Panel accepts that this was unlikely to be the advertiser’s intention, it was concerned that the tone of the ad suggested stalking type behaviour, which is often associated with, or a precursor to violence.

In this context, the Panel considered the ad to be contrary to prevailing community standards on health and safety.

Panel decision

The Panel, therefore, found that the ad breached section 2.6 of the AANA Code of Ethics.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The Panel found that the ad did not breach any other section of the advertising codes.

ACTION

The advertiser noted that the ad was withdrawn, pending the Panel’s decision, and that it would not be used again, should the Panel find it in breach of the advertising codes.

APPENDIX A: ADVERTISER RESPONSE IN FULL

Dear Australian Ad Standards Community Panel (the “Panel”),

Family (the “Company”) hereby confirms the receipt of the letter from Ad Standards with case ID 0004-26 dated 5 January 2026 in relation to the Company’s YouTube advertisement for Family Location Tracker (the “Advertisement”, please see attached the screenshot).

Please note that we take this matter very seriously, as we wish to provide high-quality service for Australian customers. The key function of our Service is to allow our family & friends to share their live location between each other based on their consent. The Advertisement was not intended to promote any violence or unsafe behaviour towards the individuals.

Accordingly, we respectfully submit that:

- The Panel should assess the Ad as a whole and together with supporting materials;
- The Advertisement did not breach Sections 2.3 and 2.6 of AANA Code of Ethics (the “Code”);
- The Advertisement also did not breach remaining Section 2 of Code;
- Should the Panel decide in favour of the complainant, the Company has proactively done mitigation measures to protect the rights of Australian consumers, and the case should be resolved with no further action.

1. Ad assessment as a whole and together with supporting materials

According to AANA Code of Ethics, “advertising” has a rather broad definition, whereas in the ad assessment the Panel shall review not just the content of the Advertisement, but also any other supporting material relevant to the case. In our case, contrary to the complainant’s assertion, the Advertisement not only depicts a blue statue of a blindfolded woman with “Track her location with no restriction”, but also the following phrase: “Check the location now. Use Family to locate friends and family in real time. Download Family Location Finder!”.

Once the consumer clicks on the Advertisement, it redirects to family.co website, where you can learn more about the intention to promote family safety, but not violence or unsafe behaviour (the first onboarding page says “It’s important to know where your loved ones are to ensure their safety”). Additionally, before proceeding with the onboarding, the user has to agree with Terms of Use which specify the following:

“To use the Service, you must provide a phone number belonging to a real third-party user. By doing so, you explicitly confirm that you have obtained clear and unambiguous consent from this person to share their personal data. The Service will process this information based on a legitimate interest, considering the user’s expected receipt of a technical message and with the intention of obtaining further personal consent.

If you have not secured consent from the third-party user, we strongly advise against using the Service. Providing consent for personal data processing is entirely voluntary and at the sole discretion of the third-party user. The Company will not issue refunds or continue Service provision if the third-party user does not click the link or provide consent for their personal data processing.”

This clearly suggests that we discourage users from trying to locate someone without their consent (and it is technically impossible to do so with our Service). This overall interpretation of

our Advertisement is important for further ad assessment with respect to alleged breaches of Section 2 of Code.

2. No breach of Sections 2.3 and 2.6 of Code

Pursuant to Section 2.3 of Code, advertising shall not present/portray violence unless it is justifiable in the content of product/service advertisement.

The Company believes the Advertisement does not depict any violence here. The fact that the blue statue of a woman is blindfolded does not prima facie mean she is subjected to violence. Similarly as in Case ID 0148-25 (AliExpress, No breach found), nothing on her mimics shows her being distressed, and there are no other persons suggesting she might be under threat. In fact, the fact that a woman is blindfolded was supposed to mean she cannot actually “see” her family & friends, whereas our Service may help her to do so in order to promote family safety.

Should the Panel believe that the woman is actually a victim here leading to violence, the Company asserts that it was justified by the message promoted through the overall interpretation of the Advertisement. We understand that different people may have a distinctive vision on the Advertisement and the concept of “blindfolded women”. However, as mentioned above, the Service is intended to promote family safety, which in turn may help the consumers to avoid their family & friends from being involved in violent cases. This means that even if someone perceives blindfolded women to be in violent cases, our wording in the Advertisement clearly suggests that you can protect your dearest (including this hypothetical women) from these cases through our Service. Accordingly, if there was any violence towards the woman in question, it was justified by the message of protecting family safety with our Service.

As regards Section 2.6 of Code, advertising shall not depict content that would encourage unsafe behaviour. The practice mostly mentions such examples as unsafe driving, unsafe use of machinery or adult things done by the children. Our case is completely different from the proposed examples, as the Advertisement promotes family safety through locating your dearest with our Service. While the complainant says that it may be “suggestive of keeping track of potential female victims in abusive situations”, the overall interpretation of the Advertisement shows a completely different message. And the Company strongly believes that locating your family does not amount to unsafe behaviour.

3. No breach of remaining Section 2 of Code

With respect to remaining Section 2 of Code, the Company believes that Advertisement does not breach any of them, as:

- Section 2.1 (Discrimination or vilification): There is no discrimination/vilification of any person here, but again - promotion of family safety.
- Section 2.2. (Exploitative or degrading): There is no sexual appeal to anyone;
- Section 2.4 (Sex, sexuality, and nudity): There is no nudity in the Advertisement;
- Section 2.5. (Language): There is no obscene language in the Advertisement;
- Section 2.7. (Distinguishable as advertising): The Advertisement is clearly distinguishable as advertising with description of Service and “Sponsored - Family” label.

4. Proactive mitigation measures done by the Company

Notwithstanding the outcomes of this case, the Company decided to remove the Advertisement and other ads with similar messages from the Internet medium. This action shall not be treated as admission of any fault in this case, but instead - the Company's desire to adhere to highest advertising standards in Australia and resolve all potential consumer concerns even if the Advertisement is compliant with Code.

Therefore, we kindly request this Panel to consider our arguments in this response and declare that there was no breach of Section 2 of Code. Should the Panel decide there was a breach, we also kindly request to proceed with no further action, as the Company has proactively performed mitigation measures to resolve the consumer concerns.

Kind regards,
Famity