

Case Report

Case number: 0009-26
Advertiser: R.M. Williams
Medium: Instagram
Decision date: 28-Jan-2026
Decision: Breach
Action: Ad removed

ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE COMMUNITY PANEL

- AANA Code of Ethics - 2.6 Health and Safety - breach

AD DESCRIPTION

This Instagram post depicts various scenes of a group of friends or family enjoying time together. Examples include playing on the beach, playing with a dog, and posing with paper crowns, as well as brief scenes where they are riding a quad bike, but not wearing any safety gear or helmets.



SUMMARY

Complaint

A complaint was received on the grounds that quad bike accidents are the leading cause of death on Australian farms. Legislation is clear on the requirement to wear helmets and install rollover bars on quad bikes. None of the people shown riding this quad bike are wearing helmets.

Advertiser response

The advertiser responded that the post is a lifestyle brand piece, depicting a family enjoying Christmas holidays in a rural Australian environment. The scenes are contextual in nature, and the primary focus is on the family connection and the apparel worn, not on quad bike riding behaviour.

The ad is targeted to an adult audience and appears in premium broadcast and digital environments where viewers would reasonably understand the imagery as lifestyle representation rather than behavioural instruction. A reasonable member of the community would be unlikely to interpret the advertisement as encouraging unsafe conduct.

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

Decisions

The Panel found that the ad was in breach of section 2.6 of the AANA Code of Ethics as the ad depicted behaviour that was contrary to community standards on health and safety.

ASSESSMENT AND DECISIONS

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.

UNSAFE PRACTICES Images of unsafe driving, bike riding without helmets or not wearing a seatbelt while driving a motor vehicle are likely to be contrary to prevailing community standards relating to health and safety irrespective of whether such depictions are for the product/service being advertised or are incidental to the product.

Advertising which demonstrates the unsafe use of machinery, even when not the focus of the advertisement, is likely to be seen as unsafe and against prevailing community standards on health and safety.

Panel assessment

The Panel considered that quad bike accidents and injuries are of significant concern to the Australian community. The Panel acknowledges that the intention of the ad may not have been to influence community behaviour. However, the Panel considered that the scenes depicted showed that neither the driver nor his two passengers were wearing helmets. The Panel also noted that the passengers do not appear to be holding onto anything to support their stability.

In the context of vehicle safety, and with the knowledge that quad bikes are notoriously easy to roll over, leading to accidents, injuries or fatalities, the Panel considered that these scenes were in direct conflict with community standards on health and safety. The Panel considered that this was problematic regardless of whether the setting was on a rural property, a farm, or in a city environment.

Panel decision

On this basis, the Panel considered 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

We confirm that the advertisement referenced in your letter has now been fully removed from all channels and is no longer in market.

R.M.Williams has taken steps to discontinue the advertisement in line with the Community Panel's decision.

APPENDIX A: ADVERTISER RESPONSE IN FULL

Description of the Advertisement

The advertisement is a 30-second brand film created in-house by R. M. Williams. The creative is a lifestyle brand piece depicting a Christmas holiday set in a rural Australian environments and people wearing R. M. Williams apparel. It forms part of a broader brand storytelling campaign celebrating connection to family, regional life, and craftsmanship.

The advertisement includes scenes showing adults using quad bikes within rural settings as part of everyday regional activity. These scenes are contextual in nature and contribute to the overall lifestyle narrative. The primary focus of the advertisement is apparel, family connection, and character, not the promotion of quad bike use or riding behaviour.

Advertisement Format and Distribution

- Media Channels:
 - Broadcast Video on Demand (BVOD)
 - Subscription Video on Demand (SVOD)
 - Linear Television (LTV)
 - Paid social media (Instagram and YouTube)
 - Organic social media (Instagram)
- Format: 30-second video advertisement
- Target Audience: Adults
- Product Category: Apparel and footwear

All paid media placements for this advertisement have been turned off. One organic post containing the advertisement remains on the R. M. Williams Instagram page.

Response to the Complaint

AANA Code of Ethics – Section 2.6 (Health and Safety)

R. M. Williams acknowledges that the advertisement includes scenes depicting quad bike use within rural Australian settings. These scenes are presented as part of a broader lifestyle narrative intended to reflect authentic regional environments in which the brand has a long heritage.

The advertisement does not:

- Promote quad bike riding as an activity in itself;
- Provide instruction, demonstration, or guidance on quad bike operation;
- Encourage risk-taking, speed, stunts, or thrill-seeking behaviour;
- Present quad bike use as aspirational or as a call to action.

The quad bike imagery is used as a contextual storytelling element, consistent with realistic rural life, rather than as the subject of the advertisement. The focus of the creative remains on apparel, people, and setting.

The advertisement is targeted to an adult audience and appears in premium broadcast and digital environments where viewers would reasonably understand the imagery as lifestyle representation rather than behavioural instruction. A reasonable member of the community would be unlikely to interpret the advertisement as encouraging unsafe conduct.

R. M. Williams recognises the importance of health and safety considerations, including sensitivities around quad bike use in Australia, and takes its responsibilities as a national advertiser seriously. The advertiser submits that the depiction does not breach Section 2.6 of the AANA Code of Ethics.

Consideration of Other Relevant Sections of the AANA Code of Ethics

The advertisement has been reviewed in full against Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics and complies with all relevant provisions:

- 2.1 Discrimination or vilification: No discrimination or vilification is depicted.
- 2.2 Exploitative or degrading: No person is portrayed in a degrading or exploitative manner.
- 2.3 Violence: No violence is depicted.
- 2.4 Sex, sexuality and nudity: Not applicable.
- 2.5 Language: No offensive or inappropriate language is used.
- 2.6 Health and Safety: The advertisement does not promote or encourage unsafe behaviour.
- 2.7 Distinguishable as advertising: The content is clearly identifiable as advertising across all placements.

Conclusion

R. M. Williams submits that the advertisement complies with the AANA Code of Ethics. The depiction of quad bike use occurs within a broader lifestyle narrative reflecting authentic rural settings and does not encourage, instruct, or normalise unsafe behaviour. We appreciate the opportunity to respond and remain committed to responsible advertising practices.