

COMPLAINT NUMBER	19/230
COMPLAINANT	R Durward
ADVERTISER	Roadshow NZ
ADVERTISEMENT	Roadshow NZ, Child's Play movie poster
DATE OF MEETING	13 August 2019
OUTCOME	Upheld in part Advertisement has been Removed

Description of Advertisement

The poster advertisement for the horror movie "Child's Play" showed a picture of a doll with one red eye. The doll is holding a knife and the blade of the knife is glistening. The text says: "Time to Play".

Summary of the Complaint

The Complainant was concerned the advertisement was disturbing to children, especially those in Christchurch. The Complainant said Christchurch is a city struggling with poor mental health and is in need of special consideration.

Issues Raised:

- Social Responsibility
- Decency and Offensiveness
- Fear and Distress

Summary of the Advertiser's Response

The Advertiser said the posters were removed on 23 June 2019. The Advertiser said they attempted to minimise the visibility of the knife by the placing of large amounts of text. They also tried to avoid "kid specific" areas for the posters, such as schools and childcare centres.

Summary of the Complaints Board Decision

The Complaints Board upheld in part a complaint about the poster advertisement for the movie "Child's Play". The Complaints Board said the advertisement would have caused fear or distress, without justification. This was due to the combined effect of the image of a doll with one red eye, carrying a large knife and the text "Time to Play".

Relevant ASA Codes of Practice

The Chair directed the Complaints Board to consider the complaint with reference to the following codes:

ADVERTISING STANDARDS CODE

Principle 1: Social Responsibility: Advertisements must be prepared and placed with a due sense of social responsibility to consumers and to society.

Rule 1(c): Decency and Offensiveness: Advertisements must not contain anything that is indecent, or exploitative or degrading, or likely to cause harm, or serious or widespread offence, or give rise to hostility, contempt abuse or ridicule.

Rule 1 (g): Fear and Distress: Advertisements must not cause fear or distress without justification.

Relevant precedent decisions

In considering this complaint the Complaints Board referred to two precedent decisions, Decision 18/234, which was Settled and Decision 17/330, which was Not Upheld.

Decision 18/234 concerned a poster advertisement for the television programme “Wellington Paranormal”. The Complaints Board said the unrestricted poster medium meant it was likely the image of the possessed girl would be confronting to children who did not understand the humorous context. However, as the campaign had concluded and the Advertiser had asked the media to remove any remaining posters, the Complaints Board said the complaint could be considered settled.

Decision 17/330 concerned an advertisement for the movie “IT” which was displayed on the back of a bus. The Complaints Board said the Complainant’s concerns relied on pre-existing knowledge of the IT story line. Without this knowledge, the Complaints Board said the image shown in the advertisement did not unduly play on fear and was unlikely to cause serious or widespread offence.

The full versions of these decisions can be found on the ASA website at <https://www.asa.co.nz/decisions/>

Complaints Board Discussion

Consumer Takeout

The Complaints Board agreed the consumer takeout was this is an advertisement for a new horror movie. The Complaints Board agreed the posters would look scary to a child, especially the combination of the knife, the doll and the text “Time to Play”.

The Complaints Board noted the posters, were quite large, at 920mm x 1320mm. They were displayed in a range of public locations, including a shopping area, and were accessible to the general public, including children. The Complaints Board noted the target audience for the movie was people over the age of 16.

Did the advertisement cause fear or distress without justification?

The Complaints Board agreed the advertisement would have caused fear or distress, without justification. This is due to the combined effect of a doll which looked possessed, with a red eye carrying a large knife and the text “Time to Play”.

Is the advertisement likely to cause harm or serious or widespread offence?

The Complaints Board agreed the advertisement was not likely to cause harm, or serious or widespread offence to the general population. The Complaints Board said the impact of the advertisement was more likely to be felt by more vulnerable members of the audience, such as children.

Is the advertisement socially responsible?

The Complaints Board said that poster advertising was an unrestricted medium and a wide audience is able to view the images and wording. The Complaints Board agreed that the content and placement of the advertisement was not socially responsible, taking into account context, medium, audience and product and was in breach of Principle 1 and Rule 1(g) of the Advertising Standards Code.

Outcome

The Complaints Board ruled the complaint was **Upheld in part**.

Advertisement has been removed.

APPEAL INFORMATION

According to the procedures of the Advertising Standards Complaints Board, all decisions are able to be appealed by any party to the complaint. Information on our Appeal process is on our website www.asa.co.nz. Appeals must be made in writing via email or letter within 14 days of receipt of this decision.

APPENDICES

1. Complaint
 2. Response from Advertiser
 3. Response from Media
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Appendix 1

COMPLAINT FROM R DURWARD

Currently there are billboards around Christchurch advertising the movie "Child's Play". These billboards were seen by me in the suburb of Addington, in the shopping area, and also near the Jack-Hinton Rd, near the side entrance to Addington Racecourse. These billboards depict a doll, with a knife. The picture is in plain view of young children. I would appreciate consideration of immediate removal of these advertising billboards, especially considering the setting of Christchurch. The region of Canterbury has the highest suicide rates in the country, and has suffered from earthquakes, and recent mosque shootings. It is therefore especially inappropriate to further traumatise the region's children from these billboards.

ADDITIONAL INFO FROM COMPLAINANT

As you know Christchurch is a city struggling with very poor mental health currently. I understand we have the worst suicide rates in the country. And maybe even the world. Many teenagers have been traumatised by earthquakes, contributing to chronic depression and anxiety. Subsequent events such as the Port Hill fires, disputes of homeowners with insurance companies for post-quake damages, and more recently the mosque shootings of March 15th, have all been likely to contribute to our poor mental health. I understand recent weeks have been especially bad for suicide rates.

Many children, teenagers and even adults are struggling with poor mental health. I propose that Christchurch is in desperate need of special consideration as to what is allowed to be shown in public. Children should now be protected from violent, frightening images as they pass in their family cars. Christchurch deserves to have consideration of legislation which would protect any harmful images further traumatising its vulnerable population.

Appendix 2

RESPONSE FROM ADVERTISER, ROADSHOW NZ

Contact person for advertising complaints	Lachlan Mackay/ Roadshow Films
Name and contact at creative agency	Helen Mladenis / Village Roadshow
Name and contact at media agency	Chrissy Payne / OMD Auckland
A basic, neutral description of the advertisement	Poster advertising "Childs Play" movie. Poster featured a doll like character with red eyes and the tip of a knife.

Date advertisement began	10 th of June
Where the advertisement appeared (all locations e.g. TV, Billboard, Newspaper Website)	Shoutout Street Poster Billboards in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.
Is the advertisement still accessible – where and until when?	No, the posters were removed on the 23 rd of June.
Who is the product / brand target audience?	People 16+
Clear substantiation on claims that are challenged by the complainant.	<p>The film has a central character which is a fictional doll, our intention was to market the film and the film only. We made this clear by including a large “IN CINEMAS” call to action.</p> <p>We attempted to dial down the visibility of the knife by placing large amounts of text over the top of it in the art work.</p> <p>The movie being advertised is in the Horror genre, so the art work is clearly for a film of this nature. The inclusion of the doll in the art work in this instance was unavoidable as the doll is the central character to the film.</p> <p>We planned our advertising campaign to avoid kid specific areas (e.g. schools/childcare).</p>

Appendix 3

RESPONSE FROM MEDIA, OMD

To confirm Roadshow also received this on the 17th July and instructed OMD to make sure all Posters were removed if they were still up. I have attached an email from Shout the Street Poster Vendor on the 23rd July confirming they had all been removed.

All other activity for this film finished by the end of June and there is nothing currently in market.

Please see below the site lists, quantity and size for the street posters in Christchurch. The dimensions are:-

Max AO 920mmx1320mm

Super Max AO 1840mm x 2676mm