



ADVERTISING  
STANDARDS  
BUREAU

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## Case Report

1	Case Number	0226/14
2	Advertiser	Ubisoft P/L
3	Product	Entertainment
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Outdoor
5	Date of Determination	09/07/2014
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

### ISSUES RAISED

2.3 - Violence Weapons

### DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement shows Aiden Pierce standing in the street of Chicago. Aiden wears a mask and is holding a mobile phone in one hand and a gun in the other. The gun is not aimed at anything and is pointing at the ground.

### THE COMPLAINT

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

*When you are driving you are forced to stop or slow as the traffic demands. This poster is in a bus shelters, lit up at night and is located around schools. This one is outside a high school where children from Yr 7-12 wait for buses.*

*The image is intimidating. My 4, 6 and 8 year old were confronted with the image when I had to stop in traffic just on dark. The oldest asked about the gun. The youngest was frightened by the man. I was asked why do men have guns now?*

*I strongly object to the normalising of weapons in advertising. I have no way of filtering this kind of advertising for age appropriateness as I am in traffic and have to stop.*

*Why is an R rated game advertised in bus shelters, particularly around schools? I can monitor and restrict where my children go in a store, what advertising they see on TV or what magazines they read, but public space advertising like this should always be suitable for all audiences that see it.*

## **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE**

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

*Watch\_Dogs is not aimed at children, but at experienced adult gamers and was rated accordingly by the Classification Board, an official Australian Government agency.*

*In this case Watch\_Dogs was rated R.*

*Care was taken to ensure creative was not too menacing or threatening, however we understand the concerns expressed by the complainant.*

*We will be more mindful of this when planning future mature themed games by requesting advertising material of R rated games are not positioned near schools.*

## **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 depicts an intimidating image of a man holding a gun and that this is too violent for outdoor display as it normalises weapons and can be frightening to young children.

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

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.3 of the Code. Section 2.3 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 noted that the advertisement is promoting a computer game called Watchdogs and features a man holding a gun in a city setting.

The Board noted it had previously dismissed an outdoor advertisement promoting a television program which featured a man pointing a gun at an unseen target (0428/12) where:

"The Board noted it had previously dismissed a similar advertisement for a movie (case reference 0221/11) which featured three men holding guns.

The Board noted that in this instance whilst the man is pointing a gun he does not look menacing and there is a clear association being made with the television series being promoted. In the Board's view most members of the community would be unlikely to interpret the image as a real life situation. The Board noted that the advertisement is on a billboard and so could potentially be seen by children however the Board considered that the image does not portray explicit violence and is relevant to the advertised product.

The Board considered that the image is not so strong as to be inappropriate for general viewing."

In the current advertisement the Board noted that the text next to the image of the man reads, "Best Action Game" and considered that most members of the community would recognise that this image relates to a game and not a real-life situation. The Board noted the PlayStation branding and images on the advertisement. The Board noted that the gun the

man is holding is not being pointed at anyone or anything and considered that overall the image is clearly in the context of a computer game and does not portray explicit violence. The Board noted that there are target markings on the heads of two people in the advertisement but noted that the lines on these markings link back to a mobile phone, not the gun, and considered that there is no suggestion that these people are being marked as targets to be shot at.

The Board considered that whilst the advertisement does contain a suggestion of violence it is relevant to the advertised product and is not inappropriate for outdoor display where children could view it.

Based on the above the Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.3 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on other grounds, the Board dismissed the complaint.