



Case Report

1	Case Number	0413/15
2	Advertiser	Wicked Campers
3	Product	Travel
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Transport
5	Date of Determination	28/10/2015
6	DETERMINATION	Upheld - Not Modified or Discontinued

ISSUES RAISED

2.3 - Violence Weapons

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The mural on the side of this camper van depicts the Cookie Monster holding a gun into the back of his own mouth, with the words 'bad trip' painted alongside this image.

THE COMPLAINT

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

In this context, a camper like this has no censorship ability and therefore can be seen by people of all ages without any appropriate filter. My own young child has been exposed to this image of a character she loves and trusts in the context of children's program (which would naturally draw a child's attention), now being shown in a context which promotes violence and self harm and attempts to trivialise these issues and depict the subject of guns as something humorous.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

Advertiser failed to respond to this matter.

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 concern that the advertisement makes light of the serious topic of suicide and appeals to children through the use of a character familiar to kids.

The Board viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser did not respond.

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 features an image of Cookie Monster (from Sesame Street) holding a gun to his own mouth. The text next to the image reads “bad trip.”

The Board noted that the image appears on one of the vehicles from the Wicked Camper fleet.

The Board noted that there is a very loose connection between a “bad trip” meaning a vacation that may not have been very good and a “bad trip” meaning a bad outcome from taking some kind of drug.

The Board noted that the text and play on words outlined above has a minor impact on the overall tone of the image and that the use of a childhood character such as Cookie Monster with a gun in his mouth has a greater impact and appeal to a broad audience which would include children.

The Board considered that to depict a popular character (or otherwise) holding a gun in their own mouth is an implication of suicide and an implied violent act. The Board agreed that any advertising message that can be interpreted as condoning or encouraging suicide, represents an advertising message that is not justifiable in the context of any product advertised.

The Board noted the genuine community concern around suicide and violence and considered that the overall tone of the advertisement and use of a popular childhood character is in extreme poor taste and determined that the advertisement did breach section 2.3 of the Code. Finding that the advertisement did breach section 2.3 of the Code, the Board upheld the complaint.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE TO DETERMINATION

The advertiser has not provided a response to the Board's determination. The ASB will continue to work with the relevant authorities in Queensland regarding this issue of non-compliance.

