

## OVERTLY SEXUAL IMAGERY IN ADVERTISING

In September 2020, the AANA announced changes to the Code of Ethics and Practices Notes around the use of sexual imagery in advertising. These changes reflected increasing community concern around increased sexualisation of advertising and children's exposure to sexualised images. The aim of these changes is to ensure that children are appropriately protected from inappropriate sexualised imagery and to stop the use of overtly sexual images being used in advertising when they are not relevant to the product or service being advertised.

### The new rules

Section 2.4 of the Code of Ethics already requires that *"Advertising shall treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience"*. The changes to the Practice Note provide guidance on what is appropriate when it comes to using overtly sexual images:

1. *Overtly sexual depictions where the depiction is not relevant to the product or service being advertised are likely to offend Prevailing Community Standards and be unacceptable.*
2. *Overtly sexual images are not appropriate in outdoor advertising or shop front windows.*

The Practice Note sets out a non-exhaustive list of what may be considered to be "overtly sexual":

- Poses suggestive of sexual position: parting of legs, hand placed on or near genitals in a manner which draws attention to the region;
- People depicted in sheer lingerie or clothing where a large amount of buttocks, female breasts, pubic mound or genital regions can be seen;
- The use of paraphernalia such as whips and handcuffs, particularly in combination with images of people in lingerie, undressed or in poses suggestive of sexual position;
- Suggestive undressing, such as pulling down a bra strap or underpants; or
- Interaction between two or more people which is highly suggestive of sexualised activity.

This guideline gives an indication to the advertising industry of what is meant by "overtly sexual images" and what would prompt closer examination by the Ad Standards Community Panel.

### How the Community Panel will judge complaints

When considering complaints under section 2.4, the Community panel will take into account:

- the nature of the product/service advertised;
- the context of the ad and its location;
- the medium in which the ad appears, including the size of the advertisement;
- the audience; and
- the likely response of that audience.

## Examples

### Images that are not sexual, or no more than mildly sexual

The following images are examples of images that are likely to remain acceptable for outdoor and shop front advertising on the basis that they are not sexual or no more than mildly sexual.



The model on the left is wearing a bikini and appearing to walk on the beach in a manner that is unlikely to be considered sexual or sexually suggestive. Similarly, the model on the right shows a topless male model wearing swimwear but his pose is unlikely to be considered overtly sexual.



Both these images show individual models in bed but neither is in a sexually suggestive pose. It is unlikely that such images would be considered overtly sexual.



The image on the left contains a group of women in swimwear that is neither sheer nor revealing. The women are posing in a way that is unlikely to be considered overtly sexual.

The image on the right shows two models in active wear. The female model has an arm around the male model, who is topless. Neither model is posing in a way that is likely to be considered overtly sexual.



The image on the left shows two people embracing in a way that is not highly sexualised. The image on the right shows two models in underwear, the female model embracing the male model. The underwear as shown in the image is neither sheer nor revealing. This image is unlikely to be found to be considered overtly sexual.



The image on the left shows a female model applying cream to her leg. The image on the right shows a male topless model shaving his face. Neither model is posing in a manner that is likely to be overtly sexual.





The image on the left shows a female model wearing lingerie that is neither sheer nor revealing the buttocks, pubic mound or genital region. The model is standing in a pose that is unlikely to be considered overtly sexual. The image on the right shows a topless male model in underwear. The model is standing with hands on hips and not in manner likely to be considered overtly sexual.



Overtly sexual images that are unlikely to be acceptable in outdoor advertising or shopfront windows, or for advertising unrelated products/services....



The image on the left shows a couple, although clothed, in a passionate embrace, suggestive of highly sexualised activity. Similarly, the image on the right shows two female models in a pose suggestive of a sexual position.



The image on the left shows a model with his hand inside his open jeans, near his genitals, drawing attention to the area. The image on the right shows a model in lingerie and astride on a bed, drawing attention to her groin area. The sheer nature of the lingerie exposing the public mound and large amount of the model's breasts combined with the full-frontal pose is likely to be considered overtly sexual.





The image on the left shows a topless male model pulling down one side of his underwear in a sexually suggestive manner. The image on the right shows a male model pulling down the strap of a female model in a sexually suggestive manner.



The image on the left shows a blindfolded female model in lingerie and suspenders holding a whip. The sexual nature of the lingerie, blindfold and whip makes it likely this image would be considered overtly sexual.

#### Help and Advice

AANA free advice for members – [marit@aana.com.au](mailto:marit@aana.com.au)

Ad Standards' Copy Advice Service for all advertisers – <https://adstandards.com.au/education-and-advice/copy-advice>