



ABAC RESPONSIBLE ALCOHOL MARKETING CODE

MEDIA RELEASE

24 May 2017

Alcohol advertising on song with community standards

NEW research has found that rulings under the ABAC Responsible Alcohol Marketing Code (ABAC) over the past three years are in-line with community standards.

Colmar Brunton Social Research has updated research undertaken in 2013, conducting a series of six focus groups and surveying 1,225 people to assess alcohol marketing considered by the ABAC Complaints Panel.

Of the twelve advertisements tested, seven complaints had been upheld by ABAC and five had been dismissed. Just one of the twelve advertisements was considered unacceptable by the majority of community respondents.

“This confirms the high standards the ABAC Responsible Alcohol Marketing Code sets for alcohol marketing in Australia,” Chair of The ABAC Scheme, The Hon Alan Ferguson, said.

“In fact, the results indicate that ABAC rulings are more conservative and, therefore, ahead of community standards, which is about where you would expect the regulator to be positioned.”

“The findings were remarkably consistent across respondents, whether being asked to assess the ads based on no knowledge of the Code and then reassess once the Code requirements had been explained to them.”

“ABAC is committed to maintaining the high standards set by the Code for alcohol marketing in Australia”.

Not surprisingly, unprompted knowledge of alcohol advertising regulation was low across all groups (4%), but once prompted a majority (65%) were aware that they could complain to the Advertising Standards Bureau.

A majority of the respondents had no concern or offence about advertising standards in general (64%) and were not particularly concerned about the content of alcohol advertising in Australia (62%).

ABAC uses the research to assist in its periodic reviews and ongoing evaluation of the Code’s standards and effectiveness.

[ENDS]

Media contact: Tony Battaglione, Deputy Chair, ABAC Management Committee on 0413 014 807.

Background:

The ABAC Scheme is the centerpiece of Australia's system for responsible alcohol marketing and is administered by a management committee which includes industry, advertising and government representatives.

The ABAC Responsible Alcohol Marketing Code regulates the content of alcohol marketing (including packaging) in Australia. Subject to regular reviews, the Code reflects community expectations and changes in the media and advertising industries.

The Alcohol Advertising Pre-vetting Service provides independent, confidential advice to advertisers on whether proposed marketing communications comply with the Code. This service is offered on a 'user pays' basis.

The ABAC Adjudication Panel, headed by the Chief Adjudicator, Professor The Hon Michael Lavarch AO, considers public complaints about alcohol marketing communications that fall within the jurisdiction of the Code. The Panel and its deliberations are independent of the Management Committee and the broader alcohol and advertising industry.

In 2016, complaints referencing alcohol (139) represented 2.5% of all advertising complaints received by the ASB (5,581). However, given multiple complaints are received about single ads and many complaints do not relate to responsible portrayal of alcohol these complaints resulted in 34 Panel determinations (0.6% of all advertising complaints)