

Australia's Responsible Alcohol Marketing Scheme

30 June 2018

Marking 20 years of responsible alcohol marketing

TOMORROW marks 20 years of setting world-leading high standards for responsible alcohol marketing and packaging for Australia's Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code (ABAC).

Independent Chair of ABAC, Harry Jenkins AO, says the Code has come a long way since its humble beginnings on 1 July 1998, continuously evolving and expanding its reach to keep pace with emerging communications and marketing trends.

“Change has been a constant for ABAC since its inception, with its rules, standards and operations improving almost year-on-year. New and ever-emerging issues and trends around social, online and digital media keep the Code on its toes.

“It is impressive how, through the Code, advertisers have demonstrated their willingness to be ahead of the curve in adopting responsible marketing, often ahead of community standards. It reflects a mature approach by the alcohol industry that acknowledges its place and responsibility in society and responds accordingly.

“This proactive approach to the changing landscape of marketing in Australia means the Code works. Community research to benchmark standards in line with public and government expectations, is vital. Social research by Colmar Brunton over a number of years demonstrates ABAC's rulings are generally more conservative than public opinion.

“ABAC has been exceptionally fortunate to have former Federal Attorney-General, Prof. Michael Lavarch AO, chair ABAC's Independent Adjudication Panel since it began two decades ago.

“Michael and his team's meticulous attention to detail, deep consideration of complaints and steadfast adherence to the letter and intent of the Code is, in no small way, what has made ABAC so successful and internationally renowned.

“Through this continuity and thorough knowledge of the issues underpinning responsible alcohol marketing, the Panel has identified and driven new areas for ABAC to consider and review.”

ABAC has been a leader in regulating social media marketing, including user generated content, and was an early adopter of age restriction controls across platforms. Similarly, its banning of marketing from programs or content primarily aimed at minors has been cutting-edge.

New Placement Rules, effective from 1 November last year, provide a cohesive set of requirements for where and when alcohol marketing cannot be used.

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“Over the Adjudication Panel’s operation, the independence of the complaints process has always been completely respected and decisions supported even when the result wasn’t agreed with by a major alcohol company”, Prof Lavarch added.

“The Scheme’s Management Committee has been willing to respond to suggestions from the Panel on improving the Code and the Scheme’s procedures and this has meant the complaints process has kept up to date with changes in technology and marketing practices.”

Keys to ABAC’s success have been the support and involvement of representatives of the alcohol and advertising industries and participation by the Australian Government in the Management Committee– ensuring community concerns are identified, addressed and adhered to.

The *20 Years of ABAC* publication, taking a look back at the advertisements banned under the Code and marking the changes in community attitudes over the years, is available at: <http://www.abac.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/ABAC-20-Years-Final.pdf>

More information about ABAC is available at www.abac.org.au

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