

Australia's Responsible Alcohol Marketing Scheme

22 October 2018

Independent brewers urged to adopt ABAC standards

THE release of the Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code's (ABAC's) Third Quarterly Report for 2018 exposes a trend among independent brewers that isn't so trendy.

"This quarter saw two breaches of the Code, both by independent breweries. One breach was for Instagram posts with strong sexual innuendo and the other related to packaging for an orange NEIPA that the ABAC Adjudication Panel found could be confused for a soft drink," Harry Jenkins AO, the Independent Chair of ABAC, said.

"These follow ABAC breaches earlier this year by other independent brewers including:

- another instance of packaging with strong appeal to minors and confusion with a soft drink;
- a social media post that prominently showed a young person aged under 25 skateboarding which was found to have strong appeal to minors and a failure to age restrict the page also breached the ABAC; and
- a point of sale promotion featuring an inflatable palm tree display and a Frisbee giveaway which was found to have strong appeal to minors.

"While creativity in marketing is to be expected, clearly these breaches do not reflect the responsible marketing approach required and adopted by the majority of alcohol companies.

"The independent beer sector is encouraged to lift its game and become a responsible part of the industry. A good start would be for the sector to make itself aware of its obligations under the ABAC rules and comply before a breach needs to be remedied.

"That said, it is pleasing that these non-signatory brewers have all co-operated with the ABAC process and acted swiftly to correct the breaches, though it does underscore the benefit to all advertisers of becoming signatories to the Code and pre-vetting their ads and packaging through ABAC before going live.

"In none of the cases outlined had the marketing or packaging been pre-vetted under ABAC. ABAC is currently engaged with the Independent Brewers Association to provide information and education opportunities in relation to the ABAC standards to its members. We are encouraged that the Association has last week released a set of [guidelines](#) for beer labelling that include ABAC standards for responsible marketing."

Meanwhile, following an increase in complaints about posts by social influencers promoting alcohol products, ABAC has updated its best practice guide for responsible digital marketing to include a checklist for companies that engage social influencers to promote their products, including ensuring that social influencers:

- are at least 25 years of age,
- apply available age restriction controls, and
- disclose that the content is a marketing communication.

"Facebook and Instagram have recently advised how social influencers can age-gate their posts that promote alcohol brands, and we strongly urge all alcohol companies to ensure this is utilised," Mr Jenkins added.

"Globally the International Alliance for Responsible Drinking has announced a partnership with four leading social media platforms Facebook (including Instagram), Youtube, Snapchat and Twitter to work together to deliver new standards of responsibility in alcohol advertising."

ABAC's Third Quarterly Report for 2018 detailing these and other decisions is available [online](#). More information about the Code is also available at: www.abac.org.au

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