

2021

YEAR IN REVIEW

ABAC - AUSTRALIA'S RESPONSIBLE ALCOHOL MARKETING SCHEME

FROM THE CHAIR

The year 2021 was an extremely busy year for ABAC with record levels of activity for the Adjudication Panel and the Pre-vetting service. During the year, regrettably, the ongoing covid pandemic and associated restrictions and lockdowns continued to affect most aspects of community activity. For alcohol marketing it meant alongside normal activity, reaction to closure of licensed premises, a shift toward at home consumption, new delivery methods and takeaway products. These measures were subject to licensing authority requirements and the associated marketing subject to the established regulatory framework. This in part accounted for some of the increased activity.

The Chief Adjudicator, Professor Michael Lavarch, and his colleagues are to be commended for dealing with their record workload in an efficient and timely manner, and the clarity and consistency of their determinations. The determinations, which are on the public record, serve as important guidance as to how the Code should be interpreted and used to produce responsible marketing.

Possibly the most pleasing aspect of the record activity during the year was the 3336 requests for pre-vetting, an over one third increase on the previous year. Rejections numbered 501, about 15 per cent of requests. This is important pro-active work, and our pre-vetters deserve congratulations on these impressive results.



Mr Harry Jenkins AO
Chair, ABAC Management
Committee



THE
ABAC
SCHEME
LIMITED

KEY ABAC INITIATIVES

ABAC Education & Awareness

ABAC Education & Awareness is key to ensuring industry compliance. In 2021 ABAC:

- developed a comprehensive series of compliance training videos complemented by a free online training course on ABAC compliance that was undertaken by 436 company and agency staff in 2021;
- held its annual free industry compliance webinar;
- delivered tailored in-house training sessions on ABAC compliance for companies and agencies;
- updated education and training resources on the ABAC website;
- communicated with the regulated community in relation to ABAC developments and issues both directly and via circulars, upheld determination alerts and quarterly reports released publicly and made available on the ABAC website; and
- negotiated Memoranda of Understanding with Liquor Licensing authorities in Victoria and South Australia to improve communication and cross referral of issues.

Community Standards Research

ABAC commissioned JWS Research to undertake quantitative community standards research in relation to ABAC and alcohol marketing in Australia. The findings released in October supported strong consistency of both ABAC Code Standards and ABAC Panel decisions with community expectations:

- Of the fourteen advertisements tested, complaints about eight of those advertisements had been upheld by ABAC and six had been dismissed. However, only two of the fourteen advertisements were considered unacceptable by the majority of community respondents prior to being exposed to the Code standards.
- When testing whether Code standards had been applied by the Panel consistently with how they would have been applied by a majority within the community, the Panel had alignment with the community on all but one of the advertisements, which it conservatively upheld.
- Most respondents (60%) had no concerns about alcohol advertising, labelling or packaging over the last 12 months. Less than a third (29%) were concerned, with only 7% 'very concerned'.
- The Code's content standards appear to reflect community expectations for alcohol marketing and in some cases, appear to be more conservative. Of the 24% of people that said they had read, seen or heard something about alcohol advertising, packaging or labelling in the last 12 months that concerned them, their main concerns are already covered by the Code. There is also strong support for current ABAC restrictions around the promotion of alcohol to people under 18.
- Among the few who were concerned or offended about advertising standards on any issue, only 15% complained. The main reasons for not complaining were a perception that nothing will happen, lack of awareness of avenues for lodging complaints and a lack of knowledge about the process.
- Awareness of Ad Standards, ABAC and the Responsible Alcohol Marketing Code is not widespread. Just over a third (35%) of people were aware they can complain to Ad Standards about alcohol advertising. Awareness of ABAC and/or the Responsible Alcohol Marketing Code was lower at 17%.
- Familiarity with unusual alcohol terms used for emerging alcohol categories was low.

3336

Requests to
pre-vet marketing

501 rejected prior
to entering market

288

Complaints

Resulting in
153 determinations
by the ABAC panel

80

Determinations
upheld

Access via the
ABAC Website

19.6

Day Turnaround

The average number of business
days determinations were
completed within. (30 day target)