

ABAC Pre-Vetting Service Guide

Introduction

The ABAC Responsible Alcohol Marketing Code sets standards for responsible alcohol marketing in Australia and regularly measures its determinations externally to ensure it is in line with community expectations. The Code regulates both the content and placement of alcohol marketing across all advertising mediums.

A key part of the scheme is the pre-vetting of alcohol marketing communications before publication to aid compliance with the Code. It is mandatory for ABAC signatories to pre-vet TV, Radio, Cinema and OOH. Pre-vetting of all other marketing communications is optional but is encouraged.

Pre-vetting marketing communications against the ABAC Code

Applications for pre-vetting of all marketing communications, including packaging, may be lodged [here](#). For pre-vetting requests relating to an existing campaign, enter the existing application number when lodging your application, and it will be allocated to the pre-vetter handling that campaign.

No informal advice or opinions will be provided to advertisers without a pre-vetting application as this may result in an informal conversation or email being confused with an approval.

Timing

Pre-vetting will be completed within 4 working days of the submission of a complete application and marketing material. Any changes to marketing material/further requests may take an additional 4 working days to be considered. However, ABAC acknowledges the dynamic nature of the industry and pre-vetter responses are typically provided by the next working day.

In exceptional circumstances pre-vetters may be available for an urgent approval. However, it is the responsibility of the advertiser or their agency to telephone the assigned pre-vetter to discuss their timing issue and agree upon a shorter timeframe.

Social Media Submissions

Social media marketing is constantly evolving with new features and platforms emerging every day. Increasingly, pre-vetting is sought for complete social media posts, or images, videos, captions or other individual components for possible use in social media posts. To improve efficiency, consistency and cost-effectiveness in pre-vetting this material:

- Create periodic (for example monthly or quarterly) campaign calendars of posts and content and lodge a single pre-vetting request for the entire calendar.
- Submit any additional posts with immediate relevance to the pre-vetter allocated to your most recent calendar of posts and telephone the pre-vetter if urgent.
- Submit complete material with all imagery, captions and text (only interim approval can be given for incomplete material or individual components of a post).

Pre-vetter responses

1. Advice

An alcohol marketer or their agency, may submit an application for advice early in campaign development. Advice provided by the pre-vetter does not constitute approval.

2. Interim Approval

Marketing communications may be submitted at concept or pre-production stage for assessment against the Code. For example: print layouts, video and radio scripts, storyboards and concepts for social media posts, packaging design and POS material.

If the material complies with the Code the pre-vetter will respond with an email confirming Interim Approval. Interim approval of material at concept or pre-production stage (in particular, headlines or key visuals alone) does not guarantee approval at final submission stage as context can alter the message resulting in a breach of the Code.

3. Final Approval

ABAC Final Approval can only be given to completed marketing material that is ready for production or publication. For example: online video edits or final artwork.

An exception is where an applicant advises the pre-vetter in their application that the material will be used as a template for different products, prices or locations. In this case a Final Approval may be given for the final and complete template but will be expressed as being conditional on change-outs being limited to product image, brand name, price, store name, store location. The Final approval will not cover any other changes to the advertisement. A change-out that materially changes a creative element of a pre-approved template, for example to promote a competition or giveaway or copy on the attributes and benefits of a product, would need to be re-submitted to the original pre-vetter for assessment against the Code.

Final Approval is only given for material to appear in the particular medium nominated in the pre-vetting application. If the material is to appear in a different medium, it must be re-submitted for approval for the new medium. For example, an advertisement approved for use in a magazine (print) will need to be re-submitted for use on a billboard (outdoor).

Final Approval is given on the basis of the material submitted and the advertiser or agency must ensure that the material submitted is complete and re-submit any alterations. Any revisions can materially alter a marketing communication or packaging and may breach the Code.

Pre-vetting approval provides some level of assurance, but no guarantee, against the possibility of packaging or marketing being later ordered out of the marketplace – via the independent ABAC complaints process. The assessment of proposed material against any standards, including the ABAC, will necessarily involve a subjective judgment by an individual pre-vetter and as such the ABAC Adjudication Panel may occasionally have a different view and uphold a complaint against material which has been pre-vetted.

4. Rejection

If a marketing communication is not consistent with ABAC standards, pre-vetters will advise the applicant by email and explain why the material is rejected by reference to the particular ABAC standards that are breached. In these instances, the applicant is encouraged to work with the pre-vetter to adapt the material to meet the Code. Advertisers may seek a [review](#) of a rejection.

Further guidance

ABAC has a range of resources on its [website](#) for education and training on the ABAC Code.