

Australia's Responsible Alcohol Marketing Scheme

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Panel decisions highlight watch outs for alcohol marketers

The Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code (ABAC) has seen a slight increase in complaints and determinations compared with the first two quarters this year.

“The determinations made this quarter by the ABAC Adjudication Panel highlight some important areas where care is needed when developing alcohol marketing.” ABAC Chair Harry Jenkins AO noted

“Some companies like to include in their marketing, imagery that is nostalgic for adults as it reminds them of their youth. However, if the appeal of a nostalgic reference or imagery is enduring in its popularity for the current generation of minors it is likely to breach Code standards as occurred when figures from the ‘Little Miss’ children’s book series were used in a social media post.

“The Panel also considered the use of the trending ‘wave’ filter on an Instagram post this quarter and found that the combination of the filter effects and the caption encouraged excessive consumption or alternatively, treated it as amusing, which breaches Code standards. It is important to remember that humour won’t save a marketing communication that fails to meet Code standards.

“Another useful reminder arising from Panel decisions, is that where a product packaging or a marketing campaign promotes a positive community benefit, Code standards for responsible marketing cannot be ‘traded off’ against another desirable outcome. That is, the ABAC does not envisage a marketing communication that is inconsistent with a Code standard will be allowed if the marketing communication serves some other worthwhile purpose.

“An important statistic each quarter is the extent to which alcohol marketers choose to use the ABAC pre-vetting service as an independent check that their marketing is meeting responsible alcohol marketing standards. It is positive to see demand continue to increase substantially each year, with almost 1,000 requests received in the last quarter. This increase in demand has resulted in a new pre-vetting lodgment system that was launched earlier this year. The new system enables companies to now lodge revised material or concepts for an existing application direct through the database, rather than via email. We encourage companies to lodge material direct as this is the fastest and most efficient way to have revised material pre-vetted. More information about using the pre-vetting service is available [here](#).

“Finally, ABAC has received very positive feedback on its new compliance checklists now available on our website. We encourage all alcohol marketers to make use of this free resource, available [here](#).”

ABAC’s Second Quarterly Report for 2022 detailing decisions made during the past quarter is available [online](#).

More information about the Code is also available at: <http://www.abac.org.au/>

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