

Australia's Responsible Alcohol Marketing Scheme

29 August 2023

Harry Jenkins retires as ABAC independent Chair after a 5 year tenure and is succeeded by Hon Tony Smith as ABAC hits 25 years of promoting responsibility in alcohol marketing

FORMER Speaker of the House of Representatives, Harry Jenkins AO has retired after 5 years at the helm of ABAC as its independent Chair. The Hon Tony Smith, former Speaker of the House of Representatives has been appointed to succeed Mr Jenkins.

“Harry has provided strong independent leadership during a period of significant change in the alcohol and marketing industries and calmly guided ABAC through the COVID-19 pandemic. ABAC is grateful for Harry’s leadership and thoughtful advice in helping the organisation to evolve over the last five years to keep pace with community expectations and a rapidly changing media and industry landscape. We wish him all the best for his well-earned retirement from the position.” said ABAC’s CEO, Jayne Taylor as she paid tribute to Mr Jenkins contributions.

Mr Jenkins added: “I am pleased to have been part of ABAC for the past five years. I have been impressed by the serious intent of everyone involved in the ABAC system, and the efficacy and responsiveness of the Scheme. The Scheme has ably responded to a variety of challenges and I am pleased to see continuing reductions in risky alcohol consumption by adults and reductions in alcohol consumption by minors. Minimising exposure of minors to alcohol advertising and ensuring the content of this advertising does not appeal to them is and will continue to be the most important objective of the Code. I would like to thank those who are regulated by the system for their ongoing co-operation with the complaints system and their proactive efforts to comply with the Code standards, demonstrated by a strong use of the pre-vetting service.

“As ABAC reaches 25 years of operation, I am impressed by what it has achieved in that time. This is in no small part, due to the leadership of the ABAC Adjudication Panel, throughout the 25 years, by former Federal Attorney-General, Professor Michael Lavarch AO. Professor Lavarch plays an incredibly important role and has been critical to the rigour and success of the Scheme. In addition to proactively evolving to meet community standards, ABAC has proven to be a powerful industry watchdog having:

- considered **31,557** requests from industry to have their marketing pre-vetted for ABAC compliance
- rejected **4,742** of those requests before reaching the market
- delivered industry compliance training to **> 2,800** industry participants since 2010
- upped training initiatives with a free online training course completed by **942** marketers in just over 2 years
- expert panel adjudication of **922** public complaints with average turnaround **14-20 business days** in recent years
- on **344** occasions ordered ads or packaging out of market, at significant cost to marketers
- achieved voluntary compliance of **98-100%** each year, with 100% compliance in 2022 and most years”

The ABAC Scheme is pleased to announce that the Hon Tony Smith will succeed Mr Jenkins as ABAC’s independent Chair. Mr Smith brings a wealth of experience to the role, having served in federal parliament for over 20 years, including as Speaker for over 6 years, and serving on numerous Parliamentary Committees, many as Chair. The ABAC Scheme has a history of appointing former Parliamentary presiding officers due to the impartiality and integrity they bring to the role. Mr Jenkins succeeded the Hon Alan Ferguson, formerly President of the Senate.

“I’m looking forward to joining an organisation that is effective, responsive and has proven itself to align with community standards. ABAC has shown it is proactive and dynamic in the way it has kept pace with the ever-emerging issues, demonstrating its willingness to be ahead of the curve. It is important that the Code remain global best practice, responding to changes in the environment in which it operates.” Mr Smith said today.

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

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