

17 April 2024

2023 ABAC Scheme Annual Report

During 2023 the ABAC Scheme released an updated set of Code standards and improved guidance for industry on responsible digital marketing the organisation's latest annual report has found.

ABAC Independent Chair Tony Smith said, "The heart of the ABAC Scheme is the ABAC Responsible Alcohol Marketing Code, and after an extensive 15 month public consultation process and independent community opinion research a new ABAC Code was launched in April 2023 and was fully implemented from 1 January 2024. This rigorous process ensures the Code remains aligned with community expectations and changes in the industry and marketing landscape.

"The Code review highlighted the importance of keeping across the complex and rapidly evolving digital marketing trends and in December 2023 ABAC released a revised Best Practice Guide for Digital Marketing. The Guide outlines the application of ABAC Code standards to digital marketing and also explores best practice to assist companies in the responsible implementation and management of their digital marketing.

"Importantly, during 2023 ABAC celebrated the significant milestone of 25 years of regulation of alcohol marketing in Australia. The data speaks for itself, and I highlight the 344 ads and packaging that were ordered out of market by the ABAC Adjudication Panel and the 4,742 marketing communications that were rejected by ABAC pre-vetters before they reached the market. These outcomes demonstrate that ABAC is an active and effective regulator of alcohol marketing in Australia, raising industry standards over that period."

Panel Chief Adjudicator, Professor Michael Lavarch, reflected on the transformation of the industry and in turn the ABAC Scheme over the past 25 years, "In retrospect quite remarkably, almost universally alcohol companies have accepted the ABAC Code and participated in the public complaints process irrespective of their relationship with a sponsoring peak body. What's more, these companies have accepted adverse Panel decisions – sometimes at the very great expense of having to remove brand names and product packaging from the market.

"Equally, via a series of key decisions, the Panel has in effect expanded the scope of the Scheme over the years, as new issues arise, by applying its 'spirit and intent' philosophy of the policy purpose of alcohol marketing regulation. For instance, the decisions to capture the social media posts of influencers and to hold alcohol companies responsible to manage the posts of user generated comments on Company sites. A 2023 decision on the marketing of UberEATS is another recent example of the Panel, aside from formal reviews of the Scheme, the Code and its standards being able to nimbly maintain the currency of ABAC. In each of these examples, there has been no push back by the Scheme's Management Committee and the industry as a whole. I am proud of the part the independent ABAC Adjudication Panel has played in the Scheme's transformation."

ABAC's Annual Report and Year in Review for 2023 are available online at:
<https://www.abac.org.au/publications/annual-reports/>

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

[ENDS]

Media Contact: Jayne Taylor on 0411 700 225.