

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.

All alcohol marketing must comply with the Code. 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 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

Alcohol marketers or their agencies must lodge an ABAC application for all new campaigns and advertisements they wish to have pre-vetted against the ABAC Code. A new application for pre-vetting a marketing communication may be lodged [here](#). Complete the online form and receive a reply with the name and contact details of your allocated pre-vetter.

For pre-vetting requests relating to an existing campaign, email the material to be pre-vetted to the original pre-vetter quoting the existing application number.

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.

Pre-vetter responses

Pre-vetters respond to a pre-vetting request in one of the following ways:

1. Advice

An alcohol marketer or their agency, may submit an application for advice regarding the pre-vetting process or any question early in campaign development that is not directly related to the pre-vetting of specific marketing material. 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 to be dispatched to the media or printer. For example: online video edits or final artwork.

An exception is where an alcohol retailer or their agency 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 advertisement, 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 by the advertiser/agency on the pre-vetting application form. If subsequently 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 referred back to a pre-vetter to seek approval for use on a billboard (outdoor).

Final Approval is given on the basis of the material submitted and it is the responsibility of the advertiser or agency to re-submit alterations. Proposed revisions to existing approved marketing communications including packaging, must be discussed with the assigned pre-vetter as to whether it needs to be re-submitted for approval, as revisions can materially change a marketing communication and may then breach the Code.

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 pre-vetting decision.

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 and further requests may each 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.

Further guidance

ABAC encourages everyone involved in the creation of alcohol marketing to be fully aware of The ABAC Code. For further interpretation of the Code refer to the [ABAC Guidance Notes and Alcohol Packaging Compliance Guide](#). The [Best Practice for Responsible Digital Alcohol Marketing](#) provides additional guidance on the management of digital marketing.