



BREWERS
ASSOCIATION

Alcohol Advertising, Promotion and Sports Sponsorship

The objective of beer advertising is to influence brand choice. Not only is there no evidence to suggest advertising encourages drinking behaviours, numerous studies show it has little to no effect on boundaries of responsible consumption. Family and peer influences are dominant.

The content of alcohol advertising is heavily and sufficiently restricted through the co-regulatory Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code and the Australian Association of National Advertisers' system and codes.

Arguments that alcohol advertising has a significant effect on harmful alcohol consumption are not reflected in reality. Over the last 40 years alcohol advertising expenditure has increased, yet both consumption per capita and underage drinking have been falling.

Socio-cultural factors are the most important determinants of national drinking patterns. Across 17 OECD countries where long-standing bans on alcohol advertising have been in place, the bans did not result in a reduction in the number of new drinkers, in alcohol consumption overall, or in rates of alcohol misuse.

Alcohol companies sponsor sport because people enjoy a drink, most popularly beer, when watching the game. The vast majority do so responsibly.

The Facts

Some argue that alcohol advertising and/or sports sponsorship must be banned because it 'targets' youth and, therefore, drives underage drinking. Others argue that while it does not specifically 'target' underage Australians, accidental 'exposure' has a similar effect. However, the reality is quite different.

Declining misuse and underage drinking

- Over the last 40 years alcohol advertising expenditure has increased (as it has for most products), yet both consumption per capita and underage drinking have been falling markedly. Alcohol consumption is still tracking at 55-year lows* and underage drinking is at its lowest level recorded with 82% of 12-17 year olds not drinking alcohol at all**.

- * Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Apparent Consumption of Alcohol, 2016-17*.
- ** Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2016*.



- This latest result of 82% abstinence among 12-17 year olds confirms a long-term trend and continuous improvement, up from 56.5% in 2007.
- *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2016.*
- Further, that those aged 12-17 drinking at lifetime risky drinking patterns fell from 4.2% in 2010 to 1.3% in 2016. And that those aged 12-17 at risk of drinking harm fell from 14.1% in 2010 to 5.4% in 2016.
- *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2016.*
- What is clear is that underage drinking is in consistent long-term decline in Australia and the age of initiation (having a first drink) continues to rise. Of the 18% of teens who tried alcohol, the age of first drink has moved up from 14.7 years old in 2007 to 16.1 in 2016.
- *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2016.*

Declining alcohol consumption generally

- The Australian Bureau of Statistics records the long-term trend in alcohol consumption in Australia in steady decline for over 40 years. Consumption per capita in 2016-17 was lower than any point since 1961-62, continuing a decade-on-decade decline as moderate consumption became the norm in Australia.
- *Australian Bureau of Statistics, Apparent Consumption of Alcohol 2016-17, September 2018.*
- Over the past decade we have seen the popularity of low- and mid-strength beers grow markedly. Mid-strength and low-strength beers now account for more than one-quarter of all beer sales – at 26.5% of total sales, mid-strength makes up 22.3% of all beer volume available in Australia, while low-strength beer accounts for 4.2%.
- *Australian Bureau of Statistics, Apparent Consumption of Alcohol 2016-17, September 2018.*

Increase in illicit drug use

Illegal drug use is, unfortunately, on the rise in Australia. Alcohol is a well-regulated industry with strict codes around the sale and advertising of products. It makes little sense to further restrict or ban the advertising of alcohol, which can be used safely in moderation, at a time when an increasing number of Australians are making the decision to use illegal drugs...

- 1.8 million people reported being victims of a drug-related incident in Australia last year.
- *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2016.*
- About one-third of ice users are now taking the drug at least once a week, compared to only a quarter in 2013.
- *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2016.*
- Over 3 million people admitted to using an illegal drug at least once in the past year.
- *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2016.*

The Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code is rigorous and effective

A rigorous Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code (ABAC) in Australia ensures that advertisers cannot seek to induce uptake or target demographics or represent alcohol in an irresponsible way. ABAC covers the content and placement of all marketing, in both traditional and digital media, and any marketing activity associated with sponsorships outside of the use of brand names and logos. It is closely regulated.

- In Australia, alcohol advertising, marketing and social media is heavily regulated through the Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code – a robust independent system that includes government representation. ABAC complements and adds to the Australian Association of National Advertisers' system by providing specific and significant restrictions on the content and placement of alcohol advertising, including:



- ✓ only portraying responsible and moderate use of alcohol beverages;
 - ✓ responsibility towards minors (under the age of 18) including that advertisements must not have strong or evident appeal to minors, use actors that may appear to be underage (actors are required to be 25 years or older) or be directed to minors by a breach of the placement rules;
 - ✓ responsible depiction of the effects of alcohol by not portraying alcohol as a means to sexual or social success, or change in mood; and
 - ✓ not depicting the use of alcohol where it may reduce safety.
 - *Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code. Visit: <http://www.abac.org.au/> for more information.*
- ABAC and the AANA Codes provide a robust system to ensure the responsible marketing of alcohol beverages by limiting the permitted content in alcohol advertising, with responsibility towards children and underage adolescents being paramount.
 - In 2017, Colmar Brunton Social Research explored whether decisions made by ABAC's Complaints Panel regarding alcohol advertisements and packaging are in line with community expectations. Quantitatively, an online survey of 1,225 Australians across locations, ages and genders measured community perceptions. Of the 12 advertisements reviewed by the Complaints Panel, seven were deemed by the Panel to breach the Code and were canned as a consequence. Yet, just one was deemed inappropriate by the community.
 - *ABAC Responsible Alcohol Marketing Code Scheme, Review of Decisions, Colmar Brunton Social Research, March 2017.*
 - The ABAC Panel forced a recall of the VB Blues promotional can as part of the 2016 NRL State of Origin series. However, the blue can packaging on an unprompted basis was deemed acceptable by 67% of viewers, with just 22% deeming it unacceptable. Even after The Code was reviewed by viewers, 62% remained committed to the blue can promotion being acceptable.
 - *ABAC Responsible Alcohol Marketing Code Scheme, Review of Decisions, Colmar Brunton Social Research, March 2017.*
 - These results indicate that ABAC's rulings are conservative compared to community expectations. And, that with a 100% industry compliance with ABAC rulings, the ABAC system has teeth.
 - *Brewers Association summation of the data.*
 - Alcohol advertising meets community expectations. The Advertising Standards Bureau reports that alcohol advertising makes up just 2% of all advertising complaints, with just 1.1% of those actually requiring determination.
 - *Advertising Standards Bureau 2018.*

Brewers Association Policy Position

- There is no evidence to support arguments for further restrictions to alcohol advertising and sponsorship – with consumption per capita, underage drinking and levels of harmful use all in long-term decline.
- Brewers make a very significant financial contribution to the creative and sporting industries, which extends to not only to national and elite sporting teams, but state competition and local club level. It would be a great shame if those funds were removed for no good reason.
- A focus on advertising and sponsorship distracts from the real drivers of misuse and underage drinking. As a community, we should be focussed on the real socio-cultural drivers.

