



PROTECT OUR KIDS AND TAKE ALCOHOL OUT OF THE GAME WE LOVE

13 January 2017

Mr Steve Smith
Captain of the Australian Cricket Team

Dear Steve

Cricket is embedded in Australian sporting culture, synonymous with hot summers and the great outdoors, and enjoyed by children and families across the country.

Children see representative cricketers like you as heroes and role models.

Sadly, professional cricket is saturated with alcohol promotion. It's almost impossible to know where the game ends and the alcohol marketing begins.

Today, as you take to the pitch at the Gabba to represent Australia, just look around at all the alcohol promotion and consider, what is Cricket Australia selling its millions of young fans during the Victoria Bitter One Day International series?

Alcohol brands are in constant view, both at the grounds and on television. From the naming rights and broadcast commercials, through to your uniform branding, promotional merchandise, website, and the scoreboard, fences, pitch and wickets.

The latest data show that 6.2 million children are exposed to 11 million alcohol advertisements during cricket broadcasting, with the majority (72.7 per cent) occurring during daytime hours.¹

When Australia celebrated its 2015 ICC World Cup win, the post-match discussion led by Shane Warne focused not on our team's outstanding performance on the field, but how "thirsty" the players were and how they were going to celebrate with booze.²

What kind of message does this alcohol-drenched culture send to the many impressionable young Australians who tune in to watch their sporting heroes play?

Last season, New South Wales Premier Mike Baird voiced concerns that "... the captain of our cricket team sits there with a big VB on the middle [of his shirt]". You might remember defending this at the time suggesting, "we're promoting the brand, not the consumption of alcohol".³

However, all the evidence suggests that this is not the case.

International and Australian research have shown that repeat exposure to alcohol promotions and sponsorship messages are associated with young people drinking more and from an earlier age.

This week, the international scientific journal *Addiction* presented the latest evidence on alcohol marketing and its impact on children. The research shows that the amount of alcohol marketing to which children are exposed influences both the age they start drinking and the likelihood they will drink at risky levels.⁴

Drinking from a young age can adversely affect the developing brain, particularly the frontal region responsible for self-regulation and impulse control. It is vital to ensure that advertising does not promote alcohol to young people at such a vulnerable age.

Alcohol marketing during sport has clear features that will appeal to children. It promotes the idea that consumption is linked to sport, positive personality traits, and success.⁵

Each time you take to the field, you are clearly promoting so much more than just a brand.

It is time to end this unhealthy relationship.

Sport is a health promotion activity and its association with an unhealthy product such as alcohol is counter-intuitive at best and harmful at worst. That's why former rugby league great Steve Ella has been calling for an end to alcohol sponsorship in sport.

We write to you today as representatives of a number of organisations with a shared conviction. We believe that every Australian child should have the best opportunity to live a long and healthy life.

This can begin with cricket removing alcohol sponsors from Australia's favourite game.

As the Captain of the Australian cricket team, which some have described as the most important job in Australia, we ask you to support the phasing out of the sponsorship of cricket by alcohol brands.

Your support for this much-needed change will make a lasting difference to the lives of young fans. Remember, alcohol is the leading cause of death and disability for young males aged 15-24 in nearly every region in the world, and young females of the same age in wealthy countries like Australia.⁶

Yours sincerely

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Alcohol Policy Coalition

people's alcohol action coalition

1 Carr, S. et al. (2015). Child and adolescent exposure to alcohol advertising in Australia's major televised sports. *Addiction*.

2 Decent, T. (2015, March 30). 'Cricket World Cup: 'How thirsty are you?' Social media reacts to Shane Warne's drinking questions and Australia's win. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved from: <http://www.smh.com.au/sport/cricket/cricket-world-cup-how-thirsty-are-you-social-media-reacts-to-shane-warne-drinking-questions-and-australia-win-20150329-1malsd.html>

3 Editorial. (2015, September 19). 'Smith defends sponsorship after Baird comments.' Cricket.com.au. Retrieved from: <http://www.cricket.com.au/news/steve-smith-defends-australia-cricket-alcohol-sponsorship-premier-nsw-mike-baird-vb/2015-09-19>

4 Jernigan, D et al (2016). Alcohol marketing and youth alcohol consumption: a systematic review of longitudinal studies published since 2008. *Addiction* 112 (Suppl. 1). 7-20

5 Jones, S. C., Phillipson, L. & Barrie, L. R. (2010). 'Most men drink... especially like when they play sports' - alcohol advertising during sporting broadcasts and the potential impact on child audiences. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 10 (1-2), 59-73.

6 *Addiction* (2017). Media release: Current controls on alcohol marketing are not protecting youth, warn public health experts.