# Alcohol advertising is impossible to escape for Aussie kids

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| **Date** | 2019-05-14 11:59:55 |
| **Categories** | Policy  |

### A new report has found that nowhere is really safe for Australian children when it comes to alcohol marketing.

School buses, primary schools, Dora The Explorer YouTube videos. All places you’d expect to be free from alcohol marketing. Unfortunately, this isn’t always the case.

The latest report from the Alcohol Advertising Review Board, [*Impossible to escape: The need for stronger restrictions on the placement of alcohol marketing in Australia*](https://www.alcoholadreview.com.au/resources/AARB-Impossible-to-escape-placement-report-2019---FINAL.pdf), highlights that there is serious community concern about where alcohol is being advertised.

The AARB considers and reviews complaints from the community about alcohol advertising. In seven years of operation, around two thirds of the complaints received by the AARB related to the placement of alcohol marketing. Concerns related to ads placed where young people were likely to be exposed or with content that would appeal to them, including on billboards in public spaces, online, public transport, and TV. Some alarming examples of alcohol advertising that drew complaints include an alcohol ad on a [school bus](https://www.alcoholadreview.com.au/articles/determination-reports/the-bavarian-ad-on-a-school-bus-in-sydney-nsw-ref-) in Sydney, and a sign for an [alcohol delivery service](https://www.alcoholadreview.com.au/articles/determination-reports/deliver-me-drinks-sign-outside-primary-school-in-f) directly opposite a primary school in Melbourne.

In reviewing the complaints over the past seven years, we came to the conclusion that nowhere is really safe from alcohol marketing. Our [‘A day in the life of a child’](https://www.alcoholadreview.com.au/resources/AARB-A-Day-in-the-Life-of-a-Child-2019.pdf) infographic highlights that an average 15-year-old Australian child could be exposed to alcohol marketing through Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, billboards, on public transport, at the supermarket, on television, and in the cinema … all in one day.

And the really scary part is, the current self-regulatory alcohol advertising system is completely inadequate to protect our kids. Prior to 2017, the only restrictions on placement related to television and outdoor advertising. The Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice (CTICP) restricts alcohol ads to 8.30 pm–5 am and 12 pm–3 pm on weekdays, and 8.30 pm–5 am on weekends and school holidays on free-to-air channels, except during sports programs on weekends and public holidays. An Outdoor Media Association guideline limits outdoor alcohol advertising to outside a 150m sight line of a school gate. Placement of alcohol marketing in all other media was unrestricted.

In November 2017, the Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code Scheme introduced new provisions related to the placement of alcohol marketing. Unfortunately, these provisions did little to change the status quo. Colleagues and I from Curtin University critically [reviewed](https://drinktank.org.au/2018/12/alcohol-industry-fails-to-protect-kids-from-alcohol-marketing-once-again/) the first six months of the ABAC placement rules to see if they provided any additional safeguards for young people. We identified significant flaws and weaknesses in the rules, and [concluded](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/dar.12872) that they were unlikely to reduce young people’s exposure to alcohol marketing.

After strong and consistent advocacy from health groups around Australia, our state and territory governments have started to take action. In April 2019, the Queensland Government [announced](https://mumbrella.com.au/junk-food-and-alcohol-ads-scrapped-by-queensland-government-576098) it would restrict outdoor advertising for junk food and alcohol on government-owned sites. In June 2018, the Western Australian Government [announced](https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2018/06/End-in-sight-for-alcohol-advertising-on-public-transport.aspx) that alcohol advertising would be removed from buses, trains, and train stations. These announcements followed the ACT’s [introduction](https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/open_government/inform/act_government_media_releases/rattenbury/2015/buses-will-no-longer-advertise-junk-food%2C-alcohol%2C-gambling-and-weapons) of restrictions on alcohol advertising on all state-owned buses in 2015. The South Australian Government has also considered restricting alcohol ads on state-owned buses, trains, and trams.

Unfortunately, the current Federal Government has been silent on the issue.

With the election looming, there are opportunities for the incoming federal government to take action to better protect young people. For starters, the exemption in the CTICP that allows alcohol ads to be broadcast during sports programming on weekends and public holidays needs to be removed. You can join calls to action on this issue by signing up to the [End Alcohol Advertising in Sport](https://www.endalcoholadvertisinginsport.org.au/) campaign.

There is also an urgent need to replace the self-regulatory alcohol advertising system with independent, legislated controls that cover the volume, content, and placement of all forms of alcohol marketing.

After all the votes are counted on Saturday, we’ll keep demanding action on alcohol marketing from the new federal government. Because Australian kids deserve better than beer ads on their school bus.

### Metadata

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