# Community organisations call on Netflix to set the standard with an ad model that prioritises health and wellbeing

As the world’s biggest streaming platform, with more than 220 million subscribers, Netflix has the chance to set the standard and establish an ad model that prioritises people’s health and wellbeing.

Netflix has already made an important decision to exclude gambling advertising from its new ad-supported subscription tier. Now, more than 50 leading Australian and international health and community organisations including FARE have signed [an open letter](https://fare.org.au/community-organisations-call-on-netflix-to-set-the-standard-with-an-ad-model-that-prioritises-health-and-wellbeing/) urging the streaming giant to also exclude alcohol advertising.

When young people are exposed to alcohol marketing, they are more likely to start drinking alcohol at a younger age. They also go on to drink alcohol at risky levels later in life. Exposure to alcohol marketing also cues alcohol cravings and is known to trigger a desire to drink among people with high-risk alcohol use and for people recovering from alcohol addiction.

Responding [in the media](https://www.news.com.au/entertainment/tv/streaming/lobby-group-calls-on-netflix-to-ban-booze-ads/news-story/6482ce959379e64d29a1f0caaf035435), Netflix said it was planning to allow alcohol ads on the streaming platform – but it is not too late to change its mind. Netflix still has the chance to protect millions of people across the world, including children and those at risk of alcohol harms, from being exposed to this marketing.

Children and Media Australia President Professor Elizabeth Handsley, who also signed the letter, shared why she believes it is important for Netflix to set the standard for advertising on digital platforms and help to protect children who watch the streaming giant's programming.

"We know that children are heavily influenced by the ads they see,” Professor Handsley said.

"Children are much more vulnerable to taking on advertising messages than adults, as they don't necessarily understand the selling intent behind advertising - so there's a need to be extra careful."

Professor Handsley said it was not enough for streaming companies to enable parents to set up children's viewing profiles, because this did not include a choice as to the advertising that will be shown across the whole family’s subscription.

"Children don't only watch children's content, they watch all sorts of content and all content should be made safe for children," she said.

"Advertising sets the horizon for what's possible and desirable in children's lives. If that doesn't include alcohol, it can help children be healthier for longer."

If even a small proportion of new or existing subscribers take up Netflix's ad-supported offer, this could mean that millions of people across the world are exposed to even more alcohol advertising.

Alcoholic products cause more than 200 diseases and injuries and more than 3 million deaths each year. We know that alcohol advertising contributes to risky drinking – this is why the World Health Organization recommends restricting marketing as a priority area.

World Cancer Research Fund International Executive Director Dr Kate Allen, who is also a signatory to the letter, said alcohol "is a significant risk factor for cancer".

"The scientific evidence shows that drinking alcohol increases the risk of 7 cancers, including mouth, pharynx and larynx but also breast and colorectal cancers,” Dr Allen said.

"In general, the more alcohol you drink, the higher your risk.”

In 2020, she said, more than 4 per cent of all new cancers globally were linked to alcohol consumption – more than 740,000 cases of cancer that could have been prevented if no alcohol had been consumed.

Along with health and community organisations around the world, FARE will continue advocating for restrictions on alcohol marketing to protect communities.

Common sense reforms to limit alcohol marketing can make a positive difference and help prevent significant harms from alcohol. This is why the World Health Organization recommends it as a policy option to help reduce harm. More action is needed globally to ensure that better protections are in place – and streaming companies can choose to take a principled stand.