# How the alcohol industry targets its underage customers of tomorrow

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| **Date** | 2017-10-04 09:21:57 |
| **Categories** | Media releases |

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Big Alcohol’s deliberate and dangerous marketing practices are as much a problem in Australia as they are a global problem and will be a major focus, when researchers and health professionals from around the world attend the Global Alcohol Policy Conference (GAPC) 2017 in Melbourne, this week.

Keynote speaker, Dr David Jernigan, Director of the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, a United States (US) based institute funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health, will present today on the growing body of research that documents the association between exposure to alcohol marketing and the impact on youth drinking and related harms.

Dr Jernigan’s latest research, [Alcohol Advertising in Magazines and Underage Readership](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/acer.13477/abstract?systemMessage=Wiley+Online+Library+will+be+unavailable+on+Saturday+7th+Oct+from+03.00+EDT+/+08:00+BST+/+12:30+IST+/+15.00+SGT+to+08.00+EDT+/+13.00+BST+/+17:30+IST+/+20.00+SGT+and+Sunday+8th+Oct+from+03.00+EDT+/+08:00+BST+/+12:30+IST+/+15.00+SGT+to+06.00+EDT+/+11.00+BST+/+15:30+IST+/+18.00+SGT+for+essential+maintenance.+Apologies+for+the+inconvenience+caused), aimed to identify if underage youth in the US were disproportionately exposed to alcohol advertising in magazines with greater youth readership.

The study analysed the advertising of 680 alcohol brands across 49 magazines between 2006 and 2011.

“What we found was that alcohol brands popular among underage drinkers are more likely than other brands to advertise in magazines with a high underage readership, resulting in a disproportionate and concerning exposure of underage youth,” Dr Jernigan said.

The findings point to the complete inadequacy of the alcohol industry’s voluntary guidelines in protecting youth from exposure to alcohol marketing, a shortcoming the US shares with Australia

Health experts in Australia have long argued that the current regulation of alcohol marketing in Australia is ineffective and fails to protect children.

A case in point, the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice is the key instrument to control the placement of alcohol advertising on television, and was reviewed in 2015.

Julia Stafford, Executive Officer of the McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth will present a case study at GAPC 2017 on the review, which resulted in significant weakening of existing alcohol advertising provisions.

The analysis identifies the industry forces that shaped the review and ultimately weakened the code in favour of the industry.

“At a time when alcohol advertising and sponsorship in televised sport has never been more aggressive and pervasive, the review should have served as an opportunity to close the egregious loophole that allows alcohol to be advertised on free-to-air TV before 8:30pm on weekends and public holidays. Instead the code was further weakened,” Ms Stafford says.

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) Chief Executive Michael Thorn says that when it comes to televised sport Aussie kids are effectively trapped in a pincer movement, by the sporting codes desperate to capture future fans’ and grow their audience, and Big Alcohol which is very deliberately grooming its customers of tomorrow.

“There is now a mounting and irrefutable body of evidence that points to the ways in which the alcohol industry very deliberately markets alcohol to children. Big alcohol’s motivation is simple. Like tobacco before it, it’s a dying industry if it can’t recruit new customers,” Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn is calling on Aussie parents to become a catalyst for change and throw their support behind a campaign to remove alcohol sponsorship from professional sport.

#BoozeFreeSport is a campaign endorsed and supported by the Public Health Association of Australia, McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth, St Vincent’s Health Australia, the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, the Australian Health Promotion Association and the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education.

“A strong majority of Australians want to see an end to alcohol sponsorship in sport. We’re asking Australians to get behind the #BoozeFreeSport campaign and ensure their voices are heard by the Commonwealth Ministers who can address their concerns.” Mr Thorn said.

[view media release in pdf](https://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Media-Release-HOW-THE-ALCOHOL-INDUSTRY-TARGETS-ITS-UNDERAGE-CUSTOMERS-OF-TOMORROW-Final-04102017.pdf)

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