

Submission to the ACMA review of alcohol advertising rules in the Free TV Code

April 2026



About FARE

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) is a not-for-profit organisation with a vision for an Australia free from alcohol harms – where communities are healthy and well and where laws, policies and programs are fair, equitable and just.

Every day, people across Australia are negatively impacted by alcohol, through injury, violence, mental ill-health, chronic disease, family violence and disadvantage. Far too many Australians die because of alcohol.

We work collaboratively to build the capacity of people wanting to create change, raise community awareness of alcohol harms, advocate for policy change aimed at preventing alcohol-related harms and increase accountability of companies that fuel harm.

Working with local communities, people with lived experience of alcohol harm, values-aligned organisations, health professionals, researchers and governments across the nation, we are improving the health and wellbeing of everyone in Australia.

To learn more about us and our work visit www.fare.org.au.

You can get in touch via email at info@fare.org.au

Contents

Executive summary	4
Recommendations	5
Harms of alcohol and alcohol advertising	6
Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence.....	6
Failures in the existing Code	7
a) General permissiveness and inadequate framing	7
b) Poor capture of alcohol marketing	7
c) Alcohol advertising and sports programming – “the sports loophole”	8
d) Lack of regulation of Broadcast Video on Demand in the Code	9
Impacts on Particular Cohorts	9
a) Children and young people.....	9
b) Other people at risk	10
Need for a “program standard”	12
a) Industry failure to improve the code and actions to weaken the code	12
b) Community attitudes and expectations	13
c) Program standard content.....	13
Conclusion	14
References	15

FARE welcomes the opportunity provided by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to contribute to its review of alcohol advertising rules in the *Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice* (the Code).

Executive summary

Australians should be able to enjoy sport and entertainment in environments that are safe and free from harm caused by alcohol. Commercial free-to-air television continues to play a significant role in the lives of Australians, and in shaping community norms and behaviours. More than half of Australian adults are watching broadcast television each week, according to the latest data from ACMA.¹

The harms of alcohol, which are exacerbated by exposure to advertising, are serious and well understood. They include individual health impacts, broader social and economic impacts, and disproportionate impacts on specific groups such as women and children.

The current regulatory framework governing alcohol advertising on commercial television (Part 6.2 of the Code) is fundamentally inadequate and fails to provide appropriate safeguards for the community.

As well as being generally lax in its permitting of alcohol advertising, the Code also allows extensive exemptions for various types of sport programming on weekends and public holidays. The Code's rules narrowly define alcohol advertising and fail to capture the full range of contemporary alcohol product promotions. The Code also fails to apply to the broadcasters' video on demand services.

The result is that alcohol advertising is pervasive and unavoidable on commercial broadcast television for large segments of the community.

The existing Code relies on classification-based time restrictions that do not meaningfully protect children, nor does it address the harms experienced by adults, including people with alcohol dependence and women and children experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence.

The sports programming exemption is particularly harmful. It disproportionately exposes communities to alcohol promotion during times of high audience engagement and at times of heightened risk of alcohol related harms such as domestic and family violence. It regularly exposes children to alcohol advertising. This exemption remains despite evidence that alcohol advertising during sport contributes only a relatively small proportion of broadcasters' revenue.

The Code's shortcomings are structural and unlikely to be remedied through industry-led revisions. The industry has weakened the Code over successive revisions and in 2024 sought to weaken protections for alcohol advertising even further. The industry has an inherent commercial conflict of interest that undermines its ability to fulfil the obligation to safeguard the community.

There is strong public support for regulatory action to be taken by ACMA. Recent community polling, together with multiple government strategies and action plans - such as the Federal Government's National Alcohol Strategy² and the Rapid Review of Prevention approaches³ - demonstrate a clear understanding of the harm caused by alcohol and alcohol advertising, and an expectation of meaningful actions to protect the community.

In summary: the existing Code does not provide appropriate community safeguards and in fact facilitates extensive exposure to alcohol advertising, including to children, which contributes to the serious alcohol-related harm within the community. The Code has failed. **ACMA should replace the existing industry code with a robust program standard that prioritises public health and community wellbeing over commercial interests.**

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. ACMA exercise its power under s125 of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* to make a program standard to apply to the commercial television broadcasting industry in relation to alcohol advertising. This program standard would replace the current Code in respect of alcohol advertising because the Code has failed in delivering appropriate community safeguards.

Recommendation 2. The program standard should be framed to provide strong community safeguards that recognise the role that alcohol advertising plays in driving alcohol consumption and the harms that flow from such consumption. The standard should specify its object is to protect the public's health and safety through reducing the community's exposure to alcohol advertising. As a *minimum* the program standard should also:

- further restrict the permitted alcohol advertising hours
- remove any exemption for alcohol advertising during sports programming
- capture all forms of alcohol marketing seen on broadcast television (including sponsorship and zero/no alcohol products).

Recommendation 3. The program standard should be extended to all aspects of the commercial broadcasters' services, including broadcast video on demand (BVOD) (eg. Channels 7Plus, 9Now).

Harms of alcohol and alcohol advertising

Alcohol is no ordinary commodity; it causes significant harm to Australians every day. These harms are facilitated by alcohol advertising, which is well-understood to be a key driver of alcohol use.⁴ Research shows that exposure to alcohol marketing has the propensity to influence beliefs, norms, consumption patterns and hazardous drinking; this is particularly the case among young people.⁵

The World Health Organisation recommends comprehensive restrictions on exposure to alcohol advertising as one of its three “best buys” to reduce the harm from alcohol.⁶

In regulating alcohol advertising, it is critical that ACMA recognises that alcohol is a unique and particularly harmful commodity that causes extensive and significant harm in the Australian community, and that safeguarding the community and preventing this harm requires strict regulation of advertising.

Tragically, Australia has recently experienced the highest rates of alcohol-induced deaths in over 20 years.⁷ Alcohol is a carcinogen, causing at least seven types of cancer, including mouth, throat, oesophagus, liver, breast and bowel cancer.⁸ Alcohol continues to be the most common principal drug of concern that leads people to receive treatment across Australia,⁹ and alcohol causes alcohol-related brain injury and Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

Harms from alcohol are not equally distributed amongst Australians, with some people experiencing higher levels of harm. People experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people living in rural areas and people in prison all experience higher levels of alcohol related harms.¹⁰ In Australia, over half (54 per cent) of all alcohol is sold to 10 per cent of people who use alcohol.¹¹ Harms are not confined to the person using the alcohol; almost half of Australians are negatively affected by another person’s alcohol use.¹²

Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence

Alcohol is also a significant contributor to gendered violence and violence against children in Australia. Alcohol increases the frequency and severity of domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSVM).¹³ Between 2010 and 2018, over half (52 per cent) of male intimate partner homicide offenders used alcohol at high-risk levels at the time of the homicide.¹⁴ Alcohol is involved up to 47 per cent of police-reported family and domestic violence incidents and more than half of women who reported physical or sexual assault between 2011 and 2021, said alcohol was a contributing factor in the most recent incident.¹⁵

Men’s drinking results in direct, indirect and hidden harms to women that are cumulative, intersecting and entrench women’s disempowerment.¹⁶

Significantly for ACMA’s review (noting that the Code has a permissive approach to advertising during sports programs, discussed below): violence involving alcohol is also associated with sporting events. For example, studies show that violence involving alcohol increases at the time of football grand finals, with an increase of 40 per cent of “domestic assaults” and 70 per cent in “non-domestic assaults” during State of Origin.^{17,18}

This link led the Federal Government’s 2024 Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches for family and domestic violence to recommend that alcohol advertising be restricted, specifically during sporting events.¹⁹ Following this Rapid Review, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced that all Governments would respond to the recommendations and that one of the four focus areas was “tackling the impacts of alcohol on violence”.²⁰ This recommendation is yet to be acted upon but should provide strong guidance to ACMA.

Failures in the existing Code

The *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* requires the commercial broadcasters (whose industry segment organisation is called “Free TV”) to create a Code of Practice that provides appropriate community safeguards, especially for children. Alcohol advertising on commercial free-to-air TV is currently regulated by the *Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice* (the Code).

The Code fails to adequately safeguard the community against the harms associated with alcohol advertising.

The Code’s failures are resulting in the widespread exposure of alcohol advertising to children and adolescents and failing to protect other vulnerable groups in our community - namely adults susceptible to, experiencing or recovering from alcohol use disorder or dependency, during high-risk periods such as late-night viewing.

a) General permissiveness and inadequate framing

The Code has inadequate and loose rules which undermine its ability to provide appropriate community safeguards.

A key purpose of the Code is to act as an appropriate community safeguard for Australians in respect of commercial broadcast television. However, the Code itself fails to define the “problem”, or harms, to be safeguarded against by the rules in the Code. In relation to alcohol, the Code should state an objective of protecting the community from the harms associated with alcohol advertising and should be developed to this end. This should be the objective and methodology of a new program standard developed by ACMA in relation to alcohol advertising.

A starting point for the Code’s failings is its generally permissive approach to alcohol advertising. Alcohol ads can be shown from 8:30pm-5am every day, and between 12pm-3pm Monday to Friday (school days); as well as during any sports program on a weekend (6pm Friday to midnight Sunday) or a public holiday (the sports exemption is discussed further below).

Alcohol harms are experienced by adults in our communities, as well as children, yet the Code relies almost entirely on time and classification-based controls, which are designed primarily to protect younger children. This “watershed” approach fails to address adolescent exposure, exposure of adults experiencing alcohol use disorder or dependence, and exposure during high-risk periods such as late-night viewing (discussed further below).

It is also the case that children regularly watch television within the times alcohol advertising is currently permitted. A 2012 study, for example, found that a large proportion of the audience after 8.30pm, when alcohol advertising is permitted, is under-age, approximately 30 per cent.²¹ ACMA’s surveying shows large numbers of children are still watching free-to-air television after 8.30pm on weekends and school days, with over 200,000 watching between 9.00pm and 10.00pm.²²

b) Poor capture of alcohol marketing

The Code is further undermined because it fails to capture many different types of alcohol-related marketing, allowing this content to continue appearing on television at any time. The Code defines “Commercial for Alcoholic Drinks” narrowly, capturing only advertising that directly promotes purchase or use of an alcoholic drink. This excludes brand-only advertising, alcohol sponsorship announcements (such as a TV show commentator announcing during a show that the program is sponsored by a beer brand or a program ends with an announcement that the program was sponsored by an alcohol company), as well as incidental depictions of alcohol consumption and advertising for zero- and low-alcohol products.

The same advertising restrictions that apply to alcoholic products should apply to zero- and low-alcohol products. Zero- and low-alcohol products are a form of “alibi marketing”, which adopts the labelling, colours and design synonymous with a brand without actually advertising the product itself, effectively skirting legislation and acting as a backdoor for alcohol marketing. A well-known example is Heineken 0. As the TV Code rules stand, commercials for Heineken 0 are not subject to the Code’s rules applicable to alcohol advertising and can be shown at any time during any advertising.

Community concern about these products is growing, with parents concerned about children’s exposure to zero- alcohol products and the potential for these products to act as a gateway to early initiation while also normalising alcohol use earlier in life.²³

Recent research has found a high recall of zero alcohol advertisements among 12- to 17-year-olds, with television reported as the largest exposure avenue. The products were found to be appealing to young people, many of whom associate the zero- alcohol product to its parent alcohol brand.²⁴

c) Alcohol advertising and sports programming – “the sports loophole”

A significant weakness in the Code is the sports exemption, which permits alcohol advertising from 6pm Friday to midnight Sunday for a broad category of “sports programs”.

A live sports exception has applied to alcohol advertising on commercial television since at least 1975,²⁵ but industry significantly widened this exemption when the Code was revised in 2015. The definition of *sports program* is now much wider. It includes coverage such as sports replays, highlights, news, commentary, and even extending to events such as the Brownlow medal night. In this revision, the definition of *weekend* was also extended to include Friday evenings from 6:00pm.

The effect is that much more broadcast sporting-related content is open to alcohol advertising. Alcohol marketing during sporting programming is prolific and large audiences being exposed to significant volumes of alcohol advertising.

The sports exemption also results in frequent exposure of children to alcohol advertising.

A recent study found that the top ten alcohol companies aired almost 11,000 advertisements during Australian sports free-to-air television broadcasts over a 12-month period, with 45 per cent of these ads shown during children’s viewing hours (before 8:30pm). The same study concluded that while alcohol advertising during sports broadcasts is pervasive, it contributes a relatively small proportion of revenue for television networks.²⁶

A 2012 study found that sport broadcasts in metropolitan television markets in Australia attracted a cumulative viewing audience of 26.9 million children and produced 50.9 million “exposures” of children to alcohol advertisements. The study also found that the exposure of children to alcohol advertising peaked between 8.30pm and 10pm because of the large number of alcohol advertisements shown during this period.²⁷ The 2015 Free TV Code loosened advertising rules, making it likely that children are exposed to an even greater extent than these studies suggest.

It is important to note that children are particularly susceptible to alcohol advertising through the medium of sport. The Code’s sports program exceptions are facilitating this exposure. Research shows that alcohol promotion when linked to sport effectively reaches children, influences choices and increases alcohol use.²⁸ Research also shows that children often lack the cognitive capacity to recognise the commercial intent of advertising, but especially when it is in the form of sponsorships.²⁹

As noted above, violence involving alcohol is associated with sporting events (eg. violence involving alcohol increases at the time of football grand finals, with an increase of 40 per cent of “domestic

assaults”, and 70 per cent in “non-domestic assaults” during State of Origin).^{30,31} The Federal Government’s 2024 Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches for family and domestic violence recommended that alcohol advertising be restricted during sporting events. The sports exemption in the Code runs counter to this recommendation, and to the evidence of harm, and contributes to alcohol-related gender-based violence.

The sport programming exemption is particularly discordant with the requirements in the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* that “broadcasting services place a high priority on the protection of children from exposure to program material which may be harmful to them” (s 3), and that industry codes “provide appropriate community safeguards” (s 123, s 125, s 130).³²

d) Lack of regulation of Broadcast Video on Demand in the Code

Broadcast Video On Demand (BVOD) services, including catch-up and streaming services via channels 7Plus and 9Now, have significant viewership. Individual platforms attracted regular adult viewing of between 27 per cent and 45 per cent in 2024-25.³³ However, these services are not within the definition of “broadcasting service” under the Broadcasting Services Act due to a carve-out that has been in place since the early 2000s (which also applies to subscription video on demand services such as Netflix and Disney+).³⁴ The result is that, despite BVOD services being operated by the same broadcasters, these channels are not bound by the alcohol advertising rules in the Code.

While there is nothing formally preventing the commercial television broadcasters from extending the Code to their BVOD services, they have not done so to date. This is despite being asked by ACMA to do so in public statements in 2024³⁵ and 2025.³⁶

This lack of alcohol advertising regulation has resulted in problematic alcohol advertising, such as the placement of ads during BVOD programs aimed at children and young people. Community complaints have been lodged – and dismissed – across a number of years for ads appearing during family friendly shows on BVOD services.

For example, eleven complaints were reviewed by ABAC between 2020 and 2024 for various alcohol brands advertising within *Lego Masters*. One complainant, who was watching the show on 9Now with their 10-year-old child, pointed out the inappropriateness of multiple alcohol advertisements playing in a program recognised to have young viewers, particularly given the episode was also showing ads for the new Peter Rabbit 2 film.³⁷

BVOD audiences are growing, and excluding BVOD from the Code leaves a significant risk to the community of exacerbating the various harms described above. It is inadequate to leave these services unregulated (except through the industry oversight provided through the industry-managed Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code Scheme, which has also been demonstrated to fail in protecting the community).^{38,39}

In making a new program standard to cover alcohol advertising, ACMA should propose including BVOD services (aligning with the 2027 expiry of the exemption in the *Broadcasting Services (“Broadcasting Service” Definition — Exclusion) Determination 2022* which will allow these services to be included).

Impacts on Particular Cohorts

a) Children and young people

The weaknesses in the Code are resulting in children and young people being exposed to alcohol advertising through TV.

Research published in 2022 (based on 2017 data), showed that young people (12 to 17 years) reported frequent exposure to alcohol advertising on television (17.1 per cent daily).⁴⁰ Recent research confirms that Australians, and children in particular, continue to be heavily exposed to alcohol advertising on television. A recently published survey of 15 to 17-year-olds found that 70 per cent reported seeing alcohol advertising in the past month, with the highest recall being television advertisements (32 per cent).⁴¹

Children and young people are a particularly susceptible cohort. Alcohol use by young people is a major public health concern. The National Health and Medical Research Council's Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol recommend that children and young people under 18 years should not drink any alcohol. This is due to the risks of injury and other harms to their health, including interfering with brain development, accidents, injury and self-harm, and developing alcohol use disorders or dependence later in life.⁴²

The harms to children from alcohol advertising are well-researched. A systematic review of the research literature found a significant association between exposure to alcohol marketing and initiation of alcohol use.⁴³ Every study reviewed within the longitudinal research piece found a relationship between early marketing exposure and alcohol use. Children with greater exposure to alcohol marketing were more likely to initiate alcohol use at a younger age and to engage in binge and hazardous alcohol use later in life.

Increased alcohol increases the risk of harm to children. The Australian Child Maltreatment study shows that, for children, living with someone who has alcohol use disorder is one of the four strongest family adversity factors linked to maltreatment.⁴⁴ Living with a caregiver with alcohol-related diagnoses more than doubles the risk of the child experiencing maltreatment.⁴⁵

The National Preventive Health Strategy 2021-2030 sets out an Australian target of less than 10 per cent of young people aged 14-17 years using alcohol by 2030 (in 2022–2023, 31 per cent of young people aged 14–17 had consumed alcohol in the previous 12 months).⁴⁶ Measures to reduce the impact of alcohol marketing, as a key driver of consumption, are essential in reaching this target, and should provide guidance to ACMA. The Strategy identifies as “policy achievements by 2030”: restricting the promotion of alcohol to minimise alcohol-related harm; and restricting exposure to alcohol marketing for children and youth.⁴⁷

The significant exposure of children to TV alcohol advertising, and the well-understood harms that result from this, demonstrate that stronger protections are required to meet the object in the *Broadcasting Services Act*, that “providers of broadcasting services place a high priority on the protection of children from exposure to program material which may be harmful to them”.

b) Other people at risk

Alcohol advertising is also a concern for others in the community, and the current Code is not designed with the intention to protect the wider community.

Alcohol marketing can undermine people's attempt to reduce their alcohol use and can be particularly harmful for people experiencing or recovering from alcohol dependence. Research has shown that alcohol advertising can increase positive alcohol-related emotions and cognitions and cue alcohol cravings among people at-risk of an alcohol-use disorder and that it can trigger a desire to drink alcohol among people in recovery.⁴⁸ Alcohol advertising also acts as a trigger for people who are supporting people with alcohol use disorders or dependence, and for people that have been harmed by alcohol in other ways.⁴⁹⁵⁰ The following quotes from Australian research provide examples:⁵¹

“My husband is in recovery from alcohol addiction, so I worry about it triggering him.”

“Alcohol [advertisements] remind me of how [alcohol] contributed to the suicide of my first husband and the pain, destruction, [and] ongoing mental health problems of my children and [the] breakup of my second marriage.”

Awareness and recall of alcohol marketing can also be greater among people with high-risk alcohol use, suggesting that people with high-risk alcohol use might be more receptive to and impacted by alcohol advertising than people with low-risk alcohol use. For example, a recent study found that the odds of reporting awareness of alcohol marketing on broadcast TV advertisements was significantly higher for people with high-risk alcohol use compared to low-risk alcohol use.⁵² Recent research on the impacts of alcohol advertising on Australian adults similarly indicates that people with high-risk alcohol use are likely to be disproportionately impacted by alcohol advertising, with people experiencing alcohol dependence at the greatest risk of impact from alcohol advertising. Participants from this research who were identified as likely experiencing alcohol dependence and wanting to reduce their alcohol use raised alcohol advertising as playing a harmful role in their lives.⁵³ For example:

“It's everywhere. It's essentially hard to see when you are trying to cut down.”

“There's so much alcohol advertising around. Seeing less would encourage me less.”

“I try to forget alcohol. Advertisements bring me a lot of pain.”

“It brings back all the cravings and makes me want to buy alcohol.”

Alcohol advertising also plays a wider role in normalising and glamourising alcohol use in Australia, and advertising regulation must also consider the potential for further impacts such as social pressures relating to alcohol and stigmatisation for people in recovery from alcohol use disorders or dependence. The normalisation and glamourisation of alcohol through advertising is a common concern raised by community members.^{54,55} The examples below are from a 2026 survey asking about Australians' attitudes to alcohol advertising on free-to-air television:⁵⁶

“It's strong association with major sporting events is harmful - it glamourises alcohol consumption by associating it with sporting role models.”

“It's too pervasive and normalises drinking at all occasions and times.”

“The consumption of alcohol should not be normalised as it can risk those struggling with addiction.”

“Alcohol should not be normalised nor promoted due to the violence it promotes.”

“Alcohol is a damaging drug. It should not be advertised openly on television especially when children are watching. Anything you can do to help de-normalise drinking this harmful drug is a step forward in helping the Australian people.”

“Violence and crime, from alcohol (and other drugs) has a major effect, not just on the individual, but family, friends and the broader community. Alcohol advertising typically ignores every negative impact and makes it acceptable to indulge - without any consideration of consequences.”

Respondents in this survey consistently highlighted the negative impact of alcohol and alcohol advertising in Australia. The full list (over 1300 responses) from this survey are **attached** to this submission.

Need for a “program standard”

When it comes to alcohol advertising, it is clear the existing Code has failed and does not adequately safeguard the community. ACMA should create a new program standard to regulate alcohol advertising. In addition to the fact that alcohol harms have significant impacts on the community, a program standard is also needed because, firstly, it is evident that the industry will not improve the Code in a way that will sufficiently mitigate these harms. Secondly, the Australian community expects and would support stronger regulation of alcohol advertising on commercial television.

a) Industry failure to improve the code and actions to weaken the code

The periodic updates to the Code mean the commercial television broadcasters have had continual opportunities to strengthen community safeguards when updating the Code. These updates have been made in an environment where community concerns, and the ongoing and increasing harm caused by alcohol, are well documented and well understood. Yet Free TV has failed to strengthen alcohol advertising rules and has in fact weakened the rules across multiple Code revisions. Further weakening of alcohol advertising rules was proposed as recently as 2024.

Examples of Free TV’s inadequate regard to community safeguards include:

1. The Code changes between 2010 and 2015 broadened the exemptions to the definition of “advertisement for an alcoholic drink” to not cover “program sponsorship announcements.” The exemption was broadened so that, for the purposes of the Code, alcohol advertising no longer includes “program sponsorship announcements which make no direct reference to the price of goods or services” (Section 8).⁵⁷ This provision allows well-known alcohol brands to promote themselves during times when they would have otherwise been prevented from doing so. The exemption allows a significant form of alcohol advertising – sponsorships – to skirt regulation, contributing to additional harm. Research shows people are less conscious of the impacts of brand promotion that occurs via sponsorship rather than traditional advertising.⁵⁸
2. Changes made to the Code in its 2015 revision introduced a much wider concept of a “sports program” that goes beyond a live sports broadcast and extends to many sports programs including coverage of a sporting event (whether *live*, *replay* or *highlights*); sporting commentary, analysis, interview and news; or presentations/awards and ceremonies associated with a sporting event. The significant negative impacts of this expansion are explained above.
3. Changes made to the Code in 2015 also defined “weekend” to include Friday evenings from 6pm, such that the sports exemption now applies from Friday evening to Sunday evening.
4. Free TV’s latest proposed revision to the Code was in 2024, which proposed changes to the “M” classification times. The proposal would have extended the times during which alcohol advertising was permitted on television by up to an additional 800 hours per year. The draft Code was rejected by ACMA, and the community was vocal in voicing opposition to this proposal.
5. As noted above, ACMA has already made multiple requests to industry to extend the Code to BVOD services. No action has been taken in response, demonstrating the industry’s lack of ambition and persistent unwillingness to act in the community’s interests.

It is clear that industry will not satisfactorily participate in the co-regulation process in a way that meets community expectations and needs. Industry is motivated to expand and increase its ability to advertise alcohol, and this is in direct conflict with the broader obligation to reduce alcohol-related harm in the community.

Research has consistently shown that industry codes of practice, such as the Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code Scheme, are ineffective at reducing exposure to alcohol advertising by people most at risk of harm from alcohol use, including young people.^{59,60,61,62}

The need to prevent vested commercial conflicts of interest in policymaking has also been acknowledged in the National Preventative Health Strategy 2021-2030, which states that public health policies must be protected from influence by vested and commercial interests.⁶³

An ACMA-created program standard is the appropriate way to ensure alcohol advertising is regulated in a way that safeguards the community.

b) Community attitudes and expectations

As s123(3) of the *Broadcasting Services Act* emphasises, “community attitudes” are relevant to developing the Code, and specifically so in relation to alcohol. It is evident that Australians are concerned about the existing rules governing alcohol advertising. The community expects and would support action by ACMA to strongly restrict alcohol advertising on television, enforced through a new program standard.

A nationally representative survey from February 2026 showed 75 per cent of Australians support less alcohol advertising on television (only 8 per cent oppose) and 82 per cent of Australians agree that alcohol advertising should be restricted during children’s viewing hours, even during live sports broadcasts (only 6 per cent disagree).⁶⁴

The survey also offered respondents the option of providing comments to ACMA about alcohol advertising on television. The responses demonstrate strong concerns in the community about the prevalence, placement and impact of alcohol advertising, particularly in relation to children, integration with sport, and broader social harms. Many expressed the need for ACMA to impose stricter regulatory measures to protect the community.

The full report on this survey is **attached** to this submission, or can be found at [Alcohol advertising on Australian commercial television: community attitudes | FARE](#)

The community’s objection to alcohol advertising is also evident in the many submissions Free TV received as part of its Code revision in 2015, and again in 2024. In 2024, ACMA rejected the proposed Code revision, determining it was “not satisfied that the revised code would provide appropriate community safeguards”.⁶⁵

c) Program standard content

This submission does not detail the content of what should be in a new program standard. FARE expects that the development of a standard would involve further consultation and input from the community. However, several key areas are obvious starting points and can be summarised as:

- Further restricting permitted alcohol advertising hours (eg. advertising only permitted from midnight to 5am; no daytime exceptions);
- Removing any exemption for alcohol advertising during sports programming;
- capturing all forms of alcohol marketing seen on broadcast television (including sponsorship and zero/no alcohol products);
- Ensuring the standard applies to BVOD;
- Specifying the object of the standard is to protect the public’s health and safety through reducing community exposure to alcohol advertising.

Conclusion

ACMA should be congratulated for reviewing alcohol advertising rules in the Code and seeking expert and community input. ACMA has the opportunity to reform these rules and, in doing so, to make an important contribution to reducing harm in the community and meeting the expectations of the Australian public.

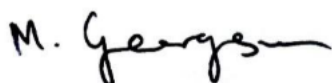
Alcohol causes extensive and serious harms in the community. Advertising contributes to alcohol use, which facilitates and exacerbates these harms. The evidence demonstrates that the Code is failing, is not fit for purpose, and does not provide appropriate community safeguards. It is facilitating the extensive exposure of people to alcohol advertising, including children and young people; and in association with sporting events, which are times when alcohol-related violence increases. The result is an exacerbation of harms such as poor health; injury; family, domestic and sexual violence; child maltreatment; increased and earlier instances of drinking in young people.

The Code is contrary to the recommendations of respected bodies, such as the WHO, and formal Government reports such as the Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches for Family and Domestic Violence and the National Preventative Health Strategy. These all highlight the need to restrict alcohol marketing.

The Code is out of step with community attitudes. The Australian public is concerned about alcohol advertising and the harm caused by alcohol. The public is supportive of reform. The industry has shown that it will not reform the Code in the way required to properly safeguard the community.

ACMA should prioritise the health and safety of the Australian community and make a strong “program standard” for alcohol advertising on commercial broadcast television that prioritises health and safety.

Yours sincerely



Matt Georgeson

Director of Policy and Research , FARE

References

- ¹ Australian Communications and Media Authority (Report, March 2026), *Trends and Developments in Viewing and Listening 2024–25* <https://www.acma.gov.au/publications/2026-03/report/trends-and-developments-viewing-and-listening-2024-25>
- ² Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (2019), National Alcohol Strategy 2019–2028 <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-alcohol-strategy-2019-2028?language=und>
- ³ Campbell E, Fernando T, Gassner L, Hill J, Seidler Z, Summers A (2024), *Unlocking the prevention potential: Accelerating action to end domestic, family and sexual violence*.
- ⁴ Petticrew M, Shemilt I, Lorenc T, Marteau TM, Melendez-Torres GJ, O'Mara-Eves A, et al. (2017), *Alcohol advertising and public health: Systems perspectives versus narrow perspectives* <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27789756/>
- ⁵ Brown, K (2016) "Association between alcohol sports sponsorship and consumption a systematic review." *Alcohol Alcoholism*. 2016;51(6):747-755. Available from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26911984/>
- ⁶ World Health Organization (2024), *Tackling NCDs: Best Buy and Other Recommended Interventions for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases*, 2nd ed <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240091078>
- ⁷ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2024), Alcohol, tobacco & other drugs in Australia <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/alcohol-tobaccoother-drugs-australia/contents/impacts/health-impacts>
- ⁸ Cancer Council Victoria (2024), *Ways alcohol causes cancer - Alcohol causes at least 7 types of cancer* <https://www.cancervic.org.au/cancer-information/preventing-cancer/limit-alcohol/how-alcohol-causes-cancer>
- ⁹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2025), *Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia: early insights* <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol-other-drug-treatment-services/alcohol-other-drug-treatment-services-aus/contents/key-findings/drugs-of-concern>
- ¹⁰ VicHealth (2015), The social determinants of inequities in alcohol consumption and alcohol-related health outcomes <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/HealthEquity-Alcohol-review.pdf>
- ¹¹ Cook M, Mojica-Perez, Callinan S (2022), "Distribution of alcohol use in Australia", La Trobe University, <https://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/CAPR-report-Distribution-of-alcohol-use-in-Australia.pdf>
- ¹² Laslett A, Hopkins C, Smit K, Cook M, Robin R, et al. (2025), *Alcohol's Harm to Others in Australia: Patterns, Costs, Disparities and Precipitants* <https://doi.org/10.26181/30715955>
- ¹³ Campbell E, Fernando T, Gassner L, Hill J, Seidler Z, Summers A (2024), *Unlocking the prevention potential: Accelerating action to end domestic, family and sexual violence*.
- ¹⁴ ANROWS (2022), *Intimate partner violence homicides 2010-2018, Australian Domestic & Family Violence Death Review Network Data* <https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/australian-domestic-and-family-violence-death-review-networkdata-report-intimate-partner-violence-homicides-2010-2018/>
- ¹⁵ Laslett A, Hopkins C, Smit K, Cook M, Robin R, et al. (2025), *Alcohol's Harm to Others in Australia: Patterns, Costs, Disparities and Precipitants* <https://doi.org/10.26181/30715955>
- ¹⁶ Wilson I, Willoughby B, Tanyos A, et al. (2024), *A global review of the impact on women from men's alcohol drinking* <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC11073422/>
- ¹⁷ Gallant D, Humphreys C (2018), *Football finals and domestic violence*. Pursuit, University of Melbourne. <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/football-finals-and-domestic-violence>
- ¹⁸ Livingston M (2018), *The association between State of Origin and assaults in two Australian states*. Centre for Alcohol Policy Research. <https://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/The-association-between-State-of-Origin-and-assaults-in-two-Australian-states-noEM.pdf>
- ¹⁹ Campbell E, Fernando T, Gassner L, Hill J, Seidler Z, Summers A (2024), *Unlocking the prevention potential: Accelerating action to end domestic, family and sexual violence*.
- ²⁰ Australian Government, (2024, September 6), Anthony Albanese Press conference – Canberra (Transcript 46223). PM Transcripts, <https://pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/release/transcript-46223>

-
- ²¹ O'Brien KS, Carr S, Ferris J, Room R, Miller P, Livingston M, Kypri K, Lynott D (2015), *Alcohol Advertising in Sport and Non-Sport TV in Australia, during Children's Viewing Times* <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0134889>
- ²² Australian Communications and Media Authority (2017), *Children's Television Viewing and Multi-Screen Behaviour: Analysis of 2005–16 OzTAM Audience Data and 2017 Survey of Parents, Carers and Guardians* https://www.freetv.com.au/wpcontent/uploads/2019/07/Free_TV_Commercial_Television_Industry_Code_of_Practice_2018.pdf
- ²³ Harrison N, Norris C, Bartram A, Murphy M, Pettigrew S, et al. (2024), "They start on the zero-alcohol and they wanna try the real thing": Parents' views on zero-alcohol beverages and their use by adolescents <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1326020023052962?via%3Dihub>
- ²⁴ Bartram A, Ahad M A, Bogomolova S, Mittinty M, Dono J, Brownbill A, et al. (2026), *Adolescents' Exposure to Zero-Alcohol Advertisements and Attitudes and Consumption Intentions Towards Alcohol: A Cross-Sectional Study* <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/dar.70125>
- ²⁵ Australian Broadcasting Control Board, *Television Programme Standards* (1975) [40(c)].
- ²⁶ Martino F, Ananthapavan J, Moodie M, Sacks G (2022), *Potential financial impact on television networks of a ban on alcohol advertising during sports broadcasts in Australia* <https://doi.org/10.1111/1753-6405.13223>
- ²⁷ Carr S, O'Brien K S, Ferris J, Room R, Livingston M, Vandenberg B, Donovan R J, and Lynott D (2016), *Child and adolescent exposure to alcohol advertising in Australia's major televised sports* <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26365018/>
- ²⁸ Brown K (2016), *Association between alcohol sports sponsorship and consumption: A systematic review* <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26911984/>
- ²⁹ Oates C, et al. (2003), 'Children's Understanding of Television Advertising: A Qualitative Approach' *Journal of Marketing Communications* 59-71
- ³⁰ Gallant D, Humphreys C (2018), *Football finals and domestic violence*. Pursuit, University of Melbourne. <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/football-finals-and-domestic-violence>
- ³¹ Livingston M (2018), *The association between State of Origin and assaults in two Australian states*. Centre for Alcohol Policy Research. <https://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/The-association-between-State-of-Origin-and-assaults-in-two-Australian-states-noEM.pdf>
- ³² Commonwealth of Australia (2024) Broadcasting Services Act 1992
- ³³ Australian Communications and Media Authority (2026), *Communications and media in Australia: Trends and developments in viewing and listening 2024-2025* <https://www.acma.gov.au/publications/2026-03/report/trends-and-developments-viewing-and-listening-2024-25>
- ³⁴ *Broadcasting Services ("Broadcasting Service" Definition – Exclusion) Determination 2022*
- ³⁵ Australian Communications and Media Authority (2026), ACMA welcomes commercial TV code of practice consultation <https://www.acma.gov.au/articles/2024-10/acma-welcomes-commercial-tv-code-practice-consultation>
- ³⁶ Australian Communications and Media Authority (2025), *ACMA decision on revised Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice* <https://www.acma.gov.au/articles/2025-06/acma-decision-revised-commercial-television-industry-code-practice>
- ³⁷ Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code (2021), *ABAC Adjudication Panel Determination Nos 95, 96, 97, 102, 105, 106, 108, 109 & 147/21* <https://www.abac.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/95-21-Others-Determination-8-June-2021-1.pdf>
- ³⁸ Reeve B, (2018) *Regulation of Alcohol Advertising in Australia: Does the ABAC Scheme Adequately Protect Young People from Marketing of Alcoholic Beverages?* 18(1) QUT Law Review 96
- ³⁹ Pierce H, Stafford J, Pettigrew S, Kameron C, Keric D, and Pratt I (2019), "Regulation of Alcohol Marketing in Australia: A Critical Review of the Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code Scheme's New Placement Rules," *Drug and Alcohol Review* 38, no. 1: 16–24, <https://doi.org/10.1111/dar.12872>
- ⁴⁰ Bain E, Scully M, Wakefield M, Durkin S, White V (2022), *Association between single-channel and cumulative exposure to alcohol advertising and drinking behaviours among Australian adolescents* <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36067077/>
- ⁴¹ National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction, Flinders University, Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education, The George Institute, Cancer Council WA (2025), *Poll Snapshot: Children's recall of alcohol advertising* <https://fare.org.au/childrens-recall-of-alcohol-ads-on-commercial-television-highlights-urgent-need-for-reform/>

-
- ⁴² National Health and Medical Research Council (2020), *Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol* <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-guidelines-reduce-health-risks-drinking-alcohol>
- ⁴³ Jernigan D, Noel J, Landon J, et al (2016), *Alcohol marketing and youth alcohol consumption: a systematic review of longitudinal studies published since 2008* <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.13591>
- ⁴⁴ Mathews, B et al (2023), "The prevalence and impact of child maltreatment in Australia: findings from the Australian Child Maltreatment Study", *Medical Journal of Australia*, vol. 218, no. S6, pp. S13–S18 <https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.51873>.
- ⁴⁵ Leung, JYY, Parker, K, Lin, E-Y & Huckle, T (2025), "The association of parental or caregiver alcohol use with child maltreatment: a systematic review and meta-analysis of longitudinal studies", *Addiction*, vol. 120, no. 9, pp. 1724–1738, <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.70055>.
- ⁴⁶ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2024), *Young People's Consumption of Alcohol (National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2022–2023)*, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/young-people-alcohol>.
- ⁴⁷ Australian Government Department of Health (2021), *National Preventive Health Strategy 2021–2030*, p67 https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/12/national-preventive-health-strategy-2021-2030_1.pdf
- ⁴⁸ Murray RL, Leonardi-Bee J, Barker A, Brown O, Langley T (2024), *A rapid literature review of the effect of alcohol marketing on people with, or at increased risk of, an alcohol problem*
- ⁴⁹ Alcohol Health Alliance (2021), *No escape: How alcohol advertising preys on children and vulnerable people*
- ⁵⁰ Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (2023), *Experiences with online marketing of alcohol, gambling and unhealthy food: A survey*.
- ⁵¹ Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (2021), *Experiences with online marketing of alcohol, gambling and unhealthy food*
- ⁵² Critchlow N, Mackintosh AM, Ford A (2025), "Where do adults see alcohol marketing? Insight from a cross-sectional survey in the United Kingdom" *Journal of Public Health* 2025;47(4):e586-e96.
- ⁵³ Brownbill A. Unpublished data, manuscript in preparation. The University of Queensland & Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education. Contact FARE for further information.
- ⁵⁴ Alcohol Health Alliance (2021), *No escape: How alcohol advertising preys on children and vulnerable people*
- ⁵⁵ Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (2023), *Experiences with online marketing of alcohol, gambling and unhealthy food: A survey*.
- ⁵⁶ Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (2026), *Alcohol advertising on Australian commercial television: community attitudes* <https://fare.org.au/alcohol-advertising-on-australian-commercial-television-community-attitudes/>
- ⁵⁷ Free TV (2018), *Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice* <https://www.freetv.com.au/resources/code-of-practice/>
- ⁵⁸ Zerhouni O, Bègue L, O'Brien KS (2019), *How alcohol advertising and sponsorship works: Effects through indirect measures* <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31037783>
- ⁵⁹ Noel JK, Babor TF, Robaina K (2017), "Industry self-regulation of alcohol marketing: A systematic review of content and exposure research" *Addiction* 2017;112:28-50
- ⁶⁰ Pierce H, Stafford J, Pettigrew S, Kameron C, Keric D, Pratt IS (2019), Regulation of alcohol marketing in Australia: A critical review of the Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code Scheme's new Placement Rules", *Drug Alcohol Rev.* 38(1):16-24.
- ⁶¹ Noel JK, Babor TF (2017), "Does industry self-regulation protect young people from exposure to alcohol marketing? A review of compliance and complaint studies" 112:51-6.
- ⁶² Aiken A, Lam T, Gilmore W, Burns L, Chikritzhs T, Lenton S, Lloyd B, Lubman D, Ogeil R, Allsop S (2018), Youth perceptions of alcohol advertising: Are current advertising regulations working?" *Aust N Z J Public Health* 2018;42(3):234-9.
- ⁶³ Australian Government Department of Health (2021), *National Preventive Health Strategy 2021–2030*, p40
- ⁶⁴ Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (2026), *Alcohol advertising on Australian commercial television: community attitudes* <https://fare.org.au/alcohol-advertising-on-australian-commercial-television-community-attitudes/>
- ⁶⁵ Australian Communications and Media Authority (June 2025), *ACMA decision on revised Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice* <https://www.acma.gov.au/articles/2025-06/acma-decision-revised-commercial-television-industry-code-practice>