

Alcohol Advertising Review Board

Determination Report

Reference number: 782/19, 784/19
Product: VB
Advertiser: CUB

The complaints are **upheld**.

27 June 2019

This determination by the Alcohol Advertising Review Board Panel (“the Panel”) concerns an advertisement for VB by CUB which was the subject of two complaints received on 22 May 2019.

The Advertisement

The complaints were in relation to the VB ‘our shout’ promotion, seen at <https://www.victoriabitter.com.au/pages/our-shout>. The text of the website stated:

“ENOUGH TALK. LET’S DO.

There’s been a lot of talk over the last few months.

While we don’t know what’s coming next, we do know this.

It’s the start of another week and it’s time to get back to doing what we do best: working hard.

That’s the only way we are going to push this country forward.

For everyone ready to get on with the job of making Australia a better place, it’s our shout.

Sunday May 26th, 2-4pm at participating venues.

Find your nearest participating venue.”

There was a list of participating venues across Australia on the website.

One complainant also sent a link to an article on the Practical Parenting website that stated:

“VB is giving away FREE BEERS at pubs across Australia this Sunday - and here's where you can get one!

Beer fans can head down to their local pub on Sunday for TWO HOURS of free VB - courtesy of Victoria Bitter.

Participating venues across the country will be giving one free beer to customers between 2pm and 4pm on May 26, 2019, as long as you are over 18.

The promotion is called 'Our Shout' and is just to celebrate being Aussie after the federal election!

'There's been a lot of talk over the last few months,' the VB website reads.

'While we don't know what's coming next, we do know this. It's the start of another week and it's time to get back to doing what we do best: working hard.

'That's the only way we are going to push this country forward.'

'For everyone ready to get on with the job of making Australia a better place, it's our shout.'

Where can I get free VB?

Here's a list of pubs across Australia taking part in the VB Your Shout promotion between 2pm and 4pm on May 26."

The Complaint

The complainants believe the advertisement contravenes the Code. The first complainant stated:

"I heard VB were giving away free beer. This sounds like such a bad idea – I know a problem drinker who will love this. They'll probably try to get to a few of the locations over the 2hrs. I googled it to find out more, hoping it wasn't as bad as it sounded. It was. On top of that, it's being promoted on the Practical Parenting website (<https://www.practicalparenting.com.au/vb-is-giving-away-free-beers-at-pubs-across-australia-this-sunday-heres-where-you-can-get-one>) That site was #3 on the list on my google search for 'VB free beer'. It's got all the VB promo info, like it's paid advertising. Really the problem is the potentially-dangerous free beer gimmick, but where's the integrity of the parenting site in promoting this? And it markets itself as a trusted destination for authoritative parenting advice. Seriously? Who's looking after the kids while the parents are getting their free beers?"

The second complainant stated:

"I would like to lodge a complaint against Victoria Bitter and their owner, Carlton & United Breweries, for the following alcohol promotion. They are offering free beer at 200 pubs across Australia. Although they are limiting this to one free drink, the text used to promote the event (see screen grab below) violates 4cii1 in that it depicts the consumption of alcohol as contributing to 'hard work' i.e. success. There is also nothing stopping people from going to multiple venues and consuming multiple free drinks.
<https://www.victoriabitter.com.au/pages/our-shout>"

The Code

The advertisement was reviewed against the Code, and in particular:

Section (3)(a)(i) of the Content Code:

3. General provisions:

a. Compliance

- i. Alcohol Advertisements must be prepared with a sense of responsibility to the audience and to society and must reflect the spirit, not merely the letter, of the Code.

Section (4)(c)(ii)(1) of the Content Code:

4. Alcohol-specific provisions:

c. Change in mood and/or success

ii. Alcohol Advertisements must not suggest that the consumption or presence of alcohol beverages may create or contribute to a significant change in mood or environment and, accordingly, must not:

1. depict the consumption or presence of alcohol beverages as a cause of or contributing to the achievement of social acceptance, social status, or personal, business, social, sporting, sexual or other success;

The Advertiser's Comments

The Advertiser was contacted for comment on 22 May 2019. No response was received.

Panel's determination

The complaints were referred to three Panel members for review. The Panel determined:

1. The advertisement contravened section (3)(a)(i) of the Content Code, on the basis that the promotion was not prepared with a sense of responsibility to the audience. A Panel member commented that while the promotion limits the offer to one beer per person, the serving size is determined by the venue and participants could obtain free drinks at more than one venue. All three Panel members commented that advertising the promotion on a parenting advice website, which includes pregnant women as part of its target audience, is irresponsible. Several Panel members noted that young parents may experience new pressures and stresses, and promoting free alcohol to them indicates little responsibility toward the audience.
2. The advertisement contravened section (4)(c)(ii)(1) of the Content Code, on the basis that the majority of the Panel believed that linking the consumption of free alcohol with making Australia a 'better place' and with Australians getting back to 'what they do best – working hard' associates alcohol with a significant change in the environment. While one Panel member believed the promotion didn't associate the consumption of alcohol with success, another Panel member commented that the ad implies that drinking beer will help participants to achieve their work goals.

The complaints are **upheld**.

Further action

The Alcohol Advertising Review Board requests the Advertiser cease promotions of this nature in line with the Panel's concerns.