

Media Release

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CALLS FOR LEGISLATION AFTER ALCOHOL ADVERTISING REPORT HIGHLIGHTS FAILURE OF SELF-REGULATION

Federal Members of Parliament from all parties and health groups called for legislation on alcohol promotion after the Alcohol Advertising Review Board 2014-15 Annual Report was released in Canberra today, along with market research showing strong public support for legislative controls to protect children and young people from exposure to alcohol promotion.

The report of the Alcohol Advertising Review Board (AARB), administered by health organisations and chaired by Professor Fiona Stanley AC, provides further evidence that self-regulation of alcohol advertising is ineffective and that many alcohol companies are ignoring concerns about young people's exposure to alcohol ads through sport, television and online.

In 2014-15, the AARB received 165 complaints; 92 determinations upheld complaints in full and 17 in part. For the third successive year, the AARB received more complaints than the industry's self-regulatory system.

Members of the AARB Panel selected the 'Worst alcohol ad of 2014-15' – a 'Customer Review' by a '12 year old' of an alcopops 2 litre cask on the Dan Murphy's website.

Other "Alcohol advertising shockers of 2014-15" included alcohol ads placed near schools, alcohol sponsorships of major Australian sports, irresponsible price promotions by Woolworths and Coles, and liquor retailer Facebook pages.

An independent national survey of 1,098 Australians in July 2015, commissioned by the McCusker Centre, found:

- 72% of Australians support legal controls to reduce young people's exposure to alcohol advertising, with only 6% opposed.
- 69% of Australians support phasing out the promotion of alcohol through sports sponsorship, with only 10% opposed.
- 76% of Australians support limiting alcohol advertising on television to late night programming only.
- 74% of Australians support phasing out television advertisements for alcohol during sports broadcasts.

Senator Richard Di Natale, Greens leader and former GP said, "The time has come to get grog ads out of sport".

"Sport is a healthy pursuit and contains a lot of positive messages for kids but now when I sit down with my kids to watch the cricket or the footy, every second ad is for beer or betting odds. Like most parents, I don't want sport being hijacked to sell my kids unhealthy or addictive adult products.

"As a society, we already accept that it is appropriate to restrict certain types of programming to adult viewing times. Those restrictions are undermined by giant loopholes with regard to sports broadcasts.

"This isn't about trying to stop people from having a drink if they want to but there's no reason why we need to let our kids be bombarded by those kinds of ads."

Dr Sharman Stone MP, Chair of the Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs said, "We need to take steps to ban alcohol advertising whenever it may influence children. Alcohol advertising associated with sport is particularly influential on children. We need to close the loophole that allows alcohol advertising during live sport broadcasts".

Melissa Parke MP, Member for Fremantle, said, "Alcohol continues to be the cause of very significant direct and indirect harm, and reducing that harm needs to be a much more urgent and better resourced public health priority. Australia has done great work in the area of tobacco control, but alcohol-related harm continues to be a cultural and regulatory blind-spot.

"This report shows that our hands-off approach to the regulation of alcohol advertising is not working. Everyone who enjoys watching the football finals in various codes over the next month with their family should pay close attention to the volume and repetition of advertising designed to associate alcohol consumption with healthy activity, young people and success. We need a cultural change when it comes to alcohol, and proper regulation of advertising must be part of that change."

Professor Mike Daube, Director of the McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth, said, "It is time to end the charade of industry self-regulation that allows children to be heavily exposed to alcohol promotion. The community understand this and there is strong support for legislation. We call on all governments to take on the international companies that dominate the Australian market and act to protect our kids".

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) Chief Executive Michael Thorn, said, "This report provides yet more evidence that self-regulation of alcohol advertising does not work. Even more disturbing, it highlights the alcohol industry's relentless drive to normalise the consumption of alcohol by exposing and pushing alcohol to young people, across an ever expanding range of traditional and digital media platforms and merchandising incentives".

Public Health Association of Australia CEO Michael Moore said, "The alcohol companies defend self-regulation because they know it doesn't work. Industry self-regulation didn't work for tobacco and it doesn't work for alcohol. It's time to legislate so that there are controls that work".

Copies of the report are being sent to all Health Ministers, Federal Members of Parliament and the Australian Communications and Media Authority.

The AARB was established by the McCusker Centre and Cancer Council Western Australia with support from many health organisations.

The report is available at www.alcoholadreview.com.au

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