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ALCOHOL ADVERTISING REPORT – CHILDREN NEED PROTECTION

The second quarterly report from the Alcohol Advertising Review Board (AARB) shows that children and young people are being exposed to a wide range of inappropriate alcohol advertisements.

The AARB considers complaints about alcohol advertising. It aims to provide an independent system of alcohol advertising review and support the community to respond to inappropriate alcohol advertising.

In its first six months from March 2012, the AARB received 105 complaints about alcohol advertisements. Online advertisements, including social media and email content, were the most frequently complained about, followed by sponsorship of sport and events, and television advertisements.

Three areas of special concern stand out:

- Nearly a quarter of the first hundred complaints received were about online advertisements, including advertising through Facebook and YouTube.
- There is great cause for concern over the association between alcohol and motor sports through promotions such as sponsorship of V8 Supercars.
- While complaints were received about many alcohol companies and promotions, complaints received about Jim Beam promotions range from television advertising to internet promotions, from branded “electric skateboards” to the Jim Beam on Campus promotion targeting students. This company appears to merit special attention in relation to forms of marketing through which children and young people may be exposed to alcohol promotion.

The Chair of the AARB, Professor Fiona Stanley, said, “At a time when there is increasing concern about drinking by young people, and those who drink are drinking more riskily, it is shocking that there is so much inappropriate and irresponsible alcohol advertising. Online media are being increasingly used by alcohol companies to market their products. They must know that children and young people have ready access to virtually anything on the internet, and notional age-related barriers are not effective”.

“We were pleased to note that some advertisers have modified or removed their advertisements in response to our concerns, and hope that others will follow.”

“Regrettably, some advertisers did not act in response to recommendations to moderate their advertisements. Notable among these was the Thirsty Camel Facebook page with images including the text “I wish I could trade in my heart for another liver. Then I could drink more and care less”.”

Federal Vice President of the Australian Medical Association, Professor Geoff Dobb, said, “Using Facebook and YouTube looks like a cynical strategy by alcohol companies to bypass regulation and promote their products to children and young people. This is profit at the expense of social awareness and responsibility”.

Director of the McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth, Professor Mike Daube, said, “This report confirms that the current alcohol and advertising industry’s self-regulation processes are unable to control a vast range of alcohol promotions to which young people are exposed. During the AARB’s first six months, we received 105 complaints and commented on 76. By contrast, during this period the alcohol and advertising industry’s process published 19 determination reports. We urge governments to regulate to reduce promotions to which young people are exposed, particularly now through social media”.

Cancer Council Director of Education and Research, Terry Slevin said, "The relentless barrage of alcohol advertising is contributing to increasing alcohol consumption and alcohol related harm. The additional cancer burden likely to stem from that increased consumption can be prevented. Challenging excesses in the promotion and advertising of alcohol is an essential strategy in curbing the damage. By community members lodging complaints they are showing their concern and willingness to act.”

For further information on the Alcohol Advertising Review Board and a copy of the report see www.alcoholadreview.com.au

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