

MEDIA RELEASE

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Bring on ‘summer of cricket’ not booze ads

5 December 2018: Spoiling the start of our ‘summer of cricket’, the alcohol industry has been exposed for using supposedly tough rules on alcohol advertising as a decoy to continue targeting children with alcohol ads as they watch their heroes play.

Ahead of the first Test between Australia and India in Adelaide on Thursday, two comprehensive reviews of the alcohol industry-run Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code (ABAC) Scheme have released damning findings, calling for a ban on alcohol advertising in sport.

A Curtin University study assessed the effectiveness of the Scheme’s Placement Rules which were introduced last year on the promise of providing better ‘safeguards for minors’.

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn said almost 100 per cent of complaints tested under the Placement Rules were thrown out by the Scheme’s adjudication panel.

“This is not the sort of scoring rate that cricket fans and parents applaud, given that two thirds of Australians support a ban on alcohol advertising on TV before 8:30pm,” Mr Thorn said.

“The Placement Rules are a decoy – they can’t achieve their objective of restricting alcohol advertising because of the existing TV exemption allowing alcohol ads during weekend sports programs and live coverage,” he said.

Researcher Julia Stafford from the Public Health Advocacy Institute of WA says the Placement Rules rely on weak existing industry codes, making the new measures equally ineffectual.

“The rules and definitions are so narrow that they still allow alcohol advertising to be placed where large numbers of children see it,” Ms Stafford said.

Dubious decisions from the ABAC Panel in the past 12 months include dismissing complaints about alcohol ads during test cricket and one-day matches, AFL games, and the Australian Open tennis.

There is indisputable evidence that children’s exposure to alcohol advertising encourages them to start drinking earlier, to binge drink more often, and to start a journey toward alcohol-related harm.

“Our advice to parents is to forget complaining to the industry-run Scheme, which summarily dismisses genuine concerns through loopholes, and instead register their disgust and disapproval by signing up to the national campaign to [End Alcohol Advertising in Sport](#),” Mr Thorn said.

“The campaign’s first priority is removing the TV exemption so that children can enjoy their summer of cricket and other sports free of damaging marketing peddled by the alcohol industry,” he said.

Adding to the evidence that the Scheme completely fails to protect children is a second research report, by Dr Belinda Reeve from Sydney University and published in the QUT Law Review, which describes the Placement Rules as a significant loophole.

Mr Thorn supports the paper’s recommendation for “increasingly coercive forms of regulation to close off the loopholes in the ABAC scheme and to progressively tighten restrictions on alcohol marketing”.

“The ABAC Scheme and the Placement Rules are pure deception and have now been found to be devoid of credibility by leading Australian research bodies,” Mr Thorn said.

Ends.

The research papers can be found online:

Public Health Advocacy Institute of WA: [Regulation of alcohol marketing in Australia: A critical review of the Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code Scheme’s new Placement Rules.](#)

Sydney University: [Regulation of alcohol advertising in Australia: Does the ABAC Scheme adequately protect young people from marketing of alcoholic beverages?](#)

Mr Thorn and Ms Stafford are available for media interviews.

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