

MEDIA RELEASE

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Alcohol ad rules failing Australians, AMA warns

With alcohol-induced deaths at their highest rates in more than 20 years, the Australian Medical Association has called for tougher regulation of alcohol advertising on television — saying current regulation has failed to protect the community.

In a submission to the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) ([link](#)) review into alcohol advertising restrictions in the Free TV Code, the AMA says current regulation hasn't worked, calling on the authority to make a binding program standard; remove alcohol advertising exemptions for sport, and further restrict advertising hours.

AMA President Dr Danielle McMullen said ACMA must step in and act to replace current weak regulations with a strong, enforceable program standard.

"Australia is experiencing the highest rates of alcohol-induced deaths in more than 20 years," Dr McMullen said.

"Alcohol is a known carcinogen and a leading cause of injury, chronic disease, mental illness, alcohol-related brain injury and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. It plays a very significant role in family, domestic and sexual violence. Yet people, including children, are subjected to relentless alcohol advertising, particularly through sport and weekend programming.

"We need stronger regulation of alcohol advertising on our television screens. The evidence shows that exposure to alcohol advertising increases the likelihood of earlier initiation and harmful drinking later in life."

Dr McMullen said the Free TV Code was failing, allowing alcohol advertising during sport from Friday evening to Sunday night — exactly when alcohol harms peak.

"Time-based restrictions are weak and inadequate for a product known to cause significant harm and past industry-led changes to the Code have expanded alcohol advertising, not reduced it.

"The research shows the majority of Australians support less alcohol advertising on television, with three in four Australians supporting less alcohol advertising on television."

The AMA is also calling on ACMA to ensure the standard captures sponsorships and zero-alcohol products and to apply rules consistently across free-to-air TV and broadcaster streaming services.

"The Code doesn't regulate zero or low-alcohol products, despite their similar branding to alcohol," Dr McMullen said. "But research shows high recall of zero-alcohol product advertising among teenagers, raising concerns about normalisation and gateway effects.

"Broadcaster-owned streaming and catch-up services (BVOD) are not covered at all, allowing alcohol ads during children's programs and commercial broadcasters have refused to close these loopholes voluntarily.

"The fox may not be entirely in charge of the henhouse in terms of the regulation of alcohol advertising, but its paw prints on current regulations are very apparent. It's time for ACMA to act."

Read the AMA's submission

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