

# Statement on the alcohol industry's review of its Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code (ABAC)

Advertising for products that cause substantial harm should be required to follow Government-led rules that protect our children, families and broader community.

For over 20 years, the alcohol industry has largely set its own rules for advertising through the Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code (ABAC) Scheme. The rules the industry has developed for itself are weak and littered with loopholes.<sup>1</sup> Community complaints are often dismissed, and even when breaches are upheld, there are no consequences.

The result is an environment where our community is inadequately protected from the harm of alcohol advertising, including children and young people who are regularly exposed to messages for harmful products.<sup>2</sup> This is highly problematic because children's exposure to alcohol marketing increases their risk of starting drinking at a younger age and more harmful patterns of drinking later in life.<sup>3</sup>

Last year, Dan Murphy's parked a mobile billboard near Byron Bay High School encouraging people to "go for a skate while you wait for your Dan Murphy's order to arrive."<sup>4</sup> Even more recently, BoozeBud painted a cartoon mural advertising their alcohol delivery service on the same street as Bondi Public (primary) School, which is passed by hundreds of children daily.<sup>5</sup> According to the alcohol industry's scheme, both of these ads weren't a problem.

Now the alcohol industry who designed this weak oversight scheme is conducting a "review" of their rules in an attempt to quell growing community concern about harmful alcohol advertising.

We, the undersigned, refuse to participate in this process of reviewing a scheme which is inherently flawed. No amount of tinkering with the ABAC, which is designed and run by alcohol lobbyists, will ever put the health and wellbeing of our community above the profits of these multinational corporations.

We need strong Government-led regulation of alcohol marketing in Australia that is independent of the alcohol industry – a comprehensive legislative framework with enforcement measures that effectively stop harmful alcohol marketing. Many community and health organisations have long recognised and advocated for such an approach.

The only role alcohol companies can and should have in the regulation of alcohol marketing is to adhere to Government-led rules developed independent of the alcohol industry to meet community standards.

Sincerely,

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