

23.4.26

To whom it may concern,

The Wollongong Local Drug Action Team is a group of community managed organisations, youth, health and government workers. We focus on primary prevention and harm minimisation including promoting safer environments.

We are writing to express our concern that the rules governing alcohol advertising on commercial free-to-air television do not meet the standard expected by the community and fail to provide appropriate safeguards. The current rules allow too much advertising, too often, and inappropriately expose children to alcohol advertising. This worsens alcohol-related harm, including poor health outcomes and increase the risk of alcohol fuelled domestic, family and sexual violence.

Alcohol is a harmful and addictive substance that causes many health conditions, injuries and deaths. Alcohol is linked to 30 diseases and injuries, mainly various cancers and transport accidents but also cardiovascular diseases and suicide. Excessive alcohol consumption is the leading contributor to the burden of illness and deaths in Australia for people aged up to 44 years.¹ There is a huge financial burden caused by alcohol. **The cost of alcohol related harm in the Wollongong LGA in 2022/23 was calculated at almost \$205 million dollars.**²

The World Health Organisation states that “alcohol marketing influences positive attitudes, perceptions and expectations towards drinking. It impacts the initiation of drinking, the desire to try, choice of consumption and society attitudes towards drinking. Over 21 global studies confirm the link between exposure to alcohol advertising and the initiation of drinking among young people, and the progression to heavy drinking for existing drinkers.”³ Marketers and advertisers create advertisements that encourage positive attitude formation, and influence consumer behaviour.⁴

We do not support the industry continuing to create its own rules governing alcohol advertising. We do not support any form of alcohol advertising.

We recommend that similar to the ban on tobacco advertising, alcohol should follow suit given the overwhelming success this has had in reduction to health-related harms.

Based on an analysis of tobacco use before and after the introduction of advertising bans in numerous countries, it is estimated that comprehensive advertising bans reduce smoking initiation by an average of 6% and smoking prevalence by an average of 4%. A partial ban is likely to only reduce prevalence and initiation by 2%.⁵ **This is why similar to the success of the tobacco advertising ban, we believe a full ban of alcohol advertising should be implemented.**

Banning alcohol marketing will decrease exposure among children and adolescents, potentially preventing early alcohol initiation and reducing alcohol cravings among those with addiction. Importantly, this could counteract the alcohol industry's influence in normalising or creating positive social values related to alcohol consumption behaviour, which has widespread negative impacts on public health, the economy and society.

Reducing population alcohol consumption to meet the national guidelines would result in substantial health improvements. This includes millions of healthy life year gained and major healthcare cost savings, as well as reductions in new cases of alcohol-related disease and injury across the population.

Restricting alcohol advertising and promotion has been identified as an important cost-effective policy measure to reduce alcohol related harms, both internationally and in Australia. Partial or complete bans on alcohol advertising have been estimated to yield likely benefits of \$2.4bn and \$3.6bn respectively in Australia.⁶ The effect of restrictions on tobacco advertising in reducing smoking rates is also indicative of the potential public health benefits that could be achieved by restrictions on alcohol advertising.

Michelle Barry



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Wollongong Local Drug Action Team

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2021, 'Australian Burden of Disease Study 2018: Interactive data on risk factor burden', < <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/burden-of-disease/abds-2018-interactive-data-risk-factors/contents/alcohol-use> >

² Crossland. P, Angeles. M, Anathapavan. J, 2020, 'Evidence costs of alcohol-related harms in New South Wales: Development of an interactive costing tool', The University of Sydney

³ World Health Organization, 2024, 'The World Health Organisation (WHO) advises limiting alcohol availability and advertising as cost-effective measure to safeguard young individuals from alcohol-related risks', accessed 9 May 2026, < <https://www.who.int/thailand/news/detail/18-04-2024-who-advises-limiting-alcohol-availability-and-advertising> >

⁴ Bond University, 2025, 'Booze ads are over the limit', accessed 9 May 2026, < <https://bond.edu.au/news/booze-ads-are-over-limit> >

⁵ Tobacco in Australia, 2025, 'Tobacco advertising and promotion', <

⁶ Australia Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance, 2025, 'Marketing and promotion of alcohol', <
https://www.acdpa.org.au/_files/ugd/6eeba7_2dafafebb51043cfbef6826c2a05107e.pdf >