



29 April 2026

Manager, Content and Media Reform
Australian Communications and Media Authority
PO Box 78
Belconnen ACT 2616

Re: Review of alcohol advertising rules in the Free TV Code

Dear Manager, Content and Media Reform

NSW Rugby League (NSWRL) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Australian Communications and Media Authority's review into alcohol advertising.

NSWRL is the governing body for rugby league in New South Wales and represents a statewide network of community rugby league clubs, districts and regional competitions. These clubs are largely volunteer-run organisations that operate weekly competitions, deliver participation pathways and provide inclusive sport opportunities for children, families and adults across metropolitan, regional and remote communities.

Rugby league has one of the largest participation footprints in the state, engaging tens of thousands of registered players, volunteers and officials each year, supported by a broad network of clubs, venues, councils and commercial partners. Over the past three years, rugby league participation in NSW has experienced a remarkable surge, with numbers steadily climbing across the state. In 2025, NSWRL surpassed 122,000 registered participants our largest number of registered players ever recorded. In 2026, the indications are strong that NSWRL will record another record-breaking season.

From the perspective of community rugby league, the commercial and media settings that support sport are not abstract policy considerations. They directly shape the capacity of local clubs and venues to remain affordable, accessible and sustainable for the communities they serve.

Importance of advertising revenue to community sport

Advertising revenue plays an important role in the broader sports and media ecosystem that underpins community sport. While community rugby league clubs may not always be the direct recipients of media-related advertising income, the downstream effects are significant.

Advertising revenue contributes to the commercial viability of broadcasters and media partners, which in turn supports media rights values, sponsorship investment and the reinvestment of funds back into competitions,

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participation programs and facilities. For community clubs, this reinvestment helps offset the real and rising costs associated with delivering safe, well-run sporting competitions.

Where advertising and integrated commercial arrangements are constrained, the resulting reduction in value does not disappear. Instead, those costs are often shifted to the local level.

Flow-on impacts for community clubs and venues

Community rugby league clubs typically operate with limited financial buffers. Any reduction in sponsorship or commercial support linked to advertising settings is likely to be felt through:

- increased venue hire fees or reduced venue rebates
- higher costs passed on through ticket prices, canteens or food and beverage pricing
- reduced capacity to maintain and improve local facilities
- constrained investment in participation, inclusion and development programs

These impacts are most acutely felt in regional and growth-area communities, where clubs often act as important local hubs and where affordability is critical to maintaining participation.

From a community perspective, changes that increase financial pressure on clubs' risk reducing access to organised sport, placing greater strain on volunteers and increasing cost barriers for families.

Value of existing sponsorship and integrated partnerships

For many community clubs and venues, sponsorship and integrated commercial partnerships provide stability and certainty rather than profit. These partnerships help fund basic operational requirements and enable clubs to meet regulatory, safety and compliance obligations.

Alcohol-related advertising and sponsorship exists within a broader, regulated commercial environment and often supports event delivery, facility upkeep and community programs delivered through sport. In practical terms, these arrangements help ensure that rugby league remains accessible, particularly for junior participants and families.

Existing safeguards within community rugby league

NSWRL strongly supports the importance of safeguards and responsible consumption and notes that community rugby league already operates within a rigorous framework designed to protect young people and communities.

Key safeguards include:

- Prohibitions on the sale or supply of alcohol at community rugby league grounds during matches involving players under the age of 18
- Restrictions around the timing of alcohol availability at venues to ensure junior fixtures are prioritised
- Prohibitions on alcohol branding on playing and training uniforms for participants under 18
- Mandatory compliance with Responsible Service of Alcohol requirements and close alignment with state liquor authorities
- Encouragement for clubs to participate in recognised harm-minimisation programs such as Good Sports

These measures demonstrate that community sport is already exercising caution and responsibility in how alcohol-related activity is managed at the local level.

Community education and wellbeing initiatives

NSWRL recognises the role sport plays in shaping community attitudes and behaviours and takes a considered approach to how rugby league participants are represented in alcohol-related advertising and promotional activity.

Where players or talent are involved in advertising campaigns associated with alcohol products, NSWRL applies clear internal standards to ensure representations align with community expectations and responsible consumption principles. This includes not making players under the age of 25 available for alcohol-related advertising and ensuring that any involvement by athletes reflects appropriate messaging and context.

These settings complement the broader safeguards that apply within community rugby league and reflect an understanding that education, role modelling and responsible representation are important components of harm minimisation. Importantly, these approaches are most effective when delivered within a stable, regulated commercial framework that allows sporting organisations and venues to continue investing in participation, wellbeing initiatives and community engagement.

In conclusion NSWRL acknowledges the objectives of the ACMA review and supports approaches that promote community wellbeing and responsible consumption.

From the perspective of community rugby league, it is important that any changes arising from the review carefully consider the practical, downstream impacts on local clubs, venues and volunteers. Well-intentioned reforms that reduce advertising viability or commercial value risk shifting costs to communities, increasing participation barriers and placing additional strain on grassroots sport.

NSWRL encourages ACMA to maintain a balanced approach that recognises existing safeguards, supports responsible practice and avoids unintended consequences for the community sporting organisations that rely on stable, predictable commercial and media environments to serve their communities.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Trodden', followed by a long horizontal line.

David Trodden
Chief Executive Officer