



Alcohol advertising on Australian commercial television: community attitudes

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Foundation for Alcohol
Research & Education



About FARE

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) is a not-for-profit organisation with a vision for an Australia free from alcohol harms – where communities are healthy and well and where laws, policies and programs are fair, equitable and just.

Every day, people across Australia are negatively impacted by alcohol, through injury, violence, mental ill-health, chronic disease, family violence and disadvantage. Far too many Australians die because of alcohol.

We work collaboratively to build the capacity of people wanting to create change, raise community awareness of alcohol harms, advocate for policy change aimed at preventing alcohol-related harms and increase accountability of companies that fuel harm.

Working with local communities, people with lived experience of alcohol harm, values-aligned organisations, health professionals, researchers and governments across the nation, we are improving the health and wellbeing of everyone in Australia.

To learn more about us and our work visit www.fare.org.au.

You can get in touch via email at info@fare.org.au

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Executive Summary

This report analyses findings from a nationally representative survey conducted in February 2026, on public attitudes to alcohol advertising on television in Australia. The survey reveals significant community concern about the nature and extent of alcohol advertising and signals clear community demand for stricter regulation of alcohol advertising.

Notably, 75 per cent of respondents agreed there should be less alcohol advertising on television, with only 8 per cent disagreeing. Further to this, 82 per cent of respondents agreed that alcohol advertising should be restricted during hours typically reserved for child viewership, including during live sports broadcasts, with only 6 per cent disagreeing. The survey also offered respondents the option of providing comments to Australia's broadcast media regulator (ACMA) about alcohol advertising on television. The responses demonstrate strong concerns in the community about the prevalence, placement and impact of alcohol advertising, particularly in relation to children, integration with sport, and broader social harms. Many expressed the need for the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to impose stricter regulatory measures to protect the community.

These sentiments reflect the growing recognition of the negative impact of alcohol advertising and its contribution to harm in the community. The results underscore the urgent need to review and strengthen existing advertising regulations – notably the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice governing alcohol advertising on commercial television – to ensure that appropriate safeguards are in place to protect the community.

Key Findings

- » 75 per cent of survey respondents agreed that there should be less alcohol advertising on television. Only 8 per cent disagreed.
- » 82 per cent of survey respondents supported restrictions on alcohol advertising during children's viewing hours, including during live sports broadcasts.
- » In their comments, respondents highlighted the normalisation of alcohol use through alcohol advertising and the negative impacts this has on the community. Respondents expressed the need for the ACMA to impose more robust regulatory measures to protect people from alcohol advertising.

Context to Survey

Alcohol harm in the community

Alcohol causes significant harm in the Australian community. Alcohol use is linked to over 200 disease and injury conditions. Nearly 6,000 people lose their lives every year and more than 144,000 people are hospitalised from alcohol use. Australia is currently experiencing some of the highest rates of alcohol-induced deaths in over 20 years.¹ This is one of Australia's greatest preventative health challenges.

Beyond its health impacts, alcohol is a major contributing factor to violence, particularly gendered and family violence. It is implicated in approximately one in three intimate partner violence incidents,² and over half of all family violence incidents reported to police involve alcohol.³ These harms extend beyond the individual, affecting families, communities, and broader social systems.

Alcohol advertising and marketing is a key contributor to alcohol use and exacerbates alcohol-related harms.⁴ Marketing is designed to shape attitudes, influence behaviours, and normalise consumption patterns. When applied to a harmful product such as alcohol, advertising can reinforce social norms that position alcohol use as desirable, socially rewarding, and integral to Australian society.

This is particularly concerning for children and young people, who are highly susceptible to advertising. Evidence shows that exposure to alcohol advertising increases the likelihood that young people will initiate alcohol use earlier and engage in higher-risk use over time.⁵

Television remains a key channel for alcohol advertising exposure. Millions of Australians regularly watch free-to-air commercial television, over 50 per cent of adults, according to ACMA's 2025 data.⁶ Children are particularly exposed to alcohol advertising through TV. Research conducted in 2022, showed that young people (12 to 17 years) reported frequent exposure to alcohol advertising on television.⁷ A recent study found that the top ten alcohol companies aired almost 11,000 advertisements during Australian sports free-to-air television broadcasts over a 12-month period, with 45% of these ads shown during children's viewing hours.^{8,9}

Current regulation of TV alcohol advertising

Alcohol advertising on free-to-air commercial television is governed by the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice (the Code). The Code is developed and overseen by the commercial television industry (under the banner of 'Free TV') and the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA).

The Code contains several weaknesses, which results in extensive alcohol advertising, and the frequent exposure of children to alcohol advertising. These include:

- Alcohol advertising is permitted between 8:30pm-5am every day of the week, and also between 12pm-3pm Monday to Friday on school days. Research has shown that a large proportion of the audience after 8.30pm, when alcohol advertising is permitted, is under-age - approximately 30%.¹⁰
- A "sports exemption", which permits alcohol advertising from 6pm Friday to midnight Sunday for a broad category of "sports programs," including non-live content. The exemption is frequently exposing children to alcohol advertising.^{11,12}
- Weak definitions in the Code mean it fails to capture many types of alcohol-related marketing, allowing this content to continue appearing on television at any time. For example, a program could

be preceded by a display of an alcoholic product with an announcement that it is the program’s sponsor; or alcohol sponsorships on stadiums or jerseys can be shown during a broadcast. These do not constitute “advertisements” under the Code.

While the existing process allows industry to create its own Code, if ACMA determines that the Code is not providing appropriate community safeguards, it may override the Code and create its own “program standard”, which would set new rules governing alcohol advertising on TV.

In June 2025 ACMA rejected Free TV’s latest draft Code following concerns from the community, public health advocates and organisations about an industry-proposed change that could have allowed up to 800 additional hours of alcohol ads on television each year.

In March 2026 ACMA announced it is reviewing the suitability of alcohol advertising restrictions in the current code.

Survey Results

Methods

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) commissioned Pureprofile to administer a survey of n=2,015 Australians to understand views on alcohol advertising on free-to-air television, including during live sports broadcasts. The survey was conducted in February 2026, and the sample was nationally representative for age, gender and location.

Findings

Most participants of the survey agreed that there should be less alcohol advertising on television (75%). Only 8% of participants disagreed (Table 1).

Table 1. Proportion of Australian respondents that are concerned about harmful product advertising (N=2,015)

	N	%
To what extent do you agree with the following statement:		
- There should be less alcohol advertising on television.		
Strongly agree	705	35%
Agree	805	40%
Neither agree nor disagree	346	17%
Disagree	130	6%
Strongly disagree	29	1%

Most participants of the survey agreed that alcohol advertising should be restricted during hours when children are watching (82%). Only 5% of participants disagreed (Table 2).

Table 2. Proportion of Australian respondents that want restrictions on alcohol advertising during children's viewing hours (N=2,015)

	N	%
In Australia, alcohol advertising is generally not allowed on television during times when children are likely to be watching. However, these ads are permitted if they appear during live sports broadcasts. To what extent do you agree with the following statement:		
– Alcohol advertising should be restricted during children's viewing hours, even during live sports broadcasts?		
Strongly agree	993	49%
Agree	661	33%
Neither agree nor disagree	244	12%
Disagree	88	4%
Strongly disagree	29	1%

As part of the survey, participants were asked the following optional question:

In Australia, the Australian Communications and Media Authority can create standards that aim to provide community safeguards when it comes to alcohol advertising on television, internet, radio, phone, and newspapers.

If anything, what would you like to tell the regulator about alcohol advertising in Australia?

67 per cent of survey respondents (n1305) contributed a comment. The responses show a strong pattern of community concern about the about the prevalence, placement and impact of alcohol advertising in Australia. Several common themes are clear from the community responses to this question:

Australians are concerned about the negative community impacts of alcohol and alcohol advertising

Respondents consistently highlighted the broader negative impact of alcohol and alcohol advertising in Australia. Many argued that advertising reinforces and perpetuates a culture that is already deeply embedded in social norms. Respondents noted that alcohol was frequently portrayed in advertising as a reward, a coping mechanism, or an essential part of social connection, which respondents believed contributes to its normalisation. Respondents noted that reducing advertising exposure could play an important role in reshaping societal attitudes over time and there was particular concern about advertising actively shaping behaviours and expectations, particularly among younger audiences.

"Alcoholism is a major issue in Australia and advertising it as a reward, socialising etc isn't helping the situation. We seem to normalise alcohol as something we need and right at the end of most it is said to drink responsibly, it is seen as a fun thing so people are often blind to their drinking problem."

– Woman, 46, Tasmania

"Violence and crime, from alcohol (and other drugs) has a major effect, not just on the individual, but family, friends and the broader community. Alcohol advertising typically ignores every negative

impact and makes it acceptable to indulge – without any consideration of consequences.”

– Man, 68, South Australia

“People in Australia don’t need to be given more reasons to drink. It’s already a big problem in our society and I find it crazy that advertisers think it’s good to market harmful substances to people. Young adults especially see these advertisements and then recognise the products when in pubs/ bottle shops and are more inclined to purchase because the name is known. It should not be that way.”

– Woman, 27, Queensland

Australians expect stronger regulation of alcohol advertising

Many respondents emphasised that current safeguards are insufficient and fail to adequately protect the public from harm. Respondents noted that ACMA has the authority and responsibility to regulate alcohol advertising within Australia and called for clearer and stricter regulations across all media platforms.

Some respondents framed this as an obligation, suggesting that ACMA has a duty of care to prioritise public health and wellbeing over commercial interests.

“You have a duty of care to do what’s morally right for the wellbeing of the public of Australia. Please stop alcohol advertising and find other ways to make money.”

– Woman, 48, New South Wales

“I’d like the regulator to consider tightening restriction on alcohol advertising, especially around live sports and online content where children and young people are exposed. It would be great to see fewer promotions linking with alcohol with fun, success or sporting excitement, and more focus on community safety. Overall, less advertising would help reduce social harm and protect families.”

– Man, 35 New South Wales

Australians recognise the problematic connection between alcohol and violence

A substantial number of responses to the question highlighted the role alcohol plays in exacerbating instances of violence, particularly domestic, family and sexual violence. Respondents recognised that harms affected both individuals and families and communities more broadly.

“Alcohol causes so much damage, heartache and worry for families and increases sad, harmful domestic situations. For the sake of the innocent, please regulate all advertising for alcohol. Tobacco advertising is disallowed on TV and other platforms, alcohol should be the same.”

– Woman, 73, Western Australia

“I feel it is excessive. You see it everywhere and it’s normalised however, I feel it’s extremely harmful to a lot of people for a lot of reasons. The alcohol fuelled abuse is a very good starting point.”

– Woman, 27, Victoria

Australians are concerned about the ties between alcohol and sport

Respondents regularly raised the problematic connection between alcohol and sport in Australia. Respondents noted the pervasive integration of alcohol branding into sporting culture through broadcast advertising, sponsorships, and on-ground promotions. Many participants noted that sporting events are often watched by families, children and young people, making the association with alcohol especially problematic. Respondent advocated for this association to end, and said that taking action on alcohol advertising is an essential step.

"I feel Alcohol advertising should be restricted as we should encourage less alcohol for a healthy and less harmful society. I feel taking alcohol advertising away from sports and sporting events is a good idea for people especially as kids see this too."

– Woman, 46, Victoria

"It's strong association with major sporting events is harmful – it glamourises alcohol consumption by associating it with sporting role models."

– Man, 68, Northern Territory

"Gambling and alcohol advertising during sports is actually quite insane. A lot of athletes struggle with these issues, including drug use. Advertising and normalising alcohol and gambling to the youth who follow sport is wrong on so many levels."

– Man, 43, Victoria

"I think that the alcohol advertising needs to be stricter and removed completely from all forms of platforms. I do not want my child to be confronted by such adverts and especially not at family orientated sports events. It should be discouraged completely."

– Woman, 54, New South Wales

Australians recognise alcohol has parallels to tobacco

Comparisons were often drawn between alcohol and tobacco. Many respondents pointed to the success of regulatory measures imposed on tobacco advertising bans in reducing use and shifting social norms and suggested a similar approach should apply to alcohol. Respondents questioned why alcohol continues to be widely advertised despite its well-documented harms.

"Alcohol advertising should follow in the footsteps of tobacco advertising which would significantly reduce the harm to both individuals and the community from alcohol consumption."

– Woman, 22, New South Wales

"I think alcohol advertising should be banned altogether, they banned cigarette advertising and alcohol is no different, in fact I think alcohol is the cause of so much abuse in homes and on the streets."

– Woman, 76, Australian Capital Territory

"Alcohol causes more damage to others than nicotine. I support no advertising for nicotine products and see no reason why alcohol and gambling shouldn't be included in this ban."

– Man, 60, New South Wales

Australians are concerned about the impact of alcohol advertising on children and young people

The most prominent theme in community responses was the negative impact of alcohol ads on children and young people. Respondents consistently expressed unease about the exposure of minors to alcohol advertising, particularly during television viewing times and through online platforms. Many participants argued that current restrictions are inadequate and allow children to be exposed to messaging that portrays alcohol as fun, exciting, and socially desirable.

"Alcohol advertising in Australia should be regulated more strictly, especially during these time were young children are glued to their TV and Tablet. It would be beneficial to implement clearer guidelines that restrict the use of alcohol related content."

– Woman, 40, Tasmania

"The promoting of risky health behaviours such as drinking alcohol is extremely harmful for young viewers and should refrain from supporting the purchase of this product."

– Woman, 19, Queensland

"It shouldn't be on tv at all, older teenagers especially see these ads making them look exciting and fun. Alcohol is dangerous and ads just glorify it to look like a cool thing to do. Many people have been made ill or even killed by alcohol consumption so it doesn't need to be advertised on tv where so many under age children watch."

– Man, 63, Queensland

Minority support for advertising, business interests, and status quo

While the main themes were concerned with the harmful impacts of alcohol and the need for stronger regulation of alcohol advertising, a smaller number of participants acknowledged the role of alcohol as a legal product and emphasised the rights of businesses to advertise. Some of these respondents still expressed concern about the current scale and pervasiveness of advertising. Many also still supported restrictions, particularly to protect children and reduce excessive exposure, and even within this group there was often a recognition that stronger regulation is necessary.

"We should limit this type of advertising, not necessarily ban it but include conversation about moderation. It is a product that can have a place, they deserve to be able to promote their products, but they could program it so people can choose to include those type of ads."

– Woman, 49, Queensland

"I don't have a problem with alcohol advertising, but there is too much of it. Every ad break there is an alcohol ad. It has been woven so much into the Australian advertising fabric that it is weird when people don't drink now."

– Woman, 36, Queensland

"Alcohol advertising should balance business promotion with public health and community safety, making sure Ads are responsible, honest, and do not encourage harmful drinking behaviours."

– Man, 35, Queensland

Conclusion

The current regulation of alcohol advertising on television does not meet the Australian community's expectations.

3 in 4 Australians believe there is too much alcohol advertising on television, and over 8 in 10 support restricting alcohol advertising during children's viewing hours, including during live sports broadcasts. The findings are reinforced by participant's open responses, which highlighted common concerns such as the harmful nature of alcohol advertising, the recognised links to violence and social harm the exposure of children to alcohol advertising, and the problematic integration of alcohol with sport. Respondents regularly expressed their expectation that ACMA will take a more proactive role in regulating alcohol advertising.

It is clear that Australians expect and would support action by ACMA to strongly restrict alcohol advertising on television, enforced through a new program standard. ACMA's ongoing work reviewing the regulation of alcohol advertising on free-to-air television presents a critical opportunity to prevent alcohol related harm and to better align with community expectations.

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