

22 November, 2024

Community opposes industry plan to flood TV screens with more alcohol ads

Community, health and children's organisations are warning of the disastrous impact of proposed changes to the Commercial TV Industry Code that will allow 800 hours of additional alcohol ads on television each year.

The Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice, overseen by the commercial television stations under the banner of "Free TV", is proposing to extend alcohol advertising on weekends, public holidays and during school holidays.

Community organisations and advocates submitted objections to the proposed new Code citing concerns about the increased risk of harm to women and children.

The proposal by Free TV to extend alcohol advertising comes after the Australian Government's Rapid Review on accelerating action to end domestic, family and sexual violence, recommended that "given the statistical increase in DFSV incidents during football grand finals, as well as the high number of children who watch sport on television and mobile apps, the Review recommends that alcohol advertising be restricted during sporting events".

CEO of the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), Caterina Giorgi said, "It's appalling that the commercial television stations are proposing to extend alcohol advertising during these high-risk periods.

"We know that women and children are at higher risk of violence during sports broadcasts and on public holidays, yet these broadcasters are proposing to increase alcohol advertising during these times.

"This proposal by commercial television stations demonstrates they are out of step with community expectations and completely disregard the advice provided by the expert panel, which strongly urged the government to further restrict advertising.

"When governments allow industry to set their own rules, they will always prioritise their profits ahead of the health, safety and wellbeing of our families and communities."

Well-known television actor and survivor advocate, Kym Valentine, wrote a strong objection to the Free TV consultation, calling on Free TV to listen to the voices of the people impacted the most.

“I’ve worked in television for more than 40 years and understand deeply how television creates and reflects our culture. The TV industry which I’ve been part of for so long has a responsibility to our communities.

“The availability, accessibility and now advertising of alcohol in homes has skyrocketed. It is undeniable that when alcohol increases so does the risk of harm.

“As a Survivor Advocate, I have heard so many stories of harm. While everyone’s story is unique, there are commonalities – including alcohol. I urge Free TV to listen to the voices of people who are most affected when making these life changing decisions.”

Prue Warrilow, CEO of children’s advocacy organisation ARACY said, “Extending advertising hours prioritises short-term profit over the long-term health of Australian children.

“A responsible, child-centred approach would focus on reducing harmful exposure, supporting the holistic wellbeing of young Australians, and building a healthier, more resilient generation.”

President of Children & Media Australia (CMA), Professor Elizabeth Handsley added, “We know that these changes will continue a trend towards commercial TV becoming a riskier place for children. Australian families deserve better.”

-ENDS-

Media outlets are requested to promote help-seeking information when reporting on alcohol and other drugs, in line with the Mindframe National Guidelines. Suggested wording relating this this media story: If you or someone you know needs support, please call Lifeline 13 11 14, the National 24/7 Alcohol and Other Drugs Hotline 1800 250 015 or 1800RESPECT 1800 737 732.

Available for interview: Caterina Giorgi, CEO, FARE; TV Actor and Survivor Advocate, Kym Valentine; and Professor Elizabeth Handsley, President, Children & Media Australia.

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The **Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education** (FARE) is the leading not-for-profit organisation working towards an Australia free from alcohol harms. We do this through developing evidence-informed policy, enabling people-powered advocacy and delivering health promotion campaigns. FARE has been working with communities across the country to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians for 20 years. To learn more about us and our work visit www.fare.org.au.