



HIGH PRICE TO PAY: FREE TV CODE WILL EXPOSE CHILDREN TO MORE ALCOHOL ADVERTISING

10 April 2015: Proposed changes to Free TV Australia's advertising code will leave children even more exposed to harmful alcohol advertising.

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) has slammed the commercial TV industry's plan to increase the times when alcohol advertising can be shown, saying the proposed code changes fly in the face of community concerns and further highlight what is a fundamentally broken self-regulatory system.

FARE's submission to the *Review of the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice* comes at a time of renewed focus and concern about the ways in which Australian children are exposed to alcohol marketing messages.

Free TV Australia's proposed code would open up additional times and contexts during which alcohol advertising can be shown, including changes which would bring the 'M classification' zone forward one hour, allowing advertising as early as 7:30pm and allowing more alcohol advertising during sport broadcasts.

Proposed changes to the code would also make it more difficult for viewers to lodge complaints.

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn says despite prevailing community concerns about the ways Australian children are being exposed to alcohol and the evidence of the damage such exposure causes, Free TV Australia wants to open the alcohol advertising floodgates even wider.

"When it comes to alcohol advertising, Free TV Australia's number one priority should be to protect younger Australians from exposure to alcohol advertising. Yet its eagerness to further weaken an already deeply flawed code makes clear the changes are being driven instead by the vested business interests of the commercial free-to-air broadcasters it represents," Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn says Free TV Australia's proposed regressive changes bring the glaring faults in the current system of self-regulation into sharp relief.

"We have long argued that self-regulation in the alcohol advertising space doesn't work – for the simple and obvious reason that the commercial self-interest of industry will always override the interests of the public. These changes are nothing but an ill-conceived money grab from a sector under threat from rival entertainment offerings," Mr Thorn said.



Foundation for Alcohol
Research & Education

Mr Thorn noted that the majority of Australians recognise that alcohol advertising and promotions influence the behaviour of people under 18 years (71%) and the majority also support a ban on alcohol advertising before 8:30pm (67%).

“Free TV Australia is out of step with community attitudes on alcohol. It’s turning its back on its audience, and proposing changes to the code in the hope to encouraging a big spending alcohol industry to increase the placement and volume of its advertising, to the further detriment of our children,” Mr Thorn said.

In February 2014, the Commonwealth Government Australian National Preventive Health Agency (ANPHA) released a draft report, *Alcohol advertising: The effectiveness of current regulatory codes in addressing community concern*, that found the current regulatory arrangements on the placement of alcohol advertising are failing to sufficiently protect children and adolescents, and called for the removal of the loophole which currently allows for alcohol advertisements to air before 8:30pm during sporting broadcasts on weekends or public holidays.

“For over a year now, the Commonwealth has been sitting on the report from the Australian National Preventive Health Agency that called for sweeping changes to the existing self-regulatory codes in order to protect children from alcohol advertising. The Commonwealth must not continue to sit idly by as Free TV Australia attempt to further weaken its code,” Mr Thorn said.

Mr Thorn (@MichaelTThorn) is available for interview.

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The **Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE)** is an independent, not-for-profit organisation working to stop the harm caused by alcohol. Alcohol harm in Australia is significant. Over 5,500 lives are lost every year and more than 157,000 people are hospitalised making alcohol one of our nation’s greatest preventative health challenges.

For over a decade, FARE has been working with communities, governments, health professionals and police across the country to stop alcohol harms by supporting world-leading research, raising public awareness and advocating for changes to alcohol policy. In that time FARE has helped more than 750 communities and organisations, and backed over 1,400 projects around Australia.