



THE  
ABAC  
SCHEME  
LIMITED

11 June 2013

Mr Stewart Smith  
Director  
NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues  
By Email: [socialissues@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:socialissues@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Mr Stewart

The ABAC Scheme Ltd (ABAC) seeks to provide answers to questions taken on notice during the hearing before the Standing Committee on Social Issues on Monday 6 May 2013 and the supplementary questions provided by the Committee.

**Research on Community Standards** (page 43 of transcript)

ABAC Research has recently been undertaken through ten (10) face-to-face focus groups along with an on-line survey of 1261 people to consider 12 alcohol advertisements that had been subject to consideration by the ABAC Complaints Panel. Of those 12 advertisements, 7 complaints had been upheld, while 5 had been dismissed, by the Complaints Panel.

Key Findings of the research:

1. Prior to being exposed to the Code, only 2 of the 12 advertisements were considered unacceptable by the majority of respondents.
2. It was found that the Complaints Panel had:
  - Correctly dismissed three (3) advertisements that were deemed acceptable by the community;
  - Correctly upheld complaints against three (3) advertisements that were deemed unacceptable by the community;
  - Conservatively upheld complaints against three (3) advertisements that were deemed acceptable by the community;
  - Dismissed a complaint against one advertisement that was deemed unacceptable.
  - Community opinions on 2 advertisements were evenly split with the Complaints Panel upholding a complaint about one advertisement while dismissing the other.
3. Knowledge of alcohol advertising regulation was low across all groups, but once prompted a majority (69%) were aware that they could complain to the Advertising Standards Bureau.
4. In the last 12 months, 66% of the general public had no concern or offence about advertising standards in general.
5. The research found that 31% of respondents were not concerned about content about alcohol advertising, 35% were neither concerned nor unconcerned and 34% were concerned.

A copy of the full research report is attached.

**What does ABAC Cover?** (page 44 of transcript)

ABAC covers the content of all alcohol advertising, events, naming and packaging. This encompasses all forms of media.

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Promotions, such as competitions, and point of sale materials are covered by the Code.

Gifts with purchase, product placement and sponsorship agreements are the only forms of marketing that are not covered by the Code. However, gifts with purchase will be covered by the Code if they are incorporated into an advertisement and all sponsorship advertising is covered by the Code.

**Pre-vetting, Internet & Social Media (page 45 & 46 of transcript)**

Where possible, pre-vetting does occur for advertisements that will appear on the internet. Over the past 3 years the Pre-vetting Service has processed 578 requests for pre-vetting of advertisements or groups of advertisements for internet use. Many advertisements were modified during the pre-vetting process and 58 were rejected outright.

While the pre-vetting service is called upon to pre-vet concepts and material for social media and other interactive digital advertising from time to time, the medium itself is often not conducive to pre-vetting given its ever changing content. Hence alcohol companies have internal guidelines in place in respect to moderation of sites and use of age-gating. These guidelines are also reflected in Codes of Practice developed by AANA and the Communications Council.

**Pre-vetted advertisements subject to complaints (supplementary question)**

Between 2010 and 2012 the ABAC Adjudication Panel received 304 complaints and made 112 determinations of which 33 upheld the complaints and 79 dismissed the complaints.

Of those 112 determinations, 55 related to advertisements that had been pre-vetted. Of those pre-vetted advertisements that were subject of complaint, 4 were upheld by the Complaints Panel.

**Promotion of ABAC Code (supplementary question)**

All complaints on advertising, including alcohol, are centralised through ASB. ASB has a website which contains information about how to lodge a complaint and advertising is also conducted about the service.

ABAC has its own website that directs complainants to the ASB site but also contains information about the ABAC Scheme.

In assessing the outcomes of the community research, ABAC acknowledges the low awareness of alcohol advertising regulation in Australia and is currently reviewing options available to improve the awareness of ABAC.

We hope this information is of assistance.

Please note that ABAC does not seek any amendment to transcript

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Denita Wawn', written over a light grey rectangular background.

Denita Wawn  
Chair - The ABAC Scheme Ltd