

# ALCOHOL ADVERTISING REVIEW BOARD

## Alcohol Advertising Review Board Annual Report 2015-16

The Alcohol Advertising Review Board (AARB) considers and reviews complaints from the Australian community about alcohol advertising. The AARB was developed by the McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth and Cancer Council Western Australia, supported by other health organisations, in response to the numerous weaknesses of the current self-regulatory alcohol advertising system. The AARB aims to draw attention to the need for strong, independent, legislated controls on all forms of alcohol advertising and promotion to help protect children and young people in Australia.

### Alcohol advertising complaints in 2015–16

Table 1 summarises the status of complaints received by the AARB from 16 March 2015 to 11 March 2016.

**Table 1: Status of Alcohol Advertising Review Board complaints received in 2015-16**

Complaints received	194
Number of ads these complaints referred to	135
Complaints considered by the AARB Panel	143
Determinations by the AARB Panel	110
Determinations that upheld complaints	96
Determinations that upheld complaints in part	12
Determinations that dismissed complaints	2

Some complaints were not progressed to the review stage as the ad could not be identified or accessed, the subject of the complaint was outside the scope of the AARB Code, or the subject of the complaint had already been reviewed by the AARB Panel (therefore the original determination applies).

## Review Panel

A total of 106 Panel members participated in a review during 2015–16. Panel members were drawn from a range of professions including public health, research, medicine, alcohol and other drug treatment services, law, education, social services and marketing.

## Timeline for handling complaints

The AARB is committed to processing and responding to complaints as speedily as possible, with a target average of 20 working days for the handling of complaints. In 2015–16, complaints took an average of 17 working days for a determination to be reached.

## Concerning alcohol ads from 2015-16

Below are three examples of alcohol ads that caused concern in the community in 2015-16.

### **Bundaberg Rum ad before Dora The Explorer YouTube video (ref 446/15)**

A concerned parent contacted the AARB regarding a Bundaberg Rum ad placed before a Dora the Explorer YouTube video they were watching with their 3 year old daughter. The complaint was upheld, as the Panel believed the ad was placed before online content that would appeal to young people.

### **VB 2015 'Raise a Glass' campaign (ref 408/15)**

The 2015 VB 'Raise a Glass' campaign called on people to 'raise a glass' on Anzac Day to commemorate those who served in the First World War. The campaign received 32 complaints relating to the TV and radio ads and campaign website. The complainants were concerned about the inappropriateness of using Anzac Day to promote alcohol. The complaints were upheld, with the Panel determining that the ad concealed its commercial intent, it would offend the standards of public decency, and would appeal to young people.

This was the third determination by the AARB regarding VB 'Raise a Glass' campaigns (ref 27/12, 152/13). The campaign did not run in 2016.

### **Wild Turkey ad on 'School Special' bus in Western Australia (ref 472/15)**

A complaint was received regarding a Wild Turkey American Honey ad on the side of a Transperth 'School Special' bus in Western Australia. The complaint was upheld, on the basis that it was placed on a bus used for school runs, and a Panel member commented that alcohol ads should not be allowed on school bus services. The AARB noted that the use of school bus services to promote alcohol is particularly inappropriate.

## Action taken by advertisers

When a complaint is upheld, the AARB notifies the advertiser and requests they modify or remove the ad. Below are three examples of ads that were removed or modified by advertisers following receipt of the complaints. The AARB commends these advertisers for taking prompt action based on community concerns.

### Images removed from Vinomofo Facebook page (ref 488/16)

A complaint was received regarding a post on the Vinomofo Facebook page that read "Alcohol prevents food poisoning. Science says so." and featured an image of a plastic bottle with "Water Wine helps energise muscles" written on it. The AARB Panel upheld the complaint on the basis that the statements were false and were health-related claims.

Vinomofo removed the image.

### Beer Shack Brewery ad removed from radio station website (ref 495/16)

A concerned parent contacted the AARB regarding an ad for Beer Shack Brewery placed below an ad for Nickelodeon cartoons on a local radio station website. A promotional video on the website showed people with alcohol in public places, including at the beach and in main streets of WA towns. The complaint was upheld, on the basis that the ad would have appeal to young people, portrayed the product in the context of an activity attractive to primarily young people, and featured open bottles of alcohol in locations where alcohol would be prohibited.

Beer Shack Brewery requested that changes be made to the timing, wording and website placements by the radio station, and the video was removed from the website.

### Purl Bar blackboard promotion removed (ref 491/16)

A community member expressed concern over Purl Bar in Perth, WA, using a children's blackboard with toy lettering to promote "\$8 tiger pint" and "Lunch special cider + sliders \$18" outside the bar. The complaint was upheld, on the basis that the majority of the Panel believed the blackboard and type of magnets used would appeal to young people.

Purl Bar advised the AARB they had ceased the use of the blackboard and would no longer use it to promote alcohol.

# Analysis of complaints

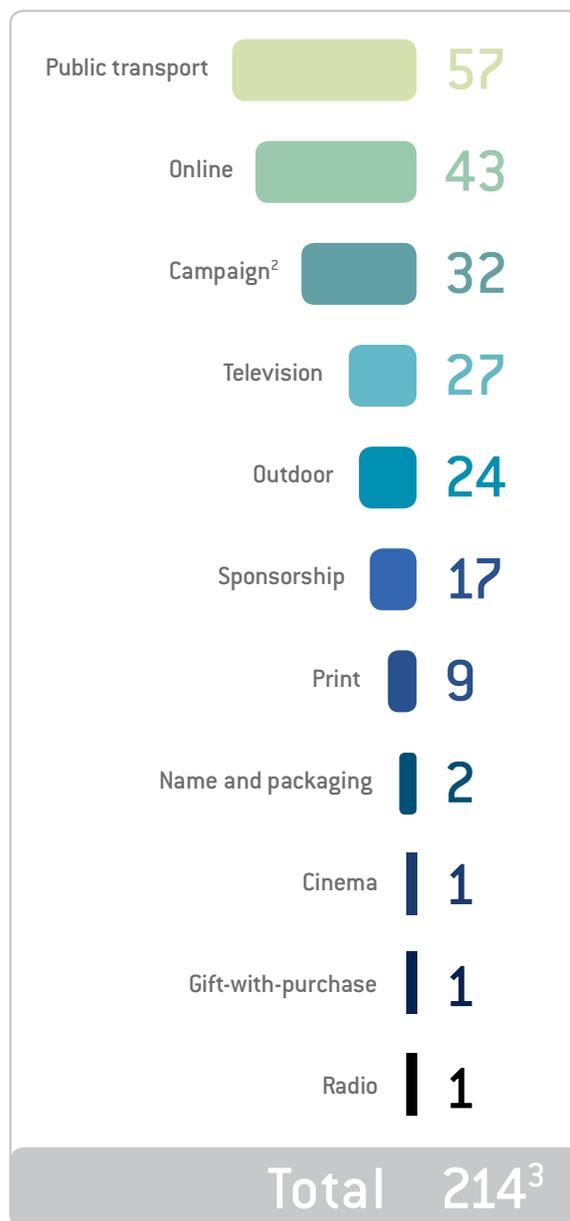
The following figures provide an analysis of the 194 complaints received by the AARB in 2015-16.

**Figure 1: Type of alcohol products to which complaints related**



1. The total is over 194 as some ads promoted multiple products e.g. a spirit and a beer product.

**Figure 2: Form of advertisement to which complaints related**



2. This category relates to complaints received about marketing campaigns that used multiple media channels.
3. The total is over 194 as some complaints related to promotions that covered more than one form, e.g. television and sponsorship.

**Table 2: Number of complaints received by Advertiser**

CUB	63
Lion	44
Diageo Australia	15
Woolworths Limited	11
Campari Australia	10
Vok Beverages	9
Beam Suntory	7
Australian Liquor Marketers	4
Asahi Premium Beverages	4
Brown-Forman Australia	3
Accolade Wines	2
Coopers Brewery	2
Molson Coors Australasia	2
Thirsty Camel NSW	2
Wesfarmers Limited	2
Brown Brothers	1
Bush Shack Brewery	1
Fluid Beverages Pty Ltd	1
Gray's Online	1
Liquor Marketing Group	1
Matso's Broome Brewery	1
McWilliams Wine	1
Purl Bar	1
Thirsty Camel Victoria	1
Treasury Wine Estates	1
Two Elk Cider	1
Vinomofo	1
Virgin Group	1
Outside AARB Code	4
Total	197 <sup>1</sup>

1. The total is over 194 as three complaints related to promotions that covered products from more than one alcohol advertiser.

# Comparison of activity by the Alcohol Advertising Review Board and Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code Scheme

The AARB was developed in response to the numerous weaknesses of the self-regulatory alcohol advertising system, including the Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code (ABAC) Scheme which is run under the auspices of the alcohol and advertising industries. The AARB provides independent review of alcohol advertising, free of the alcohol and advertising industries.

**Table 3: Comparison of the number of complaints received, determinations and decisions made by the AARB and the ABAC over the most recent one-year periods for which data are available.**

	AARB 2015 – 16	ABAC 2015 Annual Report
Complaints received	194	133
Number of ads these complaints referred to	135	71
Number of complaints considered by the Panel	143	35
Determinations by the Panel	110	29
Determinations that upheld complaints [at least in part]	108	8
Determinations that dismissed complaints	2	21 <sup>1</sup>

1. This category was inferred from information in the ABAC 2015 Annual Report.

It is evident that the community is deeply concerned about the extent of alcohol advertising and promotion in Australia. The concerning alcohol ads detailed in this report are only a small sample of the inappropriate alcohol ads about which the AARB receives complaints each year. Strong, independent, legislated controls on all forms of alcohol advertising are urgently needed to protect children and young people. The AARB will continue to press for independent regulation of alcohol advertising and to provide an avenue for the Australian community to voice its concerns.

© McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth, 2016

