

Media Release

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New report finds alcohol advertising is impossible to escape for Aussie kids

The regulation of alcohol marketing is so weak in Australia that alcohol advertisements are being seen on school buses, across from primary schools, and before children's videos on YouTube, an analysis of complaints made to the Alcohol Advertising Review Board (AARB) has found.

The report, released today by the Public Health Advocacy Institute of WA (PHAIWA) based at Curtin University, found almost two-thirds of complaints made to the AARB over the past seven years had raised concerns about the placement of alcohol marketing in Australia.

The report found that 760 of the total 1126 complaints were about where alcohol marketing was placed in the community. Of the 760 placement-related complaints, almost 40 per cent raised concerns that the advertisements were placed where young people were likely to be exposed or with content that would appeal to them. The report highlights the need for governments to introduce stronger restrictions to better protect children and young people from exposure to alcohol marketing.

The results are outlined in a new report titled, *'Impossible to escape: The need for stronger restrictions on the placement of alcohol marketing in Australia'*, compiled by the Alcohol Programs Team at PHAIWA in partnership with Cancer Council WA.

Ms Julia Stafford, from the Alcohol Programs Team at PHAIWA, said the report highlights the inadequate regulation of the placement of alcohol marketing in Australia, adding immediate action needs to be taken by governments to reduce the harm from alcohol in the community.

"Young people are regularly exposed to alcohol advertising and this can influence their beliefs and attitudes about drinking. Some alarming examples of alcohol advertising in Australia include an alcohol advertisement on a school bus in Sydney, and a sign for an alcohol delivery service directly opposite a primary school in Melbourne," Ms Stafford said.

"By reviewing the complaints made to the AARB, the report highlights that a 15-year-old Australian child could be exposed to alcohol marketing through Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, billboards, on public transport, at the supermarket, on television, and in the cinema all in one day.

"With the election looming, there are opportunities for the incoming Federal Government to take action to better protect young people. This includes removing the exemption in the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice that allows alcohol advertisements to be broadcast during sports programming on weekends and public holidays. There is also an urgent need to replace the self-regulatory alcohol advertising system with independent, legislated controls that cover the volume, content, and placement of all forms of alcohol marketing."

The report also recommends that state, territory, and local governments should remove alcohol advertising from public transport vehicles and transit stops, on sporting fields, stadiums, billboards and other outdoor advertising locations.

Ms Melissa Ledger, Cancer Prevention and Research Director from Cancer Council WA, said children are being bombarded with alcohol advertising that portrays alcohol as desirable and aspirational.

“Alcohol is a major risk factor for cancer, not an everyday normal product as the advertising would suggest. We must do more to protect kids from this constant exposure as clearly industry self-regulation is not working,” Ms Ledger said.

The AARB was developed by the Alcohol Programs Team at PHAIWA in partnership with Cancer Council WA and supported by other health organisations. It considers and reviews complaints from the Australian community about alcohol advertising.

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Notes to Editor:

Curtin University academics are available for interview via our in-house Globelynx camera, which can deliver broadcast quality HD pictures direct to your newsroom. Please contact us for more details.

About Curtin University

Curtin University is Western Australia’s largest university, with more than 56,000 students. Of these, about 26 per cent are international students, with half of these studying at the University’s offshore campuses. The University’s main campus is in Perth. Curtin also has a major regional campus in Kalgoorlie in addition to four global campuses in Malaysia, Singapore, Dubai and Mauritius.

Curtin is ranked in the top one per cent of universities worldwide, with the University placed in the top 200 globally and 9th in Australia according to the [Academic Ranking of World Universities \(ARWU\) 2018](#).

The University has built a reputation around innovation and an entrepreneurial spirit, being at the forefront of many high-profile research projects in astronomy, biosciences, economics, mining and information technology. It is also recognised globally for its strong connections with industry, and for its commitment to preparing students for the jobs of the future.

For further information, visit curtin.edu.au.

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