



MEDIA RELEASE

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Cup Day loophole allows alcohol companies to target children

FEDERAL: The Alcohol Policy Coalition wants to see the removal of a special exemption that allows alcohol companies to advertise during child-friendly hours this Melbourne Cup Day – the race that stops the nation.

In 2009, 281,000 children around Australia watched the Melbourne Cup race on TV.

“Alcohol companies are banned from advertising on TV during the day, specifically to protect children. So why should public holidays and weekends be any different?” queried Geoff Munro, Director Policy Australian Drug Foundation.

“We know that children love to watch sports and we also know that the amount of alcohol advertising during sports broadcasts influences their decisions about drinking later in life,” said Mr Munro.

Exposure to alcohol advertising shapes young people’s beliefs, attitudes and drinking behaviours, which can lead to harmful long-term drinking patterns. Research shows that 10-12 year olds interpret the messages of alcohol advertisements in the same way as adults, i.e. alcohol ads can appeal to children directly.

Mr Munro said the alcohol industry is taking advantage of this exemption because:

- in 2007, almost half (46%) of the alcohol ads screened across Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney were shown on weekends and public holidays when children are more likely to be watching TV and
- 44 percent of these were shown during the day, i.e. between 5.01am to 8.29pm.

“The alcohol industry claim they don’t target children. So why do they advertise so much during the day when kids are watching and why use mascots that appeal to kids like the Bundy Bear and the Boonie Doll?” said Mr Munro.

“It’s obvious the alcohol industry aren’t serious about protecting children from alcohol ads otherwise they would stop advertising during live sports broadcasts on weekends and public holidays,” added Mr Munro.

During the 2010 AFL Grand Final, Carlton United Breweries aired a three-minute TV ad before the start of the game. 355,000 children aged under 15 tuned in to watch the Grand Final telecast.

“It’s time for governments to step in and do something to protect children from alcohol advertising. The first step is to end this exemption,” said Mr Munro.

Background:

The Commercial Television Code of Practice states:

- 6.7 A commercial which is a “direct advertisement for alcoholic drinks” (as defined in Clause 6.11) may be broadcast:
 - 6.7.1 only in M, MA or AV classification periods; or
 - 6.7.2 as an accompaniment to the live broadcast of a sporting event on weekends and public holidays.

6.13 “Public holidays” are those days proclaimed, Gazetted, or nominated in a statute as public holidays under the relevant State or Territory legislation. These holidays generally affect either an entire State or Territory (such as the various Queen’s Birthday holidays) or a particular city or region (**such as Melbourne Cup Day in Melbourne**).

For media enquiries please contact Renee Lustman on 03 9278 8109 / 0430 948 380.

The Alcohol Policy Coalition (the Coalition) is a collaboration of health agencies – Australian Drug Foundation, Cancer Council Victoria, Heart Foundation (Victoria), Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre and VicHealth – with shared concern relating to the misuse of alcohol and its health/social impacts on the community. Alcohol remains one of the major causes of preventable death and illness in Australia. As such, the Coalition advocates for evidence based policy to prevent and reduce the harms caused by alcohol to Australians. For more information visit www.alcoholpolicycoalition.org.au