Does the system work?

There are ongoing debates between industry and community groups about whether the self-regulatory system is effective. It is not possible to know exactly how many complaints about advertising are made each year. The annual case reports prepared by the ASB state the advertisements that have received a complaint, but not the total number of complaints received for each advertisement.

What we do know is that the number of complaints upheld is very small.

How will you know what the outcome was?

If you have made a complaint about an advertisement, the ASB will inform you in writing of the decisions from both the Advertising Standards Board and the ABAC Complaints Panel, and will send you a copy of the case report. Copies of case reports (for upheld and dismissed complaints) are available on the ASB website (http://www.adstandards.com.au/pages/casestudy_search.asp).

What happens if your complaint is upheld?

If either the ASB or ABAC (or both) upholds your complaint, the advertiser is asked to modify or withdraw the advertisement. If the advertiser chooses not to modify or discontinue an advertisement in line with a determination, the Board may forward its Case Report to appropriate government agencies and media proprietors.

However, as this is a self-regulatory (and voluntary) system, neither the ASB nor ABAC impose any penalties for advertisements that are found to be in breach of the Code(s).

Key Points

- Research on alcohol advertising messages and complaints suggests that the current system is ineffective

What Can I Do?

- Educate schools and community groups about the ineffective regulation of alcohol advertising
- Lobby for stricter regulations on the advertising of alcohol, and for penalties for inappropriate advertisements

Other Fact Sheets in this Series

- ADV1: Alcohol Advertising: Alcohol Advertising Summary
- ADV2: Alcohol Advertising: What are the issues?
- ADV3: Alcohol Advertising: What are the rules?
- ADV4: Alcohol Advertising: What is the code?
- ADV5 (Part A): How Do I Complain?
- ADV6: Alcohol Advertising: The AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics
- ADV7: Alcohol Advertising: The Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code
- ADV8: Alcohol Advertising: Further Reading