



Gala News

Newsletter No 59 of GALA New Zealand Inc.
(Group Against Liquor Advertising)
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What GALA stands for: GALA is promoting a community free from liquor advertising and sponsorship. We recognise that liquor is a permanent part of New Zealand society, we are not prohibitionists. We are seeking bans on broadcast liquor advertising and liquor sponsorship. We support health warnings on liquor containers and standard drinks labelling.

Editorial

Review of the Regulatory Framework for Alcohol Advertising

Yes, it's true, that as a result of our petition there will be a major Government review of alcohol advertising. We are very proud of GALA's achievement of this. A Steering Group is being set up. The review is far-reaching and is expected to take most of this year. That's the good news.

The Steering Group comprises members from ALAC, the ministries of Health, Justice, Youth Development, and Culture and Heritage, the Advertising Standards Authority, the Broadcasting Standards Authority, plus two independent members. GALA and other organisations were invited to put forward nominations for the two last positions. These had to be people of "wide experience and likely to be acceptable to all stakeholders." GALA nominated Dr Robert Crawford, formerly head of Queen Mary Hospital, Hanmer, and Dr Viola Palmer.

Why "acceptable to other stakeholders"? It is unlikely that our nominees will be "acceptable". Why should the advertising industry, which has already had several opportunities to review alcohol advertising, be represented? The selection process was not transparent.

The Advertising Standards Authority represents the advertising industry, which benefits financially from alcohol advertising. They have been in charge of self-regulation of alcohol advertising,

which has failed to prevent the exposure of children and teenagers to alcohol promotions. The ASA, and to some extent the BSA, (which has a broadcasting industry representative), have a vested interest in the status quo and are unlikely to support effective changes. We consider that they should not be on the steering group. We have objected vigorously to the structure of the Steering Group, and fear that it may jeopardize a good outcome from the review. We do want to see something positive, especially for our youth, come from this review.

Three well-known alcohol researchers have declined nomination because of the structure of the Steering Group. There is international recognition that it is not possible to formulate healthy alcohol policy when there is industry input.

On the bright side, the scope of the review is pleasing. They will interpret "advertising" in its broadest sense, including packaging, liquor-branded merchandise, product placement, sponsorship, competitions, giveaways, internet and text marketing, as well as all the usual types of media advertising.

GALA's nominees have been declined and it is likely that there will be no public interest group voice on the Steering Group.

In summary, we give content 10 out of 10, structure 4 out of 10.

Alcohol Damage this Summer

The mayhem from alcohol this summer is pushing the need for a review of alcohol advertising. Here are a few examples

- A policewoman in Tauranga suffered head injuries when hit by a beer keg when quelling a riot
- Drag racing by alcohol fuelled teenagers in Milton, taking the lives of some.
- A woman under the influence of alcohol set two bull mastiffs on police in Papakura.
- Fifteen year old prostitutes offered sex for alcohol in Christchurch.

Adverts push up drinking by youth

Young adults, as well as teenagers, drink more under the influence of advertising for alcohol, researchers say.

A survey of young people aged 15 to 26 found that for each additional alcohol advertisement viewed a month, there followed a 1% rise in the average number of drinks consumed, says the study author, Leslie Snyder of the University of Connecticut in the United States.

The findings counter industry arguments that only adult drinkers heed alcohol advertising, Professor Snyder said in the study, published in the journal 'Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine' at New Year.

For the study, the researchers held four rounds of interviews between 1999 and 2001 with nearly 2000 young people.

They also found that for each additional dollar spent per person on alcohol in a particular media market, study participants drank 3% more a month.

"The results also contradict claims that advertising is unrelated to youth drinking amounts, and that advertising at best causes brand switching, only affects those older than the legal drinking age or is effectively countered by current educational efforts," Professor Snyder said.

The study is the first of its kind to link young people's alcohol use directly to objective measures of industry spending on advertising.

Dominion Post 4 Jan. 2006

(This is a most important piece in the jig-saw of youth drinking and alcohol advertising.Ed)

UK Drinking Doubles in 40 Years

Research published in the 'Lancet' medical journal in January provided evidence of a doubling of alcohol consumption since 1960. Deaths from liver cirrhosis quadrupled for both men and women. The official figure for drink-related deaths in 2004 is 6,614. The campaign group Alcohol Concern claims that in fact 22,000 deaths a year are linked to excessive drinking. (Guardian Weekly 13 Jan. 2006)

Liquor Industry response to the Review

According to the National Business Review (20 Jan 2006) an industry working party including the Communications Agencies Assn, advertising and media, will be discussing the review. The industries have been surprised by comments from Associate Health Minister Damien O'Connor adopting a strong tone in favour of greater regulation.

The response on television has been noticeably less advertising over the past year. This may explain the reduced advertising expenditure of \$29 million, based on Nielson Media Research, reported in the NBR. It is not clear whether this includes sponsorship, point-of-sale etc, which is estimated in USA as twice the media spend.

Sports bodies were quick to side with the liquor industry, pointing out the impact on sporting bodies of a ban on sponsorship.

Minimal Advertising brought Erceg a Fortune

The unfortunate death of Michael Erceg in a plane crash last year brought comments about how he amassed his fortune. Erceg headed the Independent Distillers Group which was responsible for the introduction of ready-to-drink or pre-mixed cocktails to the New Zealand market. He also broke the duopoly of the big brewers in the beer market. Erceg did very little advertising, relying instead on price, taste, fancy bottles and brand recognition, for sales. This is often cited by liquor industry spokespeople to show that advertising does not increase sales.

An industry executive said "He rides on the coat tails of the general category promotion done by big brewers. The work that DB or Lion does

in promoting beer effectively helps him promote his product without having to put any investment into it.” (NZ Herald 12 Nov 2005)

Far from disproving the effectiveness of advertising, this statement indicates how advertising of one alcoholic product leads to sales of others.

Alcohol Advertising on the Web

The internet, which till now is unregulated as far as advertising is concerned, has flagrant breaches of the codes. In October last year, the Tui beer site www.tui.co.nz had an album of soft porn, as seen in the image on right. Another showed excessive consumption, with a young woman drinking from a drinking horn. Interestingly these images have been replaced with less extreme ones. Is this in response to the review?

Most product sites carry competitions which are attractive to teenagers. These usually involve winning large amounts of the product.

The (Not so) Independent Media

GALA received a “Sorry, nothing doing” response to some of our enquiries to add our brochure as inserts in various magazines. The committee thought it could be worth the expenditure, to raise our profile.

The NZ Listener replied “Unfortunately our position is somewhat delicate. We have some regular liquor advertising in the NZ Listener, and therefore see it as a conflict of interest and slightly hypercritical (? hypocritical- Ed) to run an insert pledging support for your group.”

The New Zealand Woman’s Weekly replied that they could not accept our insert. No reason given.

The Australian Woman’s Weekly (NZ Edition) replied “We support your cause, however the beverage advertising market is important to ACP Media, and the advertising revenue we receive from these clients across our portfolio of titles is essential for our core business. We also have solid relationships with various beverage companies. Unfortunately running these inserts could impact heavily on our existing client’s advertising commitment to us.”

