



NEW ZEALAND MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

14 February 2011

Advertising Standards Authority
Code Review Panel
P O Box 10675
Wellington

By email: asa@asa.co.nz

Consultation on the review of the code for advertising liquor

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter.

The NZMA is New Zealand's largest medical organisation and has a pan professional membership. We have around 4500 members who come from all areas of medicine including medical students, resident medical officers, general practitioners, and other specialists.

The NZMA aims to provide leadership of the medical profession, and promote:

- professional unity and values;
- the health of New Zealanders.

The key roles of the NZMA are to:

- provide advocacy on behalf of doctors and their patients;
- provide support and services to members and their practices;
- publish and maintain the Code of Ethics for the profession; and
- publish the New Zealand Medical Journal.

We wish to make the following comments.

Current adherence to the code

From a review of the recent alcohol advertisements on television it seems to us that the code as it currently stands is not being adhered to. For example, the guidelines under principle 2 – “Liquor advertisements shall observe a high standard of social responsibility” say that such advertisements

- a) shall not depict...unduly masculine themes”, (2b) and
- b) shall not be sexually provocative. (2d)

Yet the advertisements for Ranfurly Frontier beer humorously depict a place called Ranfurly Man Park that has become the last bastion for ““real” men’ and the Tui ads claim the beer is

brewed by “gorgeous women”. Both of these advertisements seem to be in breach of the above guidelines. It makes us wonder how effective the current code actually is? We believe that the code needs to be strengthened and more vigorously enforced (see our comments below) to ensure that these sorts of breaches do not continue.

“Glamour”

Principle 1(b) states that “[l]iquor advertisements shall not **glamorise** liquor or association with it”. While we agree that the term “glamour” should remain we note that in today’s society the term or vision of glamour may no longer be on point. While young drinkers today may not necessarily associate - or want to associate - drinking with glamour, the advertisements of today do direct them to associate drinking certain brands with a measure of being “cool” or part of the “in crowd”. We are not sure that the current language of the code covers this and believe that this needs to be addressed.

Enforcement

We have already indicated our concern that the current code does not appear to be being adhered to or properly enforced. We also have concerns about the effectiveness of the enforcement mechanism in those instances where it is used. The sanction of having an advertisement removed and receiving a possible fine is underwhelming however, for a large brewery. Further, even if the advertisement is subsequently removed the impact has already been felt. For this reason it is our view that more effort must be made to ensure that inappropriate and/or irresponsible advertising never makes it past the approval stage.

Liquor Advertising Pre-Vetting System (LAPS)

The code states that pre-vetting is “strongly recommended”. Given the impact that even a short term of irresponsible advertising can have on people before the advertisement is pulled it is our view that LAPS should be compulsory for every organisation which has agreed to abide by the code.

Advertising Standards Complaints Board (ASCB)

We note that the current ASCB is comprised of 5 public members and 4 industry members. In respect of liquor advertising (and also direct to consumer advertising which we accept is outside the ambit of this review) we would like to see at least one person with public health expertise on the Board.

Code for advertising liquor and Code for Naming, Labelling, Packaging and Promotion of Liquor.

We believe that the above two Codes should be combined under one. In particular, if a complaint is raised in respect of matters arising under both codes there should be the ability to have these matters dealt with together rather than separately.

We trust the above comments are helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Foley', written in a cursive style.

Dr Peter Foley
Chair, NZMA