

08/02/2004

Samantha Edmonds  
NCOSS  
66 Albion St,  
Surry Hills  
NSW 2010.



*Working For  
Mental Health*

Dear Samantha,

Thank you for providing the Mental Health Co-ordinating Council (MHCC) with the opportunity to contribute to the review examining guidelines for the marketing of specific alcoholic products that could be seen to be specifically aimed at the youth market.

MHCC is the state peak body for non-government organisations (NGOs) working for mental health throughout NSW. MHCC represents the views and interests of over 130 NGOs in the formation of policy, and acts as a liaison between the government and non-government sectors. Our member organisations specialise in the provision of rehabilitation services and disability support for people who experience mental illness.

MHCC strongly supports a review of this issue in the light of recent data that identifies a growth in alcohol problems and mental health issues. Of particular concern is the apparent increase in the underage binge drinking of adolescent females, and we encourage any review that investigates the impact that packaging and promotions might have on young people, as we understand that there is no statistical information as to the specific consumption of "Ready to Drink" (RTD) alcoholic beverages.

MHCC makes the following recommendations:

1. That an independent watchdog is established to identify products misleadingly packaged, prior to release to the consumer.
2. That the watchdog, whilst being independent of government or industry will be established by seed funding from the Commonwealth Government, and maintained by contributions from industry as a commitment to social responsibility.
3. That the ABAC management committee substantially includes community representation from drug and alcohol and youth organisations.
4. That legislation which is currently complaint driven is actively enforced and that fines imposed are sufficiently severe as to serve as a deterrent to unscrupulous marketeers.

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Co-ordinating Council

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5. That the Commonwealth Government supports a harm minimising, responsible drinking campaign as opposed to reactionary program that apportion blame and creates stereotypes. Visuals should be culturally sensitive, and scenario based to encompass diverse settings and mixed groups relevant to pinpoint target audiences of both parents and children of diverse social and ethnic backgrounds in both rural and city settings.
6. That this campaign should be promoted across all media types.
7. That the product be clearly labelled as to its alcoholic content and indicate how this relates to a standard drink (measure), per bottle.
8. That the product be clearly marked with a uniform logo indicating that it is alcoholic and that it is a risk to health and safety.
9. That the price of these products should be at a premium compared to that of mineral water.
10. That an ongoing education program be aimed at both parents and children, informing them as to the alcoholic content of the products, and the negative impact of alcohol on long-term mental and physical health and safety.
11. That there should be a confidential support program for parents, children and independent young people experiencing problems with alcohol abuse.
12. That ongoing market research should be carried out across a community spectrum that encompasses city, rural, cultural, racial and ethnic diversity, to determine the extent of the problem and the impact of advertising and packaging on the young drinker to gain deeper insight into the appeal of the product in certain age / sex categories.

MHCC would welcome a review of the Liquor Act 1982 – Sect 117I, 117J and Sections 57C & 57D of the Registered Clubs Act 1976, in the hope that concerns raised at the Government's Summit on Alcohol Abuse will be addressed, and that a more satisfactory balance will be achieved between the protection of minors and the business interests of the liquor industry.

If you would like to clarify any points raised in this submission, please do not hesitate to contact Corinne Henderson on (02) 9555 8388. MHCC would be happy to review any further proposals.

Thank you for considering this feedback.

Yours sincerely

Jenna Bateman  
Executive Officer.