



ADVERTISING
STANDARDS
BUREAU

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The Director
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000
[By Email: socialissues@parliament.nsw.gov.au]

21 May 2013

Dear Sir/Madam,

Advertising Standards Bureau submission: Inquiry into strategies to reduce alcohol abuse among young people in NSW – additional information

I have read the transcript for the proceedings before the Committee for 6 May 2013 at which Ms Denita Wawn and Ms Alina Bain appeared.

I note that Committee members asked a number of questions about the Advertising Standards Board (the Standards Board), in particular regarding their representative nature, their independence, how they are selected and how they determine community standards.

Since the Board falls under my responsibility, I provide the information below which I hope will address the Committee's questions. This information is in addition to the submission that I emailed you in March (**Attachment A**).

Role of the Standards Board

The centre piece of the self-regulation system is the Standards Board. The Standards Board is independent, dedicated and diverse. It comprises 20 people from a broad range of age groups and backgrounds and is gender balanced and as representative of the diversity of Australian society as any such group can be.

Individual Standards Board members do not represent any particular interest group (industry or consumer) and are individually and collectively clearly independent of the industry. The complaint adjudication system is robust and designed to avoid conflict of interest. On the rare occasion an individual member has a connection with a party concerned in a particular determination, that Standards Board member absents herself or himself from consideration of the complaint.

The sole function of the Standards Board is to determine complaints about advertising and marketing communications against the principles set out in the relevant codes. The Standards Board makes determinations on complaints about most forms of advertising in relation to issues including the use of language, the discriminatory portrayal of people, concern for children, portrayals of violence, sex, sexuality and nudity, and health and safety.

The Standards Board discharges its responsibilities with fairness, impartiality and with a keen sense of prevailing community values in its broadest sense. Its task is often a difficult one and the outcomes of its determinations will not and cannot please everyone.

Membership of the Standards Board is on a fixed term basis. New appointments are staggered so that a mix of old and new members ensure the Board retains a mix of corporate knowledge and at the same time introduces people with different experiences, views and skills. Profiles of all current Standards Board members are available to all on the Bureau website (www.adstandards.com.au) and are at **Attachment B**.

The majority of Standards Board appointments are made following a publicly advertised (**Attachment C** – Advertisement in The Australian; **Attachment D** – Advertisement on ASB website, 2011) application and interview process. A recruitment agency is engaged to accept applications and shortlist against the selection criteria which is outlined in Attachment D. A selection panel of three members is convened to assess the shortlisted applications and submits suitable candidates to a short interview. In the last recruitment round, the panel comprised the Bureau CEO, a current member of the Standards Board and one of the Directors of the Bureau. On occasions, specific skill sets require direct appointment e.g. Dr Maher's background in gender and women's studies, Ms Stott Despoja's wide political and community involvement and Professor Williams' health and nutrition background and experience. All appointments are made by the Directors of the Corporate Board of the Bureau. The most recent appointment of new members to the Standards Board was in 2011 and the Bureau will call for applications again 2014. People sought for appointment to the Standards Board ideally have an interest in, and views on, advertising and have been exposed to a broad range of community activities and interests.

As Ms Bain indicated in her response to Ms Barham's question, the Advertising Standards Bureau (Bureau) regularly conducts research into community standards regarding Bureau work. This research, which is conducted by a reputable social research company, queries a representative sample of the community on their views regarding the decisions of the Board. This research is provided to Board members who use it when considering complaints against advertisements. I have attached to this letter a copy of the latest community standards research which was undertaken in 2012, and it may also be found on the Bureau website at <http://www.adstandards.com.au/publications/factsandfigures>.

I would be happy to discuss further this information or any other matters that you may find useful.

Yours faithfully

Fiona Jolly
Chief Executive Officer