



The Royal Australasian  
College of Physicians

## Calling last drinks on promoting alcohol to children via sport

### Media Release

3 March 2016

More than half of Australians (58%)<sup>i</sup> are concerned about the influence of alcohol in Australian sport, with analysis from the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) revealing how alcohol is intractably linked to some of Australia's most popular sports.

The RACP has reviewed nine sports across six categories and found all were influenced by alcohol sponsorships and advertisements, either at the stadium or during television coverage.

Cricket and rugby league fared the worst with alcohol an important part of each sport's sponsorship, naming rights, apparel, on field advertisements, press conference backdrops and television advertisements.

The marketing saturation, both at stadiums and during coverage, has prompted a call from RACP to phase out all alcohol sponsorships and cease advertisements during live games and broadcasts until after 8.30pm.

Current regulatory loopholes approved by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) allow television advertising of alcohol during sports programs at times when children are likely to be watching.

Primarily due to this loophole, it has been estimated that children aged under 18 years are exposed to a cumulative total of more than 50 million alcohol advertisements each year<sup>ii</sup>.

The analysis is part of the launch of RACP's Alcohol Policy\*, an 18 month project which highlights the impact alcohol is having on Australian society and makes a series of recommendations regarding how its harmful influence can be reduced.

RACP President Laureate Professor Nick Talley said it is concerning that young, impressionable children and adolescents are exposed to alcohol sponsorships and advertisements while they watch their favourite players and teams compete.

"Studies have shown that alcohol marketing strategies lead to children and adolescents starting to drink, regular young drinkers becoming prone to binge drinking patterns, and established young drinkers consuming alcohol at levels which increase their risk of alcohol-related harms.

"These stages of progression are a steady downward spiral and they start so early. It is therefore little surprise that the peak age for the onset of alcohol use disorders is only 18 years<sup>iii</sup>.

"Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to developing a positive association between sport and alcohol consumption. All alcohol sponsorships need to be phased out and advertisements involving alcohol, at times when children are watching, need to stop."

“Stronger, more consistent regulatory measures – particularly from ACMA – is part of the solution. But we are also calling on sporting codes to recognise their role in promoting positive attitudes towards health and community by phasing out alcohol sponsorship and marketing.

“It can be done and professional sport in Australia will continue to thrive. We achieved a similar outcome with tobacco advertising in the 1990s,” he added.

Monash University Associate Professor Kerry O’Brien has spent more than ten years monitoring the influence of the alcohol industry.

“A recent analysis of alcohol advertising in Australian sport and non-sport TV showed that during the daytime when hundreds of thousands of children are watching, 87%<sup>iv</sup> of the alcohol advertising was on sport TV,” explained Professor O’Brien.

“When you take into account programming time, it works out that there are almost four alcohol ads in sport for every ad in non-sport programming. That doesn’t seem appropriate.

“Research suggests that alcohol advertising is more attractive to young people when presented in sport programming. For example, boys like beer ads more when placed within sport TV programming, and this greater liking is associated with stronger drinking intentions and higher alcohol use,” he added.

*\*RACP’s Alcohol Policy, jointly developed in consultation with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, focuses on the for the introduction of national, comprehensive, evidence-based strategies to combat the harms of alcohol, including measures to:*

- *Protect young people from being targeted by alcohol companies in their promotion;*
- *Reduce the availability of alcohol through measures to restrict outlet density and trading hours;*
- *Introduce universal volumetric taxation and a floor price for alcohol; and*
- *Ensure access to effective treatment services.*

**Ends**

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**About The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP):** The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of more than 15,000 physicians and 7,500 trainee physicians across Australia and New Zealand.

The College represents a broad range of medical specialties including general medicine, paediatrics and child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology, public health medicine, occupational and environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine, rehabilitation medicine, geriatric medicine and addiction medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patients.

The College offers 60 training pathways. These lead to the award of one of seven qualifications that align with 45 specialist titles recognised by the Medical Board of Australia or allow for registration in nine vocational scopes with the Medical Council of New Zealand.

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i Based on attitudinal research completed by Essential Media on behalf of the RACP in February 2016. Sample size of 2017 respondents.

ii Carr S, O’Brien K, Ferris J, et al. Child and adolescent exposure to alcohol advertising in Australia’s major televised sports. Drug and Alcohol Review 2015: DOI: 10.1111/dar.12326.

iii Degenheart L, Hall W, Teesson M, Lynskey M. Alcohol use disorders in Australia: findings from the National Survey of Mental Health and Well-Being. NDARC Technical Report No. 97; 2000.

iv O’Brien K.S., Carr, S., Ferris j, et al. (2015). Alcohol advertising in sport and non-sport TV in Australia, during children’s viewing times. PLoS ONE 10 (8): e0134889.



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# Through Children's Eyes: Alcohol Promotion in Sport

SPORT	Number of participants aged 5-14*	Alcohol sponsorship	Naming rights	Alcohol logos on uniforms	Alcohol logos on field or stadium	Press conference backdrops	Alcohol ads during broadcast
SWIMMING	492,100	●	●	●	●	●	●
SOCCER	397,600	●	●	●	●	●	●
AUSTRALIAN RULES FOOTBALL	226,500	●	●	●	●	●	●
NETBALL	222,700	●	●	●	●	●	●
BASKETBALL	220,200	●	●	●	●	●	●
TENNIS	205,200	●	●	●	●	●	●
CRICKET	130,700	●	●	●	●	●	●
RUGBY LEAGUE	109,900	●	●	●	●	●	●
RUGBY UNION	58,800	●	●	●	●	●	●

## LEVEL OF VISIBILITY

● High   ● Occasional   ● None

\*Source: Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities, Australia, April 2012, Table 11: Children participating in most popular organised sports, by sex, Australian Bureau of Statistics

Disclaimer: Every effort has been made to ensure the information in this document is accurate and up-to-date, however unexpected errors may occur.

