

## **Submission to the Senate Community Affairs Committee Inquiry into Alcohol Toll Reduction Bill 2007**

**March 2008**

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NSW Centre for Overweight and Obesity  
University of Sydney

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The NSW Centre for Overweight and Obesity (COO) was established at the University of Sydney in 2002 as a result of the priorities identified by the 2002 NSW Obesity Summit, and is partly funded by the NSW Health Department. COO's multidisciplinary research team has taken a leadership role in conducting research on overweight and obesity to inform Australian policy and programs, with an emphasis on children and adolescents.

As part of our research program, we have investigated the advertising of food and beverages to young people. On the basis of specific research findings in relation to alcohol advertising we would like to indicate our strong support for the proposed Alcohol Toll Reduction Bill. Alcohol misuse causes considerable morbidity and mortality in Australia, with a high proportion of young people engaging in risky alcohol behaviour.<sup>1</sup> We are pleased to submit information from our research on alcohol advertising to young people to advise the Community Affairs Committee on the Alcohol Toll Reduction Bill 2007.

### **1. Background**

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Whilst television advertising is known to contribute to a large proportion of alcohol industry advertising spend (with metropolitan television advertising contributing to 45% of total alcohol advertising expenditure (2003-2004)),<sup>2</sup> the use of other non-broadcast (non-TV) mediums to market alcohol to young people creates an environment where young people are continuously exposed to alcoholic products.<sup>3</sup> Exposure to alcohol advertising has been found to shape young people's beliefs, attitudes and drinking behaviours,<sup>4</sup> and contributes to young people's alcohol brand recall.<sup>5</sup>

Previous research from the United States, examining the effect of outdoor alcohol advertising on young people's beliefs and attitudes towards alcohol, have identified significant positive associations between young people's exposure to outdoor alcohol advertisements near schools and their alcohol beliefs and intention to consume.<sup>6</sup> This



effect remained significant after controlling for other confounding factors, including exposure to other forms of alcohol advertising.

**Our position:** We strongly urge the Senate Community Affairs Committee to broaden the proposed Alcohol Toll Reduction Bill 2007 to preclude alcohol advertising via all forms of marketing, including but not limited to, outdoor advertising.

## **2. Australian research indicating alcohol promotion to young people using outdoor advertising**

In 2007, the COO conducted research which examined food and beverage (including alcoholic and non-alcoholic) advertising in the areas surrounding primary schools in New South Wales. Specifically, forty primary schools were randomly sampled from the Sydney and Wollongong statistical divisions for inclusion, and the area within a 500m radius from each school scanned for advertisements.<sup>1</sup>

Criteria were developed to classify advertisements as; food or non-food product, the brand name and a description of the advertised product and the distance of the advertisement from the school (less than 250m radius from schools; between 250m and 500m radius from schools). Food and beverage advertisements were further categorised according to food classification criteria.

Overall, 25.0% (n = 2286) of all advertisements identified in the area surrounding primary schools were for food and beverages. Of all food and beverage advertisements the most frequently advertised food products were soft drink (23.8% of all food ads), followed by **alcohol (22%, n = 498)**.

Further, alcohol was the single most frequently advertised product in the area closest to school grounds (less than 250m radius), with **25 advertisements for alcoholic beverages per km<sup>2</sup>** in this area. This indicates that alcohol advertisements are concentrated in the area immediately surrounding primary schools.

The full range of alcoholic products was advertised in these areas, including wine, beer and spirits. Ready to drink beverages (RTDs), were also promoted (contributing to 5% of alcohol advertisements), which are known to be specifically targeted towards young people, to appeal to their taste preferences in order to facilitate young people's transition from soft drinks to alcohol (See Appendix for examples of these advertisements).

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<sup>1</sup> Unpublished research report is available from the COO upon request.

### **3. Recommendations**

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Our research indicates that young people are not solely exposed to advertisements for alcohol through the broadcast mediums of television and radio. Considerable exposure to such advertising also occurs through non-broadcast media channels, including outdoor advertising.

Currently alcohol advertising is concentrated in the areas immediately surrounding primary schools, and alcohol is the single most frequently advertised food and beverage product that young people are exposed to in this environment. Young people's repetitive daily exposure to alcohol advertisements near schools reinforces and normalises these commercial messages and promotes brand recognition.

While we applaud the Senate Committee for the proposition of this Bill, we would urge for its remit to be broadened to include the exclusion of alcohol marketing to young people through other non-broadcast marketing channels.

This has been submitted on behalf of The COO by:

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## 4. References

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## 5. Appendix

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**Figures 1 – 3:** Photographs taken of alcohol advertisements identified in the area surrounding primary schools

