



**Ad  
Standards**

## **Review of Operations**

**20**

**24**

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# From the Chair



## Gillian Franklin

Chair, Ad Standards Governance  
Independent Director, AANA Board

I am pleased to present the Ad Standards Review of Operations. This report highlights the significant work undertaken in 2024 and reinforces the critical role Ad Standards plays in ensuring that advertising remains responsible, respectful, and aligned with Australian values.

In 2024, Ad Standards recorded a 10% increase in complaints compared to 2023, and a 60% increase compared to 2022. This continued growth reflects a highly engaged community, increasingly willing to raise concerns when advertising falls short of accepted standards. We believe this also reflects the community's trust and confidence that Ad Standards will take the necessary action to ensure compliance with the advertising codes.

In addition to responding to community complaints and an ever-changing advertising environment, Ad Standards advanced several strategic initiatives to ensure it remains a fit-for-purpose regulator. Notably, Community Perceptions Research released in September 2024 provided valuable insights into public attitudes towards advertising, which will help guide future decision-making and ensure that standards evolve in step with community expectations.

Maintaining alignment with global best practices remained a key priority. Through active engagement with the International Council for Advertising Self-Regulation (ICAS), Ad Standards monitors international developments while embracing new and innovative approaches, such as proactive monitoring and the integration of AI capabilities, to strengthen advertising regulation.

The achievements of 2024 would not have been possible without the dedication and professionalism of the Ad Standards team. On behalf of the Ad Standards Governance Committee and AANA Board, I extend my sincere thanks for their contribution and commitment.

I also extend my gratitude to Australia's advertising industry for their ongoing support, and to the Ad Standards Independent Reviewers and the members of the Community Panel. They remain central to Australia's world-class advertising self-regulation system, ensuring that our decisions are fair and reflective of the values and diversity of the Australian community.

# About Ad Standards

Ad Standards is Australia's advertising regulator. We give a voice to community concerns and promote responsible advertising.

Ad Standards manages the independent complaints handling process for advertising in Australia, ensuring that advertising and marketing communications comply with the AANA Codes and the FCAI Code.

We play a vital role in maintaining public trust in advertising by offering a transparent, accessible, and impartial platform for community members to raise concerns.

Ad Standards functions as secretariat for the Ad Standards Community Panel and Industry Jury – the two independent bodies that adjudicate consumer and competitor complaints under the advertising industry codes.

In addition to complaints management, we also undertake research to monitor community sentiment and promote responsible advertising by providing guidance and support to the advertising industry.

Ad Standards has a small number of dedicated staff who support key business functions including secretariat support, complaints handling, legal and regulatory affairs, administration and communications.

## Funding

Australian advertisers fund Australia's self-regulation system and support its administration by agreeing to a levy being applied to advertising spend.

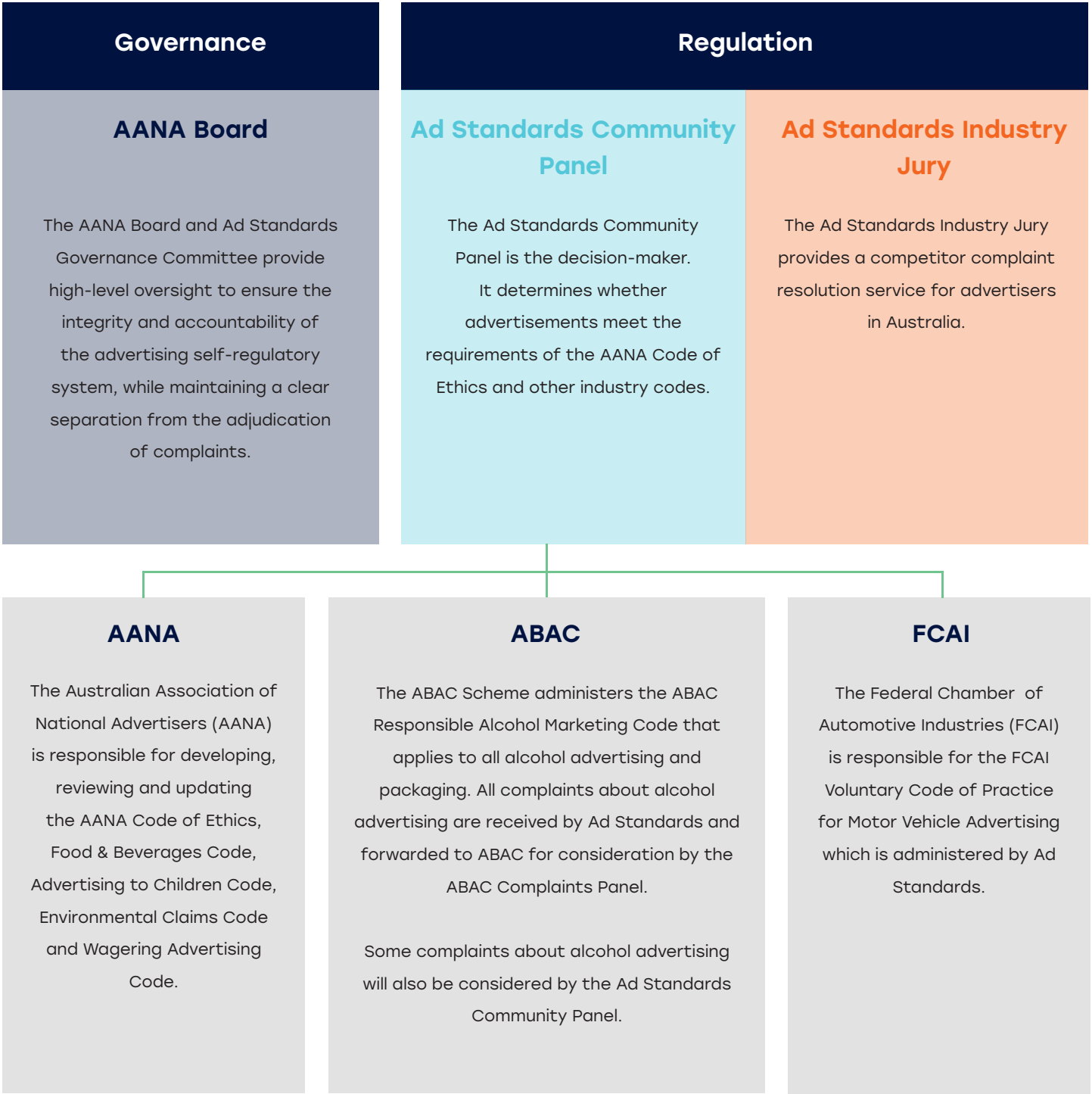
The self-regulation levy is set at 0.05 per cent (\$500 per \$1 million) of media spend. The levy is collected mainly through media buying agencies.

Ad Standards receives no government funding.

All levy monies are applied to the maintenance of the self-regulation system and are used to finance activities including research, education, community awareness, Community Panel meetings and recruitment, and general administration.

Ad Standards

Ad Standards gives a voice to community concerns and promotes responsible advertising.



# Ad Standards Community Panel

The Community Panel is an independent and impartial body of community representatives responsible for making decisions about ads.

The diversity of background and opinion within the Community Panel is essential to ensuring the advertising complaints process administered by Ad Standards reflects community standards.

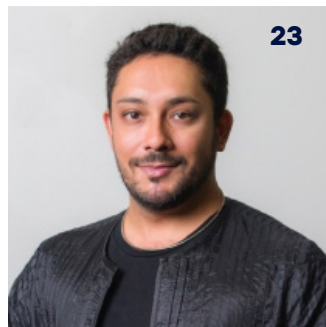
Community Panel members are not subject to direction by Ad Standards management or the AANA Board. They are independent of any commercial or government interests and provide an objective and impartial review of advertising complaints against the Codes.

Community Panel members are recruited through a rigorous process and are all directly involved with their communities.

## Community Panel members 2024

- 1 Kamaljit Kaur Athwal
- 2 Michael Bonning
- 3 Sarah Coe
- 4 Rebecca Curran
- 5 Adam Davey
- 6 Jeremy Davey
- 7 Sam Drummond
- 8 Max Fitzgerald
- 9 Markos Hasiotis
- 10 Justin Hanely
- 11 Rosemary Kariuki
- 12 Ivan Kolarik
- 13 Sue Knowles
- 14 Truc Clark-Le
- 15 Jaemin Lee
- 16 Nigel L'Estrange
- 17 Tania Major
- 18 Anne-Therese McMahon
- 19 Kerry Milligan
- 20 Mohammad Matin Paziraei
- 21 Kylee Stewart
- 22 Jeremy Wiggins
- 23 Jack Wilkie-Jans
- 24 Chloe Zettl





# Ad Standards action

**9**

requests for  
Independent Review

**11 days**

Average timeframe to  
resolve all complaints

**34**

requests for copy  
advice

**42 days**

Average timeframe between  
first complaint about an ad  
and Community Panel decision  
published



# Complaints

4,182

complaints received about  
1000+ different ads

63% within scope

37% outside scope\*

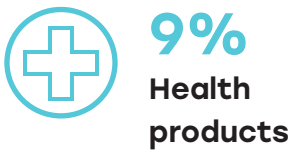
\*Complaints that raise issues outside the  
scope of the advertising codes enforced  
by Ad Standards.

Breakdown of complaints that raised  
issues under the advertising codes.

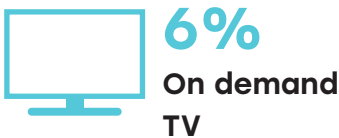
## Top 3 by issue



## Top 3 by category



## Top 3 by medium



# Most complained about ads of 2024

#1

## KFC - 69 complaints

This TV ad shows a woman exiting the bedroom of a younger man, much to the surprise of her daughter.

Concerns: Depiction of sexual themes.

Decision: No breach

#2

## Red Rooster - 55 complaints

This TV ad shows a skateboarder stealing chicken at a skate park.

Concerns: Promotion of anti-social behaviour and theft.

Decision: No breach

#3

## Rest - 45 complaints

This TV ad for a super fund shows a woman holding a disfigured cake followed by a man letting out a high-pitched scream.

Concerns: Distressing sounds, insensitivity and discrimination.

Decision: No breach

#4

## Zynga - 44 complaints

This TV ad shows a woman playing a casino style game on her mobile.

Concerns: Promotion of gambling.

Decision: No breach

#5

## KFC - 41 complaints

This TV ad shows a couple having an awkward interaction in bed.

Concerns: Depiction of sexual themes.

Decision: No breach

# 2024 Community Perceptions Research

In September 2024, we released research offering fresh insights into Australians' attitudes towards advertising. The research explored general perceptions of advertising, issues of concern, awareness and support for Ad Standards, and community thresholds for language and violence.

## Research highlights

- Australians report frequent exposure to advertising across a range of channels but often feel disengaged from it.
- Despite this, 3 in 4 Australians agree that advertising should reflect community standards.
- An overwhelming 9 in 10 Australians agree that Ad Standards' role in handling complaints is important.
- Those aware of Ad Standards are significantly more likely to trust advertising.
- Gambling and misleading or deceptive advertising top the list of community concerns.
- 1 in 4 Australians expressed concern about violent or scary content in advertising, while 1 in 5 were concerned about the use of offensive language.

## Key takeaways for advertisers

- Australians appreciate creativity, memorability, and humour in advertising – but can be distrustful when ads fail to meet community standards.
- Context, creativity, and humour can shape how Australians perceive the use of violence or offensive language in advertising.
- Most Australians believe that certain words are never acceptable in advertising, even when censored or bleeped.
- Ads that rely on offensive language purely for shock value are often considered as lazy and uninspired.
- While the line for language is relatively clear, tolerance for violence is more subjective. Normalising violence, being insensitive to social issues, or deliberately upsetting audiences is generally not accepted.

The full research report is available on our website.

# Advertising codes

Ad Standards accepts complaints that raise issues under any of the six advertising industry codes. These codes apply to advertising and marketing in any medium.

<div><div>AANA Code of Ethics</div><div></div></div> <div><p>The AANA Code of Ethics is the flagship advertising industry code.</p><p>It requires all advertising on all mediums to align with prevailing community standards in relation to:</p><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discrimination or vilification</li><li>• Exploitative or degrading sexual imagery</li><li>• Violence</li><li>• Sex, sexuality and nudity</li><li>• Language</li><li>• Health and safety</li><li>• Distinguishable advertising.</li></ul></div>	<div><div>AANA Food and Beverages Advertising Code</div><div></div></div> <div><p>This code applies to all food and non-alcoholic beverage advertising.</p><p><b>Summary of requirements:</b></p><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Must not mislead or deceive</li><li>• Must not undermine a healthy and active lifestyle</li><li>• Health and nutrient claims must be supported by evidence</li><li>• Advertising for occasional food and beverage products cannot target children.</li></ul></div>	<div><div>AANA Children’s Advertising Code</div><div></div></div> <div><p>This code applies to all advertising that targets children.</p><p><b>Summary of requirements:</b></p><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Must not contravene prevailing community standards</li><li>• Must not mislead or deceive</li><li>• Must not employ sexual appeal or images that cause distress</li><li>• Must not undermine judgment of parents</li><li>• Must be clearly distinguishable as advertising.</li></ul></div>
<div><div>AANA Environmental Claims Code</div><div></div></div> <div><p>This code applies to any environmental claims made in advertising.</p><p><b>Summary of requirements:</b></p><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Truthful &amp; factual</li><li>• Claims can be substantiated</li><li>• Clear and not vague</li><li>• Offer a genuine benefit to the environment.</li></ul></div>	<div><div>FCAI Voluntary Code of Practice for Motor Vehicle Advertising</div><div></div></div> <div><p>This code applies to all motor vehicle advertising.</p><p><b>Summary of requirements:</b></p><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Must not portray unsafe or illegal driving</li><li>• Must not portray deliberate or significant environmental damage</li><li>• Use of motor sports must be clearly identifiable</li><li>• Off-road driving must be safe and not encourage excessive speed.</li></ul></div>	<div><div>AANA Wagering Advertising Code</div><div></div></div> <div><p>This code applies to all advertising for wagering services.</p><p><b>Summary of requirements:</b></p><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Must not target minors or depict people aged under 25.</li><li>• Must not portray wagering in combination with alcohol consumption</li><li>• Must not state or imply a promise of winning</li><li>• Must not portray or encourage participation as a means of increasing sexual success, or relieving financial or personal difficulties</li><li>• Must not encourage peer pressure or excess participation.</li></ul></div>

# Advertising complaints process





COMPLAINTS (No.)	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Complaints within Ad Standards' scope	2384	3026	1634	2501	2624
Complaints outside Ad Standards' scope	1130	1649	967	1263	1558
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,514</b>	<b>4,675</b>	<b>2,601</b>	<b>3,764</b>	<b>4,182</b>

COMMUNITY PANEL DECISIONS (No.)	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Upheld (ads found in breach of one or more codes)	69	85	61	81	88
Dismissed (ads found not in breach of the codes)	284	230	188	178	211
Ad changed or removed before Community Panel assessment	31	41	39	31	40
Ad did not proceed to Community Panel for another reason	8	5	10	6	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>349</b>
<b>Upheld % of all cases</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Upheld % of cases considered by the Community Panel</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>29%</b>

ISSUES ATTRACTING COMPLAINT (%)	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
AANA Section 2.4 - Sex, sexuality and nudity	32.29%	21.31%	29.85%	41.53%	30.2%
AANA Section 2.3 - Violence	10.29%	11.34%	17.16%	17.05%	15.4%
AANA Section 2.6 - Health and safety	7.96%	16.50%	12.08%	9.93%	15.0%
AANA Section 2.1 - Discrimination or vilification	15.43%	10.22%	14.08%	9.69%	12.1%
AANA Advertising to Children Code	0.45%	1.42%	0.42%	0.71%	7.7%
AANA Section 2.2 - Exploitative or degrading	18.29%	3.34%	4.05%	3.32%	4.3%
AANA Section 2.7 - Distinguishable advertising	0.45%	2.68%	8.34%	2.61%	3.8%
AANA Section 2.5 - Language	5.59%	9.77%	5.80%	4.94%	3.8%
Other**	4.43%	15.54%	1.45%	5.18%	3.7%
AANA Food and Beverages Code	2.33%	2.18%	2.36%	1.62%	2.1%
AANA Environmental Claims Code	0.45%	1.37%	2.30%	1.58%	1.0%
AANA Wagering Code	0.45%	1.01%	0.91%	0.44%	0.5%
FCAI Code	0.89%	3.19%	1.21%	1.38%	0.4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*\*Complaints that don't raise issues under the codes but have for another reason been linked to a case.

PRODUCT CATEGORY BY CASE (%)	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Food and beverages	20.10%	17.98%	12.50%	18.28%	18.88%
Lingerie	6.27%	8.71%	11.46%	4.48%	11.80%
Entertainment	10.18%	7.30%	7.29%	15.17%	8.55%
Clothing	5.22%	7.02%	7.29%	4.14%	5.01%
Sex industry	3.13%	2.81%	1.74%	4.48%	5.01%
Gambling	3.66%	5.06%	5.90%	3.45%	4.72%
Community awareness	3.66%	2.25%	3.47%	2.07%	4.42%
Energy/resources*	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	4.48%	4.42%
Health products	5.22%	5.06%	5.90%	3.45%	3.54%
Retail	1.57%	3.37%	4.17%	5.86%	3.54%
Vehicles	5.48%	7.87%	4.51%	6.90%	3.54%
Professional services	1.83%	1.69%	1.04%	2.41%	2.95%
Automotive	3.13%	3.09%	3.13%	3.10%	2.65%
Insurance	3.92%	1.97%	1.39%	2.76%	2.36%
Other	0.26%	1.69%	4.51%	0.69%	2.36%
House goods/services	3.66%	2.81%	5.21%	1.72%	1.77%
Sport and leisure	1.04%	1.12%	0.69%	1.03%	1.77%
Finance/investment	1.57%	3.37%	3.13%	1.72%	1.47%
Toiletries	3.39%	2.25%	2.08%	2.41%	1.47%
Alcohol	4.70%	4.78%	3.47%	2.41%	1.18%
Hardware/machinery	1.83%	0.84%	2.43%	0.69%	1.18%
Telecommunications	1.31%	0.84%	0.00%	2.07%	1.18%
Toys and games	0.78%	1.12%	1.39%	1.38%	1.18%
Employment	0.26%	0.00%	0.35%	-	0.88%
Information technology	1.04%	1.69%	0.69%	-	0.88%
Media	0.52%	0.56%	0.35%	1.03%	0.88%
Tourist attractions	0.52%	0.56%	1.04%	-	0.88%
Travel	2.35%	1.69%	2.08%	0.69%	0.88%
Education	0.26%	0.28%	0.35%	-	0.29%
Real estate	0.52%	0.28%	0.69%	2.07%	0.29%
Beauty salon	0.52%	0.84%	0.69%	-	-
Mobile phone/SMS	0.78%	0.56%	0.69%	-	-
Religion/beliefs	0.26%	-	-	-	-
Slimming	1.04%	0.56%	0.35%	1.03%	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Category introduced in 2023

PRODUCT CATEGORY BY COMPLAINT (%)	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Food and beverages	22.23%	13.16%	16.84%	20.38%	15.66%
Health products	7.91%	4.98%	3.77%	5.26%	9.68%
Gambling	5.49%	8.62%	8.54%	3.37%	8.92%
Community awareness	6.43%	7.23%	4.61%	5.61%	7.99%
Entertainment	4.04%	4.09%	5.61%	7.28%	5.21%
Alcohol	5.75%	5.84%	4.77%	5.31%	4.93%
Sex industry	3.98%	3.59%	3.69%	16.68%	4.62%
Retail	1.65%	2.31%	3.42%	2.26%	4.40%
Finance/investment	1.91%	3.34%	4.73%	1.70%	4.11%
Professional services	1.08%	1.18%	1.54%	1.86%	3.75%
Insurance	2.45%	2.27%	1.73%	2.13%	3.44%
Lingerie	2.31%	2.84%	4.19%	1.83%	3.18%
Clothing	3.59%	4.66%	4.73%	2.26%	2.56%
House goods/services	4.35%	2.33%	4.46%	2.28%	1.89%
Political/social message	2.39%	8.73%	7.73%	4.76%	1.72%
Other	0.00%	0.68%	1.50%	1.28%	1.67%
Automotive	9.79%	1.88%	1.08%	0.80%	1.60%
Telecommunications	1.20%	1.93%	0.38%	1.67%	1.60%
Vehicles	2.11%	2.50%	2.50%	3.03%	1.58%
Media	0.85%	1.07%	1.11%	0.82%	1.48%
Energy/resources*	-	-	-	0.96%	1.41%
Sport and leisure	1.17%	0.92%	1.23%	0.93%	1.36%
Toiletries	2.59%	1.41%	4.81%	2.05%	1.34%
Travel	0.54%	0.56%	1.27%	0.88%	1.20%
Real estate	1.31%	0.49%	0.12%	1.43%	1.17%
Slimming	0.37%	0.26%	0.27%	0.43%	0.72%
Information technology	0.88%	9.99%	1.15%	0.48%	0.60%
Tourist attractions	0.46%	0.32%	0.81%	0.40%	0.43%
Toys and games	0.51%	0.34%	0.27%	0.35%	0.41%
Hardware/machinery	0.51%	0.41%	0.62%	0.32%	0.36%
Religion/beliefs	0.60%	0.28%	0.27%	0.27%	0.26%
Employment	0.23%	0.19%	0.27%	0.16%	0.24%
Education	0.37%	0.24%	0.31%	0.40%	0.22%
Beauty salon	0.28%	0.49%	0.92%	0.27%	0.17%
Bars and clubs	0.09%	0.11%	0.15%	0.13%	0.12%
Mobile phone/SMS	0.60%	0.77%	0.62%	-	-
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

CASES BY ADVERTISING MEDIUM (%)	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
TV - Free-to-air	38.90%	36.24%	29.51%	27.93%	29.79%
Social media	15.93%	23.59%	23.61%	16.90%	19.17%
Store window*	-	-	-	3.45%	10.32%
TV - On demand	7.05%	8.43%	5.90%	12.07%	6.49%
Internet	5.48%	4.21%	10.07%	10.69%	6.19%
TV - Pay	5.22%	4.21%	3.47%	5.17%	5.01%
Radio	4.44%	2.81%	2.78%	3.79%	4.13%
Billboard	3.92%	2.81%	2.08%	4.48%	3.83%
Commercial vehicle	-	-	0.69%	0.34%	2.95%
Print	1.57%	0.84%	1.39%	1.72%	2.65%
App	3.13%	1.69%	1.04%	0.69%	1.47%
Cinema	0.26%	0.28%	1.04%	2.07%	1.47%
Poster	5.22%	3.37%	8.33%	3.45%	1.18%
Radio/audio streaming*	-	-	-	0.69%	1.18%
Email	1.57%	2.25%	2.08%	1.38%	0.88%
Outdoor	1.83%	0.84%	1.74%	2.07%	0.88%
Promotional material	1.31%	0.28%	2.08%	1.72%	0.88%
Transport	2.61%	2.25%	1.74%	1.03%	0.88%
Mail	0.26%	0.56%	1.04%	0.34%	0.59%
TV - Out of home	1.31%	5.34%	1.39%	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Category introduced in 2023

COMPLAINTS BY ADVERTISING MEDIUM (%)	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
TV - Free-to-air	66.62%	65.54%	57.05%	46.23%	56.65%
Social media	7.09%	8.43%	13.69%	9.96%	11.00%
TV - On demand	5.41%	5.97%	4.27%	5.39%	6.62%
Internet	2.36%	2.93%	3.46%	4.36%	4.09%
TV - Pay	5.09%	3.51%	4.08%	2.52%	3.97%
Store window*	-	-	-	0.96%	2.94%
Billboard	2.62%	1.65%	3.54%	17.30%	2.63%
Radio	2.90%	3.17%	2.96%	3.00%	2.42%
Commercial vehicle	-	-	0.15%	0.05%	1.77%
Print	0.80%	0.90%	0.92%	2.60%	1.10%
Email	0.63%	0.68%	0.88%	0.56%	1.00%
Outdoor	0.71%	0.49%	1.23%	1.01%	0.93%
App	0.60%	0.45%	0.62%	0.82%	0.91%
Transport	1.02%	0.53%	0.54%	1.33%	0.84%
Radio/audio streaming*	-	-	-	0.61%	0.79%
Poster	2.25%	1.18%	3.31%	1.04%	0.57%
Cinema	0.11%	0.17%	0.42%	0.50%	0.48%
Promotional material	0.34%	0.81%	0.62%	0.58%	0.43%
Mail	0.26%	0.64%	0.50%	0.19%	0.36%
Packaging (alcohol)	0.57%	0.58%	0.85%	0.74%	0.36%
SMS	0.17%	0.36%	0.31%	0.21%	0.14%
TV - Out of home	0.40%	1.90%	0.58%	0.03%	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Category introduced in 2023



COMPLAINTS WITHIN SCOPE (No.)	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Complaints linked to a case in 2024	1504	1551	669	1376	1011
Complaints about ads already considered (previous years)	265	268	176	99	209
Complaints about issues consistently dismissed by the Community Panel	577	1129	727	948	1328
Complaints resolved prior to case being raised	38	78	62	78	76
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,384</b>	<b>3,026</b>	<b>1,634</b>	<b>2,501</b>	<b>2,624</b>

TOP 10 REASONS COMPLAINTS WERE OUTSIDE SCOPE (No.)	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Misleading, truth and accuracy	138	156	81	193	307
Raised issue under the ABAC Responsible Alcohol Marketing Code	108	141	81	135	174
Tasteless advertising	65	82	42	69	145
Dislike gambling advertising/timing/frequency	96	207	88	52	120
Disagree with content	77	54	30	38	120
Does not raise an issue under the advertising industry codes	129	114	79	94	87
Insufficient information to identify ad	47	61	59	52	66
Political or social issues	95	401	186	148	51
Advertising for own station or network	24	30	35	33	49
Overseas complaint	2	1	3	4	44
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>781</b>	<b>1,247</b>	<b>684</b>	<b>818</b>	<b>1,163</b>



**Ad Standards**

PO Box 5110, BRADDON ACT 2612

[adstandards.com.au](https://adstandards.com.au)

With thanks to Bigdatr for their ongoing support of Ad Standards and the advertising self-regulation system.





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