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Ad bans on television are not a solution to binge drinking

Calls for more alcohol ad bans on commercial free-to-air television by the New South Wales Health Minister, John Della Bosca, are misguided and misleading the CEO of Free TV Australia, Julie Flynn said today.

“In the rush to appear to be seen ‘to do something’ Mr Della Bosca has provided no evidence that his proposal will have any impact on the level of binge drinking that has aroused his concern.”

“Free TV broadcasters already have extensive restrictions on alcohol advertising which are far stricter than those for any other media platform,” Ms Flynn said.

“There is no evidence that extending a ban on alcohol advertising from 8.30pm to 9.00pm will solve the problems of late opening hours and clustering of alcohol venues that most experts, including the police, argue are the first steps in dealing with binge drinking.”

“Further ad bans will also do nothing to ensure that responsible service of alcohol laws are observed.”

“In fact, further limits on advertising on commercial free-to-air television will simply see advertisers transfer their spending to un-regulated areas of the media,” Ms Flynn said.

Broadcasting is a federal matter. It is legislated for under the Broadcasting Services Act and regulated by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA).

“If the federal government believes that further advertising restrictions are necessary they should apply equally to all media,” Ms. Flynn said.

Free TV broadcasters have recently funded a “Live Life” commercial about responsible consumption of alcohol. It is aimed directly at young people and is part of a broader campaign featuring prominent sports men and women which also targets childhood obesity.

“Education and appropriate regulation across all areas of the alcohol industry are much more likely to deliver a positive outcome to this important problem.”

“Broadcasters are willing to work constructively with governments and the community to play a role in achieving a genuine solution to the binge drinking problem,” Ms Flynn said.

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