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MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate release

Flawed logic derails Rethink Drink Advertisement

Excessive drinking causes immense harm and injury in our community! Unfortunately this harm is often experienced by innocent members of the community who have not been drinking. Up to 80% of police work involves an alcohol-related incident and in 2005 the harmful effects of alcohol resulted in 11,878 hospitalisations in WA alone.

The aim of the Rethink Drink campaign is to prevent and reduce the harms associated with alcohol consumption, by challenging our drinking culture. A recent advertisement which depicts a pregnant women being injured as a result of another person's drunkenness is just one example of the many harmful consequences that can occur.

As a result of a number of complaints received by the Advertising Standards Board (ASB), the recent Rethink Drink advertisement depicting a pregnant women having a miscarriage as a result of someone else's drunken behaviour, has been pulled off the air. The ASB decision to pull the advertisement underwent an independent review and as a result the complaints have been upheld. In our view the logic used to support this decision is unsound.

The main argument provided is that the injury depicted in the advertisement could have happened without alcohol being involved and therefore the link between alcohol and the injury was tenuous. If this logic was applied more broadly, this would mean that education campaigns targeting alcohol and road crashes, alcohol and violence, smoking and cancer for example, would no longer be allowed as there are other known contributing factors to these injuries. While, alcohol is not the only contributor to injury and harm in our community, we must acknowledge that it is a major public health issue.

While we express a great deal of sympathy to anyone that has been affected by a miscarriage, it was certainly not the intention of this ad to cause additional trauma. However, it is extremely difficult to raise awareness about any health or social issue without causing some emotional discomfort to the viewing audience, in fact sometimes it's absolutely necessary to get a message across, stimulate public debate and to change attitudes and behaviour.

As an agency involved in the Rethink Drink campaign, in partnership with the Drug and Alcohol Office, we are extremely disappointed to see this ad being pulled off the air. Why is so much attention being directed towards an advertisement that is promoting safe and responsible drinking when alcohol causes so much harm in our community and yet its consumption is allowed to be widely promoted to the entire community including children.

Ends.

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