

Friday 1 June 2018

Booze companies "get under our skin" say young Victorians

The first winners of an initiative from health promotion foundation VicHealth seeking to mobilise young Victorians around the sneaky tactics of booze companies say booze is 'everywhere' and Top Spin has 'opened their eyes' to how alcohol companies manipulate the way they drink.

[Top Spin](#), a five week statewide competition is asking young people to call out the sneaky tactics the alcohol industry uses to influence them to drink and promote the ideas they have to create change.

The response from young Victorians to Top Spin has been strong with thousands of visitors to the website and [entries in the hundreds](#) already. Competition judges have remarked on the quality and craft shown to date by entrants.

"The response to Top Spin from young Victorians has been incredible, with entries commenting on a range of issues young people care about such as alcohol sponsorship of sport, political donations and our heavy drinking culture," competition judge and VicHealth Manager of Alcohol Emma Saleeba says.

"It's often assumed that young people don't support alcohol reform – these entries show that young people are concerned about alcohol and want to see our booze culture change."

Early competition winner Jesse Theodosiou, 21 calls Aussie booze culture into question in her [winning entry](#) about the big life moments, like graduating high school or starting uni, where "everyone is just - let's drink."

"We've become accustomed to this notion, that every life event, milestone, and special moment has to be celebrated with a drink," Jesse explains.

"The more turning points our lives bring, the more opportunities alcohol companies have to convince us of a drink to go with it. It's impossible to think of a time that our celebrations didn't involve the invitation of alcohol.

"I don't really watch TV so don't see the [alcohol] ads there but it's everywhere on social media."

Jesse is drinking less these days with a full workload at university and is hoping to do well and get a job at the end of it. "I drank more in the past at 18 or 19 when I think a lot of people do," she says.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter says this is consistent with the current young generation of Victorians who are drinking less and are more critical of alcohol than their forebears.

"While Victorians in their 20s are still more likely than other age groups to drink in a risky way, they are drinking less than previous generations at the same age and they are more supportive of action to reduce the harms caused by alcohol," Ms Rechter says.



“Young people are also becoming more sceptical of the alcohol industry’s spin. It’s becoming increasingly uncool to be drunk, which is great to see.”

Another early winner Zane Flynn (20) says Top Spin had opened his eyes to the way alcohol companies work.

“I hadn’t thought much about alcohol companies before [Top Spin]...but you see alcohol ads watching sport and you don’t understand how they’re getting under your skin,” he says.

Zane is a keen sports fan with [his winning entry](#) calling out sports codes for their involvement with alcohol. According to Zane it’s “surprising how obvious alcohol advertising in sport is, yet at the same time can be so subtle, with hidden messages going straight into the minds and then down the throats of the younger generation.”

Top Spin wraps up on Thursday 7 June but before then will explore the role of life lessons around alcohol and how the themes of friendship and mateship can be exploited by booze companies to impact young people’s drinking choices.

For more information and to check out the entries visit www.top-spin.com.au

For more information and for interviews with Top Spin spokespeople and entrants, please contact:

Jacqui Loftus-Hill
jacqui@prgroup.com.au
0416 778 146

