

Black TV scraps drink ad ban

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THE nation's only indigenous-owned commercial television station has scrapped its ban on alcohol advertising, enraging anti-violence campaigners.

Imparja television, which broadcasts to two-thirds of the nation including most indigenous communities, announced yesterday it had abandoned the 15-year-long prohibition because its competitors were widely promoting alcohol.

Station management put a positive spin on the move by announcing it would spend 30 per cent of alcohol advertising revenues on a campaign to discourage alcohol and substance abuse. They will also seek funding from government and corporate sponsors for the initial 12-month trial that starts on January 1.

Anti-violence campaigners such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission's Alison Anderson were livid, saying alcohol abuse was a major cause of the violence plaguing indigenous communities.

"It's a sad day for Aboriginal people when the primary function of Imparja when it applied for the licence was to advocate Aboriginal law and culture," said Ms Anderson, who is the commissioner for central Australia.

"We know our culture is being destroyed by the very stuff they are trying to advertise -- which is alcohol."

Imparja, which means "footprint" in the central desert's Arrernte language, employs 50 people at its Alice Springs studio.

"With the spread of alcohol advertising by pay-TV broadcasters and other media, the effect of our (ban) policy has become increasingly insignificant," the station said.