**PRESS RELEASE**

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**BELFAST NIGHTCLUB BREACHES DRINKS CODE**

The Independent Complaints Panel that oversees the Northern Ireland Responsible Promotion and Retail of Alcohol Code has upheld a number of complaints against nightclub owners Premium Bars & Restaurants, which operates as Eivissa in Belfast.

A number of complaints received by the Independent Complaints Panel raised concerns that the ‘Messy Mondays’ promotions (April 2013) at Eivissa nightclub in Belfast encouraged excessive and irresponsible consumption of alcohol. The complaints also raised concerns about the dispensing of alcohol directly into people’s mouths, as well as the use of inappropriate sexual and offensive language to publicise the promotions on the nightclub’s social media pages.

Having considered the available information and following representations from the nightclub owners, the Independent Complaints Panel has upheld the complaints and found that the nightclub breached four specific areas of the code which state that no alcohol promotion in Northern Ireland should:

* Suggest that alcohol consumption enhances sexual attractiveness or include promotional material that is linked to sexual imagery implying sexual success or prowess
* Refer to consuming alcohol to recover from over indulgence, glamorise excessive or irresponsible drinking and the effects of intoxication should not be referred to in any favourable manner
* Be disrespectful of contemporary, prevailing standards of taste and decency or degrade or be gratuitously offensive through images, symbols, figures and innuendo
* Dispense alcohol in a manner that the consumer cannot regulate the amount of alcohol consumed, such as when alcohol is dispensed directly into a person’s mouth

Duncan McCausland, chair of the independent complaints panel overseeing the code, said:

“Following a detailed process, the Independent Complaints Panel has upheld the complaints against Premium Bars & Restaurants operating as Eivissa nightclub on four counts. Whilst we are not against licensed premises offering good value promotions to their customers, it is the responsibility of every licensee to ensure they do so in a way that does not encourage the irresponsible consumption of alcohol or offend common decency.

“We would like to note however that Eivissa has been compliant throughout the process and has already taken steps to address the issues when they were brought to their attention by the panel.

“This case also highlights the growing use of social media to promote business and alcohol promotions. Therefore, all licensees must ensure that a system of control is in place to monitor how their promotions are publicised across all their social media channels and to ensure that the Responsible Retailing Code is not being breached.”

The Joint Industry Code for the Responsible Promotion and Retail of Alcohol in Northern Ireland (2012), which aims to address the current attitude and culture in Northern Ireland in terms of alcohol misuse and abuse, applies to all suppliers and retailers of alcohol in Northern Ireland. It has been developed with the support of the Minister for Social Development, Nelson McCausland as well as the representative bodies of the drinks industries in Northern Ireland. It is hoped that compliance with the code will eventually become a condition of the granting or renewal of both liquor and entertainment licenses across Northern Ireland.

Premium Bars & Restaurants, who operated Eivissa nightclub at the time of the breach, have been notified of the decision and in line with the terms of the code, the panel has also alerted local PSNI and Belfast City Council of its decision.

Full details of the Responsible Retailing Code can be found at [www.responsibleretailingcodeni.org](http://www.responsibleretailingcodeni.org)

**ENDS**

For further information, please contact Nuala Bannon at MCE Public Relations on 028 90 267099/ 07595826131 or Nuala@mcepublicrelations.com

**NOTES TO EDITOR**

* It is understood that since the original complaints were made, Eivissa has been sold and is now under new ownership.
* Examples of promotions and language used on Eivissa’s Facebook page to promote nights such as ‘Messy Monday’:

**April 2013:** “Comment ‘I’m horny for Eivissa this Easter Monday’ to win free entry for you and 5 friends this Easter Monday.”

**April 2013:** “Our sexy hostesses and dancers walking around the club with beerbongs and super soakers filled with vodka and shots!”

* **APRIL 2013:** “Student loans are in this week! Time to be a fabulous c\*\*t and get wrecked!”

**ABOUT THE CODE**

* The Joint Industry Code for the Responsible Promotion & Retail of Alcohol in Northern Ireland (2012) was launched on 23rd May 2012.
* Following its launch it was rolled out for a three month adjustment period to allow the industry to adapt to the new measures.
* The code came into full effect on 1st September 2012.
* A copy of the full code can be found at [www.responsibleretailingcodeni.org](http://www.responsibleretailingcodeni.org)

**HOW THE CODE WORKS**

* If an individual thinks that an alcoholic drink promotional activity or sales practice might breach the Code, they can complain to an Independent Complaints Panel. All they have to do is send a letter enclosing a flyer or describing the promotion or sales practice in question, with as much information as possible.
* The individual lodging a complaint will be notified (within 7 working days of receipt) if the complaint is one which can be dealt with under the Code.
* If it is, it will be investigated by the Independent Complaints Panel which meets regularly and is independent of the alcohol industry. If it is not, it will be explained why.
* The Panel will inform the company that a complaint has been made and ask for their response.
* The complaint and the company’s response are then adjudicated on by the Panel. The individual will be informed when the Panel is meeting to consider the complaint.
* If the Panel does not uphold the complaint it will be explained why not. The decision is final.
* If the Panel does uphold the complaint, the decision is provisional and the company is given the opportunity to make further representations. This is because finding against a company may have serious business and reputational repercussions. The Panel will then meet again to consider any further representations before a final decision is made. If the company does not challenge the provisional decision, then the decision becomes final.
* The individual who initially lodged the complaint and the company are then informed of the Panel’s final decision. The decision will be notified to the press, the company’s local PSNI and Council, as well as being published on the website and in the Annual Report.
* Further information on how to make a complaint and the timescales involved can be found on the website [www.responsibleretailingcodeni.org](http://www.responsibleretailingcodeni.org)