

Australian Amateur Brewing Championship Aims, Rules and Information

Revised 30 March 2021

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A. Brief History of the Australian Amateur Brewing Championship

The first national competition of the ABAA (Amateur Brewers Association of Australia) was held in Sydney in 1995 in conjunction with the Ausbeer Homebrew Expo organised by Colin Penrose. The call for entries was publicised in the magazine Ausbeer and entries were judged over several days/evenings preceding the Expo by a number of Sydney judges.

The second national competition was held in Melbourne in 1996, again with the call for entries via Ausbeer. Judging was carried out at a number of brewpubs around Melbourne on a single Saturday with both local and interstate judges.

Some of the categories in 1996 had a very large number of entries –some more than 70 – which made them almost unjudgeable on one day by a single panel of judges. This added weight to a long-running desire of a number of people (particularly Colin Penrose) that the National Championship should consist of the best entries from each of the states. This would require State Qualifying Championships, which have slowly developed over the years. Since 1997, there have been State/Territory Qualifying Championships each year in VIC, SA, ACT, and NSW, and often in QLD.

The third national competition in 1997 in Melbourne was the first with state qualifiers. An AABC has been held each year since then. The locations of the AABC have been: 1995 Sydney; 1996 Melbourne; 1997 Melbourne; 1998 Canberra; 1999 Canberra; 2000 Adelaide; 2001 Melbourne; 2002 Sydney; 2003 Canberra; 2004 Canberra; 2005 Adelaide; 2006 Melbourne. The total number of entries in the State/Territory Qualifying Championships in 2005 was 800+ (Vic 302, SA 177, ACT 160+, NSW 148, QLD 14, WA 11)

A rather informal body (the AABA – Australian Amateur Brewing Association) with self-appointed delegates from some of the states has been responsible for deciding on the rules and categories for the AABC, which has been run by a local organising committee. There have been some attempts to try to organise a formal structure with ongoing funding but without much success. At times the AABA has been very active, at other times it has almost disappeared from view. Most deliberations of the AABA have been by email, some by phone, with occasional meetings at the same time as the AABC. A web site was set up in 2003 by the Canberra Brewers with some assistance from other states, but disappeared at the end of 2004. The rules/decisions of the AABA have not been well documented. Many rules were never formally decided upon but were the outcome of long-running email debates or simply the copying of local state rules. There were several years of intense discussions about and changes to the categories for the AABC, but they have remained fairly constant for the last few years.

(For the record, it should be noted that there is a longer running amateur beer competition - the National Amateur Wine and Beer Show which has been running in South Australia since the early 1980s but has always had a focus on wine. It has attracted entries from around Australia but the numbers of entries have generally been quite small, the categories were for many years very broad, in the late 90's beer was almost removed from the competition, and beers were often judged by only one or two judges.)

B. Aims of the AABA (Australian Amateur Brewing Association)

B1. To organise the annual Australian Amateur Brewing Championship (AABC). This will usually involve appointment of a local organising committee in one of the States/Territories to hold and run the Championship.

B2. To help coordinate and, where possible, support the State/Territory Qualifying Championships so that all interested amateur brewers have the opportunity to qualify for the AABC.

B3. To standardise categories, style guidelines, and judging sheets at the AABC and the State/Territory Qualifying Championships to ensure consistency and fairness.

B4. To help organise educational workshops (such as courses, judge accreditation and exams) for beer judges to improve the overall standard of beer judging and to broaden the pool of judges available for amateur brewing competitions.

B5. To encourage friendship and the exchange of ideas between amateur brewers throughout Australia.

C. Structure and Rules of the AABA (Australian Amateur Brewing Association)

C1. Delegates. The AABA consists of delegates (normally two) from each State and Territory willing to support the Aims of the Association (section B). It is the responsibility of each State/Territory to nominate their own delegates.

C2. Deliberations. The main deliberations of the AABA will be by email or similar means.

C3. AGM. An annual meeting of the AABA will be held in conjunction with the annual AABC.

C4. Web presence. The AABA will maintain a web presence, through a dedicated site (www.aabc.org.au) or hosting and mirroring at amateur brewing sites such as oz.craftbrewers.org, www.vicbrew.org, www.canberrabrewers.org, www.sabsosa.com, and nsw.craftbrewer.org.

C5. Decision-making. Where possible, decisions of the AABA will be reached by consensus. If voting is necessary, each State/Territory will have two votes on the AABA with issues decided by a simple majority of those voting provided that votes are received from at least three States/Territories. Any issue to be voted upon must be circulated (by email) to all current delegates with at least 14 days provided for discussion.

C6. AABC Local Organising Committee. A local organising committee responsible for running the annual AABC will be selected by the AABA based on nominations received. In selecting the location of the AABC, the AABA will, amongst other considerations, attempt to give all States/Territories the chance to host the AABC, and will take into account the track record of the organising committee.

C7. AABC Decisions. Where it is necessary for the successful running of the AABC, the local organising committee is authorised to make decisions on issues not previously agreed upon by the AABA. Such decisions should be guided by the other AABC rules, the Aims of the AABA and, where possible, the views of other AABA delegates.

C8. Categories & Styles. The categories and styles for the AABC will be decided upon by the AABA. In order to maintain some consistency from year to year, a maximum of three changes are allowed per year.

C9. Rules for State Qualifiers. State/Territory Qualifying Championships shall, where possible, follow the same (relevant) rules as the AABC. However, in order ensure that all interested amateur brewers have the opportunity to qualify for the AABC, the AABA will make reasonable efforts to accept entries from State/Territory Qualifying Championships, provided that all AABC entrants are treated equitably and fairly.

C10. State Qualifier Registration. The State/Territory Qualifying Championships shall be registered by 1st March each year through advice to the AABA delegate list and registration on a dedicated web site. The information shall at a minimum be competition date, categories, and organiser contact details

C11. Accreditation of State/Territory Qualifying Championships. There shall be only one Qualifying Championship in each State/Territory. If there is more than one nomination for the competition to be used as the State/Territory Qualifier, this shall be decided upon by brewers from that State/Territory. In the event of a dispute, the AABA will nominate which competition is to be used as the State/Territory Qualifying Championship. Each State/Territory Qualifying Championship shall accept entries from throughout that

State/Territory. If there is no Qualifying Championship in a particular State/Territory, then another State/Territory Qualifier may chose to accept entries from that State/Territory. The beers from both States/Territories would be judged together but for the purposes of qualification for the AABC, the placings for each State/Territory would be decided by only considering the scores for the entries from that State/Territory (see the example in the explanatory notes).

C12. Categories for State/Territory Qualifying Championships. All State/Territory Qualifying Championships shall be run using the published AABC categories, styles and guidelines.

C13. Results from State/Territory Qualifying Championships. The organisers of the State/Territory Qualifying Championships will supply the full results of placegetters in their competitions and their contact details to the AABC organising committee within one week of the running of the State/Territory Qualifying Championship.

D. Rules of the AABC (Australian Amateur Brewing Championship)

Except for the rules that specifically apply to the AABC (D1, D4, and D10–Champion State), these rules shall also be used by the State/Territory Qualifying Championships.

D1. Qualification. The first three placegetters at State/Territory Championships automatically qualify for entry to the Australian Amateur Brewing Championship in the same year (see D8 for resolving tied scores). A maximum of three entries in any category will be accepted from each State/Territory. Entrants may enter only those categories in which their placings were achieved. If the original beer is no longer available, entrants may submit a different beer in the same or a different style in that category. The beer style nominated must be a designated style for the category, as listed on AABC Entry Form available at www.aabc.org.au. Organizers reserve the right to reclassify or disqualify non-conforming entries. In the event that a qualifying entrant is unable to submit a beer in a particular category, State/Territory organizers may invite the next highest scoring entrant in that category to do so, in his/her own name, in order to fill the quota of three entries for AABC.

D2. Entries. No more than **two entries** are allowed from each entrant in any one Category. Within this rule, no more than **one entry** is allowed in any one style. (This rule would normally be enforced in State/Territory Qualifying Championships.)

D3. Amateur brews. The competition is restricted to amateur brews, that is to beers not subject to excise duty. This means any beer not fermented on licensed brewing premises is eligible, including beers made using extract kits, wort kits, or any other source of fresh wort. Brew-On-Premises beers are ineligible as these are subject to excise duty. Entries must be submitted under the brewer's own name.

D4. One Qualifying Championship per Brewer. Entrants can only qualify from one State/Territory Qualifying Championship.

D5. Containers. Each entry must consist of a single container of at least 500 mL and no more than 1000mL in volume. Both glass and plastic bottles and aluminium cans are acceptable. Containers should not have any unique identifying features other than possibly a batch code on the bottle caps.

D6. Judging. Judging will be by blind tasting. Where possible, each judging panel will include at least one BJCP-qualified judge. Neither the judges nor the stewards serving the judges should know the name of the brewer whose beer is being served. Judges decisions are final and no correspondence will be entered into. Completed judging/score sheets will be returned to the brewers within three weeks of completion of judging.

D7. Category Awards. Prizes will be awarded for the first, second and third placed beers in each category based on the judging scores.

D8. Tied scores. In the event of tied scores in determining the first three placegetters, placings will be resolved either by the judging panel during judging or using a progressive countback until the tie is resolved based on: a) highest score for Overall Impression; b) highest score for Flavour; c) lowest range of individual judge scores (smallest spread of scores across panel); d) the judging panel will be requested to resolve the tie.

D9. Champion Beer and Champion Kit/Extract Beer. The award of the Champion Beer of the Show will be to the beer that receives the highest number of judging points in the championship. If awarded, the Champion Kit/Extract Beer of the Show will be awarded to the kit/extract beer (identified on the entry form) that receives the highest number of judging points in the championship. In the event of equal top scores for two or more beers, the

Champion Beer will be decided using the criteria for resolving tied scores given in rule D8. The same rules apply for resolving ties for the Champion Kit/Extract Beer.

D10. Champion Brewer and Champion State. The sum of category placing points is to be used for deciding Champion Brewer and Champion State. Category placing points are 3 points for first place, 2 points for second place, and 1 point for third place. If there is a tie (in the number of placing points) for Champion Brewer or Champion State then the sum of the placing points times the judging points will be used to decide the winners. For example, a win (3 placing points) for a beer receiving 130 judging points and a third place (1 placing point) for a beer receiving 110 judging points would have a total of 500 points. If there is still a tie, then joint winners will be declared.

D11. Privacy. Personal information (names, addresses, and other contact details, etc) provided by brewers on the entry form will only be used for the conduct of the competition. This information will not be released to third parties, other than the names of brewers, which will be published in the results lists for the competition.

D12. Results. The full results for all beers entered in the AABC will be published on the AABC web site within one week of completion of the judging. The results will include score, brewer, category, style and state, as well as the judges for each category and their BJCP Rank where applicable.

E. AABC Taxonomy of Beer Styles

Introduction

The way in which beer styles are grouped into categories for the purposes of the Australian Amateur Brewing Championship and the associated State/Territory qualifying championships has been a contentious topic among AABA delegates for many years. A major influx of new styles in recent years has served to highlight some of the difficulties involved.

The following outlines for the first time a logical classification system for assigning beer styles to categories. It provides a logical way to combine categories for competitions with fewer entries, and to split categories to cater for future growth. It also provides a logical way to include new styles which may evolve and become popular with homebrewers.

E1. AABC Taxonomy of beer styles

The AABC Taxonomy table on page 4 illustrates the classification system for assigning the large number of possible beer styles into categories, for use in AABC competitions. Styles are classified progressively according to the following hierarchy of criteria:

1. *Fermentation*
2. *Base Malt*
3. *Alcoholic Strength*
4. *Beer Colour*
5. *Bitterness*

These criteria identify the major sensory characteristics of a style, thereby grouping similar styles, which facilitates the judging and scoring of competing beers. Application of these criteria proceeds downwards from the top of the table, and is described step by step below:

1. Fermentation: There are four style groups, according to the species of micro-organism traditionally employed in fermentation (follows Linnaean taxonomy):

- **Ale:** traditionally fermented with ale yeast exclusively (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae*)
- **Lager:** traditionally fermented with lager yeast exclusively (*Saccharomyces carlsbergensis*)
- **Wild Beer:** traditionally fermented with or with inclusion of wild microbiota (esp. *Brettanomyces*, *Lactobacillus*, *Pediococcus*) which may be introduced by spontaneous fermentation and/or direct inoculation.
- **Specialty Beer:** no predominant fermentation tradition (may include Ale, Lager, and Wild Beer versions – eg. Pumpkin Beer).

2. Base Malt: Ale styles are further classified into:

- Barley malt styles
- non-Barley malt styles (there are currently no non-Barley Lager styles).

3. Alcoholic Strength: Ale and Lager styles are further classified into 3 ABV ranges:

- Low
- Medium
- Strong (Medium and Strong non-Barley groups are combined).

4. Beer Colour: Medium ABV Barley styles are further classified into 3 colour ranges:

- Pale
- Amber / Brown
- Dark

Note that AABC taxonomy is a general classification scheme which simply specifies the criteria for separating styles. The extent to which these criteria are applied will depend on the number of styles and their popularity, in terms of competition entries received. For example, if Wild Beer styles became wildly popular, they could theoretically be separated further according to Alcoholic Strength and/or Beer Colour.

The sixth row of the table shows the **14 Generic Categories** obtained by applying the first four criteria as currently configured. These Generic Categories form the basis for constructing the AABC Category Format, as described in the following section.

E2. AABC Category Format.

If the **14 Generic Categories** were used for AABC, there would be a very large variation in the number of entries in each category. Therefore a number of them are split or combined to produce a rational AABC Category Format, which delivers relatively even category size in terms of actual entries. This is necessary for practical judging purposes, and to ensure consistency and fairness to entrants across all categories.

AABC Categories are shown as coloured cells in AABC taxonomy table. The bottom two rows demonstrate how new AABC categories are created, by combining or splitting Generic Categories in the row above. The two different category types created, and the methods used to create them, are described below:

1. Style Specific Categories: This is the preferred method for creating new categories, because it keeps beers of similar styles together for judging. Methods are:

- Generic Categories attracting too few entries can be combined, eg:
 - Amber & Dark Lager Category
 - Low Alcohol Category (combines Low Alcohol Lager and Low Alcohol Ale categories).
- Generic Categories attracting too many entries can be split by applying the fifth taxonomy criterion **Bitterness**, eg:
 - Bitter Ale Category is separated out from Generic Brown Ale Category.
- Alternatively, entire style families can be extracted from a Generic Category, eg:
 - Pilsener family extracted from Generic Pale Lager Category.
 - IPA and Strong Stout families extracted from Generic Strong Ale Category.
 - Porter and Stout families extracted from Generic Dark Ale Category, leaving it vacant.
- Similarly, a single popular style may be extracted in isolation, if it attracts sufficient entries to warrant its own dedicated category, eg:
 - American Pale Ale extracted from Generic Pale Ale Category.

2. Country Specific Categories: A secondary option for category creation is to extract styles from a Generic Category according to their place of origin. However since most countries produce a diverse range of styles, this tends to group dissimilar styles, which is less desirable for judging. Occasionally however, it becomes necessary or convenient, eg:

- Belgian Strong Ale family extracted from Generic Strong Ale Category, as the only realistic option for further splitting.
- German Wheat & Rye Category is convenient, because all styles in Generic Wheat & Rye Category are German anyway.
- Farmhouse Ale Category is discussed in the following section.

E3. AABC Categories & Styles

The 2009 AABC categories, as represented by the coloured cells in AABC taxonomy table, are reflected in the separate AABC Categories & Styles table in Section F, with the actual styles listed in their preferred judging order within each category. (It should be noted when evaluating style assignments, that no generic taxonomy for beer styles can be absolute, since many styles are quite broad, and style parameters may overlap). All AABC Styles have been classified according to AABC taxonomy, with the following exceptions:

- ***Baltic Porter:*** This is a Strong Lager but has been reassigned to Porter Category. As a version of English Porter, it is deemed more appropriate in the Porter style family.
- ***Classic Rauchbier:*** This is an Amber Lager but has been reassigned to Specialty Category. As a smoked style, the Specialty character is deemed more significant than the Amber Lager character.
- ***Farmhouse Ales:*** As a diverse class of beers characterized by small batch brewing and a wide range of ingredients, including a variety of grains, malted or raw, as well as herbs, spices, fruit flavourings, sugar, honey, and typically displaying characteristics associated with wild fermentation – phenolics, Brett character, acidity, these styles defy generic classification. Accordingly, Farmhouse Ale Category is represented horizontally in AABC Taxonomy table, spanning Barley and non-Barley, Medium and Strong ABV. As a low-entry Category, it is combined with Wild Beer Category in AABC Category Format, based on style similarities and common ancestry.

E4. Category Format dimensioning.

The format expands the number of AABC 2009 categories to 18. This caters for recent growth in State/Territory qualifying championships, as well as the recent increase in judging time per beer, consequent upon judging to higher BJCP standard.

Anticipating future growth, AABC Taxonomy provides a pathway for rational Category Format expansion, towards maturity at around 24 currently identifiable categories, thereby enabling larger State/Territory qualifiers to cater for up to 500-600 total entries, while maintaining even entry distribution and realistic category size for one-day judging.

Similarly for smaller State/Territory qualifiers, AABC Taxonomy enables rational Category Format contraction, down to a minimum of 11 categories as shown in the second table in Section F, without affecting AABC qualification. That is, results would be separated to identify AABC qualifying entries.

This provides a degree of flexibility for State/Territory organizers to dimension Category Formats independently. As such it offers a means to accommodate a wide disparity in competition size across Australia, which will be amplified in the hoped for event of State/Territory qualifiers becoming established in Tasmania and NT.

Recognizing that a “one size fits all” common category configuration is problematic in the Australian first round context, this solution has the advantage of being a purely administrative mechanism, rather than a reconfiguration of actual judging schedules and procedures.

AABC Taxonomy Table

STYLE GROUP	ALE						LAGER			WILD BEER	SPECIALTY BEER			
1. Fermentation	S. cerevisiae						S. carlsbergensis			Wild microbiota	variable			
2. Base Malt	non-BARLEY		BARLEY				BARLEY			any	any			
3. Alcoholic Strength	Low <4%	Medium & Strong	Strong >6%	Medium		Low <4%	Low <4%	Medium	Strong >6%	any	any			
4. Beer Colour	any	any	any	Dark	Amber Brown	Pale	any	any	Dark	Amber Brown	Pale	any	any	
Generic Categories <i>(currently 14)</i> <i>derived from above four criteria</i>	Low Alcohol non-Barley	Medium & Strong non-Barley	Strong Ale	Dark Ale	Brown Ale	Pale Ale	Low Alcohol Ale	Low Alcohol Lager	Dark Lager	Amber Lager	Pale Lager	Strong Lager	Wild Beer	Specialty Beer
Style-Specific Categories <i>preferred method</i> Combine generic categories, or extract style families to create new categories.	Incl. in Low Alcohol	Wheat & Rye Beer	India Pale Ale	Strong Stout	Porter	Bitter Ale	American Pale Ale	Low Alcohol	Amber & Dark Lager	Pilsener				
Country-Specific Categories <i>non-preferred method</i> Styles grouped by place of origin - tends to group dissimilar styles, but occasionally necessary or convenient.			Belgian Strong Ale											
	Farmhouse Ale													

F. Categories & Styles for AABC 2011

Category colour matches that used in AABC Taxonomy table (Section E). Styles listed in preferred judging order. Beers may only be entered in listed styles

<p>1. LOW ALCOHOL (<4% ABV) 1.1 Light Australian Lager 1.2 Leichtes Weizen (Light Wheat Beer) 1.3 Scottish Light Ale 1.4 Southern English Brown Ale 1.5 Mild Ale 1.6 English Bitter</p>	<p>10. PORTER 10.1 Brown Porter 10.2 Robust Porter 10.3 Baltic Porter</p>
<p>2. PALE LAGER 2.1 Australian Lager 2.2 Australian Premium Lager 2.3 Pale Continental Lager 2.4 Munich Helles 2.5 Dortmunder</p>	<p>11. STOUT 11.1 Dry Stout 11.2 Sweet Stout 11.3 Oatmeal Stout</p>
<p>3. PILSENER 3.1 Classic American Pilsener 3.2 German Pilsener 3.3 Bohemian Pilsner</p>	<p>12. STRONG STOUT (>6% ABV) 12.1 Australian/Foreign Extra Stout 12.2 American Stout 12.3 Russian Imperial Stout</p>
<p>4. AMBER & DARK LAGER 4.1 Oktoberfest/Märzen 4.2 Vienna 4.3 California Common Beer 4.4 North German Altbier 4.5 Munich Dunkel 4.6 Schwarzbier</p>	<p>13. INDIA PALE ALE 13.1 English IPA 13.2 American IPA 13.3 Imperial IPA</p>
<p>5. STRONG LAGER (>6% ABV) 5.1 Strong Pale Lager 5.2 Maibock/Hellesbock 5.3 Traditional Bock 5.4 Doppelbock 5.5 Eisbock</p>	<p>14. STRONG ALE (>6% ABV) 14.1 Old Ale (English Strong Ale) 14.2 Strong Scotch Ale 14.3 English Barleywine 14.4 American Barleywine</p>
<p>6. PALE ALE 6.1 Cream Ale 6.2 Blonde Ale 6.3 Kölsch 6.4 Belgian Pale Ale 6.5 Australian Pale Ale 6.6 English Pale Ale</p>	<p>15. BELGIAN STRONG ALE (>6% ABV) 15.1 Belgian Blond Ale 15.2 Belgian Golden Strong Ale 15.3 Tripel 15.4 Dubbel 15.5 Belgian Dark Strong Ale</p>
<p>7. AMERICAN PALE ALE 7.1 American Pale Ale</p>	<p>16. WHEAT & RYE BEER 16.1 American Wheat or Rye Beer 16.2 Weizen/Weissbier 16.3 Dunkelweizen 16.4 Weizenbock 16.5 Roggenbier</p>
<p>8. BITTER ALE 8.1 American Bitter Ale 8.2 English Best Bitter 8.3 English Extra Special/Strong Bitter (ESB) 8.4 American Amber Ale 8.5 Düsseldorfer Altbier</p>	<p>17. FARMHOUSE ALE & WILD BEER 17.1 Witbier 17.2 Saison 17.3 Bière de Garde 17.4 Flanders Red Ale 17.5 Flanders Brown Ale/Oud Bruin 17.5 Berliner Weisse 17.6 Straight (unblended) Lambic 17.7 Gueuze 17.8 Fruit Lambic</p>
<p>9. BROWN ALE 9.1 Northern English Brown Ale 9.2 Irish Red Ale 9.3 Scottish Ale 9.4 Australian Dark/Old Ale 9.5 American Brown Ale</p>	<p>18. SPECIALTY BEER 18.1 Fruit Beer 18.2 Spice/Herb/Vegetable Beer 18.3 Christmas/Winter Spiced Beer 18.4 Classic Rauchbier 18.5 Belgian Specialty Ale 18.6 Wood-aged Beer 18.7 Other Specialty</p>

Minimum category format for smaller competitions

In order to maintain competitive category size, State/Territory Championship qualifiers may use any or all of the following 11 categories, which include 7 Consolidated Categories (shaded subcategories show AABC Categories). AABC preferred judging order is maintained, and results will be separated to identify AABC qualifying entries.

<p>LOW ALCOHOL (<4% ABV) Light Australian Lager Leichtes Weizen (Light Wheat Beer) Scottish Light Ale Southern English Brown Ale Mild Ale English Bitter</p>	<p>STOUT Dry Stout Sweet Stout Oatmeal Stout</p> <p>Australian/Foreign Extra Stout American Stout Russian Imperial Stout</p>
<p>PALE LAGER Australian Lager Australian Premium Lager Pale Continental Lager Munich Helles Dortmunder</p> <p>Classic American Pilsener German Pilsener Bohemian Pilsner</p>	<p>STRONG ALE Old Ale (English Strong Ale) Strong Scotch Ale English Barleywine American Barleywine</p> <p>English IPA American IPA Imperial IPA</p>
<p>AMBER, DARK & STRONG LAGER Oktoberfest/Märzen Vienna California Common Beer North German Altbier Munich Dunkel Schwarzbier</p> <p>Strong Pale Lager Maibock/Hellesbock Traditional Bock Doppelbock Eisbock</p>	<p>WHEAT & RYE BEER American Wheat or Rye Beer Weizen/Weissbier Dunkelweizen Weizenbock Roggenbier</p>
<p>PALE ALE Cream Ale Blonde Ale Kölsch Belgian Pale Ale Australian Pale Ale English Pale Ale</p> <p>American Pale Ale</p>	<p>BELGIAN, FARMHOUSE & WILD BEER Belgian Blond Ale Belgian Strong Golden Ale Tripel Dubbel Belgian Strong Dark Ale</p> <p>Witbier Saison Bière de Garde Flanders Red Ale Flanders Brown Ale/Ouid Bruin Berliner Weisse Straight (unblended) Lambic Gueuze Fruit Lambic</p>
<p>BITTER ALE Australian Bitter Ale English Best Bitter English Extra Special/Strong Bitter (EBS) American Amber Ale Düsseldorf Altbier</p>	<p>SPECIALTY BEER Fruit Beer Spice/Herb/Vegetable Beer Christmas/Winter Spiced Beer Classic Rauchbier Belgian Specialty Ale Wood-aged Beer Other Specialty</p>
<p>DARK ALE Northern English Brown Ale Irish Red Ale Scottish Ale Australian Dark/Old Ale American Brown Ale</p> <p>Brown Porter Robust Porter Baltic Porter</p>	

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009
Location	VIC	NSW	VIC	ACT
No of cat's	13	14	13	18
	Low Alcohol	Low Alcohol	Low Alcohol	Low Alcohol
<i>Lagers</i>	Pale Australian Lager	Pale Australian Lager		
"	Pale Lager	Pale Lager	Pale Lager	Pale Lager
				Pilsener
"	Dark Lager	Dark Lager	Dark Lager	Amber & Dark Lager
"	Strong Lager	Strong Lager	Strong Lager	Strong Lager
<i>Ales</i>	British Ale	British and Irish Ale	British and Irish Ale	Bitter Ale
"	Pale Ale	Pale Ale	Pale Ale	Pale Ale
				American Pale Ale
"	Dark Ale	Dark Ale	Dark Ale	Brown Ale
				Porter
"	Stout	Stout	Stout	Stout
				Strong Stout
"	Strong Ale	Strong Ale	Strong Ale	Strong Ale
				India Pale Ale
				Belgian Strong Ale
"	Wheat Beer	Wheat & Rye Beer	Wheat & Rye Beer	German Wheat & Rye Beer
"	Belg. & French Specialty	Belgian, French and Sour Beer	Belgian, French and Sour Beer	Farmhouse Ale & Wild Beer
<i>Misc</i>	Fruit, Spec, Hist. & Exptl	Fruit & other Specialty Beer	Fruit & other Specialty Beer	Specialty Beer
		Hybrid Beer	Hybrid Beer	

Explanatory/Background Notes

These documents (Aims, Structure, Rules) have been put together based on rules that have been used by the AABC and some of the state competitions. They have also taken into account of a vigorous email discussion in 2006 about what types of rules are required. The aim is to have a minimalist set of rules that are clear, can be easily enforced but are not so rigid that they can't cope with the variations between the state championships. These explanatory/background notes are included to summarise the main arguments used in formulating the rules so that these don't have to be revisited/rejustified every few years.

Explanatory/Background Notes – Aims of the AABA

B1. Having the AABC run by local organising committees in the States/Territories has many advantages over being run directly by a national body. It provides experience and understanding to a greater pool of people, provides more judges with the experience to evaluate national-standard beers, removes what could be a persistent State bias in judging, provides fresh input into the competition, and provides greater opportunities for sponsor involvement.

Explanatory/Background Notes – Structure and Rules of the AABA

C1. Delegates. A longer term aim should be a formally structured AABA with delegates elected from state bodies. However, this would be very ambitious at present given the difficulty of even getting on-going organisations for many of the state competitions. The ACT has the Canberra Brewers, Victoria has VicBrew, and South Australia has Mike Leupold, but the other states have struggled to maintain an on-going structure. Colin Penrose, and later Peter Ryan, tried to establish a national organisation along the lines of the American Homebrewers Association, with funds to support a national body and competition, but these were not sustainable. We need to have something that will actually work, which is probably a decentralised structure with a number of groups of people willing and able to run successful competitions including sponsorship and follow-up. Delegates need to be willing to support the Aims of the AABA (see section B).

C4. Web presence. An AABA web site was established in 2003 but the domain names fees were not renewed and the site is now defunct. Given the problems of on-going support for a separate web site and the potential loss of all information on the site, it should be mirrored at a number of relevant sites that are likely to survive in the longer term.

C5. Decision-making. Given the tenuous nature of the state bodies and the many disagreements between them over the years, it is unlikely that they would not take kindly to an AABA dictating how they should run their state competitions. Thus, in order to ensure that the AABC survives, it is necessary to be encourage consensus decision making and to work with a loosely-structured AABA.

C7. AABC Decisions. From time to time, the AABC local organising committee running the AABC may have issues that need more rapid resolution than is possible using rule C5. It is not anticipated that this rule should be used very often. Where appropriate, new rules should be developed following each AABC in order to clarify the issue for future organising committees.

C8. Categories & Styles. This is the issue that generates the most heated debates amongst brewers and within the AABA. There are many factors that need to be taken into account. It is

also recognised that there needs to be a mechanism for changes to the categories/styles. The rule to allow a maximum of three changes per year is designed to minimise wild swings in the format of the competition from year to year. A brief history should be provided of the reasons for the current categories to prevent the same issues being debated every year or so.

C10. Registering State Qualifiers. The aim should be to have competitions registered early (by 1st March) but the AABA should be sufficiently flexible to try to ensure that qualifying competitions are run in all States/Territories to give all interested amateur brewer the opportunity to qualify while ensuring that all AABC entrants are treated equitably and fairly. The Craftbrewer web site (oz.craftbrewers.org) provides a simple system for registering competitions that could be adopted. The AABA delegates are responsible for endorsing the State/Territory Qualifying Championships and ensuring that only one competition is endorsed for each State/Territory.

C11. Accreditation of State/Territory Qualifying Championships. If there is no State/Territory Qualifying Championship in a particular State, and entries from that State were accepted in another State Qualifying Championship, then the following example indicates how the qualifications for the AABC would be worked out. Example: If there were entries from States A and B with the following results in one category: 1st A, 2nd B, 3rd B, 4th A, 5th B, 6th B, 7th A. The three entries that would qualify for the AABC would be: From State A - 1st A, 4th A, 7th A; From State B - 2nd B, 3rd B, 5th B.

C12. Categories for State/Territory Qualifying Championships. This rule provides clarity for entrants and competition organisers.

C13. Results from State/Territory Qualifying Championships. This information is necessary for the AABC organisers to ensure that only suitably qualified entries are accepted for the AABC and to follow up on missing/mis-classified/broken entries directly with the entrants.

Explanatory/Background Notes – Rules of the AABC

D1. Qualification. Qualifying rounds are necessary for the national championships in order to limit the number of beers to be judged to manageable levels. In 2005, there were a total of about 800 entries in the qualifying championships. The rule allowing a different brew to be entered for the national competition exists because unless bottles for both qualifying and national rounds are submitted at the same time, it is impossible to enforce that the same beer is entered at both state and national level. The desire of the AABC should be that the same beer as that winning the state qualifier should be judged. In practice, there would be little point in a brewer entering a second-rate beer at state level and saving a better beer for the AABC. And in most cases there is insufficient time to prepare another beer for the AABC after the state qualifier. However, the rule allows for this. Another way of wording the whole rule would be to say that a state placing qualifies the brewer to enter the AABC in that category, but this is effectively what is said, just in a way that is easier to understand for most brewers who have another bottle of the same beer available. The rule specifies that in each category the top three beers from each state qualify for AABC. The previous version of this rule specified that a brewer had to place first, second or third in a qualifying competition. With tied placings (which were also permitted) more than three beers could progress to AABC. Or if one of the placegetters no longer had a beer available, that state only had 2 entries progress through to AABC. The amended rule with a quota of three addresses both these issues.

D2. Entries. *The rule of a maximum 2 entries per category provides a balance between the desire of some brewers to enter lots of beers to get feedback on them, the ability to properly judge all the entries in a competition with the time and number of judges available, and the desire to prevent a category (or competition) being overwhelmed by a single entrant to the detriment of a good competition. The rule of a maximum of 1 entry per style is in part for the above reason on limiting entries, in part to prevent a brewer entering the same beer twice in the same style. Even the American Homebrewers Association has a limit of one entry per style.*

D3. Amateur Brews. *The name of the competition is the Australian AMATEUR BREWING Championship. This indicates the competition is for amateur brews and not for commercial beers. For many years there was no rule on this issue. The competition name was commonly interpreted to mean that it was restricted to amateur brewers (rather than amateur brews) and not open to professional brewers. An issue arose occasionally when a homebrewer turned professional. Depending on the state, they were sometimes told they could not enter, sometimes they chose not to enter, and sometimes they were allowed to enter their homebrewed beers. This rule seeks to clarify the issue by referring to the beer itself. It recognises that when a professional brewer goes home from work and brews non-commercial beer as an amateur, then the beers they produce should be considered to be amateur brews. A commercial beer is defined as one on which full excise duty is payable. Note that the rule specifically prohibits beers from Brew-On-Premises establishments, which pay a reduced rate of excise (they were allowed prior to 2011). The formulation of this rule was highly contentious and only evolved out of dozens of emails between AABA delegates. One position was simply to restrict entries to amateur brewers because this is a simple rule to enforce – it is generally public knowledge whether someone is brewing professionally. But a significant number of delegates wanted a rule that would encompass a slightly broader range of brewers. It is expected that most full-time professional brewers would not have the time or interest in making or submitting amateur brews. There was a lengthy discussion in 2011 about whether or not to allow beers made from fresh wort kits. Fuller explanation to be added here.*

D4. One Qualifying Championship per Brewer. *Most brewers will only enter one state qualifier so that this should be considered the norm. Given the way the state qualifiers are run (with competition organisers not aware of what entries other states will receive), it is almost impossible to prevent brewers from entering several state qualifiers. From a practical point of view, it is easiest to allow the brewer to choose which state qualifier they want to use, but they should only be able to enter based on their results in one qualifier. Of course, states may choose to limit their entries to residents of their state.*

D5. Bottles. *There needs to be sufficient beer for judging. While 750 mL was the preferred size, these bottles are becoming scarcer. The 500 mL size provides sufficient beer (100-150 mL) for each judge. When served in jugs, it is best that all entries have the same amount of beer in the jugs to help ensure that judges can't be influenced by perhaps knowing that the brewer only entered a stubbie. Identifying marks on the bottle cap (recorded on the entry form by the brewer) can help competition organisers sort out mix-ups during registration. These identifying marks should be removed or covered by the random entry number so that they cannot be identified by cellar staff or stewards. If a Best Of Show judging round were introduced, then it may be necessary to require that 2 bottles be submitted with each entry.*

D6. Judging. *This rule provides guidance to how the competition should be run so that the brewers are not known to the judges or stewards.*

D8. Tied Scores. *The previous version of this rule allowed for tied placing, but this produced inconsistencies at AABC. Some states resolved all ties during judging and always only awarded 3 placings - one first, one second, and one third, whereas other states allowed tied placings and there were commonly 4 and sometimes 5 qualifiers from some states in some categories. The amended rule (along with changes to D1) allows the best three beers from each qualifier through to AABC. It also makes competition fairer for Best State Award.*

D9. Champion Beer and Champion Kit/Extract Beer. *The method of selecting Champion Beer does not account for the variations in judge scoring between categories, but is often used in Australian competitions and is the simplest method. Differences between judging panels should also tend to reduce as more judges become BJCP-accredited. An alternative method is to judge the Best of Show separately using another bottle of the best beer in each category. This would require twice as many bottles to be handled and may be hard to fit in the one day that has traditionally been allowed for the AABC. However it would provide a ready supply of beer for the awards dinner at night after judging! The Champion Kit/Extract Beer is seen as inappropriate by some brewers (why distinguish based on production method) but sponsors such as Coopers and homebrew shops are keen to see a Champion Kit/Extract award because this accounts for so much of their business. It also encourages new entrants who are vital for all competitions. An option would be to leave the inclusion of the Champion Kit/Extract award to the local organising committee who are organising the sponsorship.*

D10. Champion Brewer and Champion State. *In the case of a tie for these awards, a taste-off of beers is not possible because they are based on results from all the categories judged throughout the day. Thus the suggested method of computing a sum of placing points times judging points.*

D12. Results. *This clarifies the precedence for AABC and most competitions that full results be published.*

History of Rule Changes

25 February 2007 C12 revised on, based on unanimous vote of 12 AABA delegates.

Previously the rule read:

“It is recommended that all State/Territory Qualifying Championships be run using the published AABC categories and styles. However, if other categories and style guidelines are used in a State/Territory Qualifying Championship, then it is the responsibility of the State/Territory to select the best three beers that will qualify for the relevant categories in the AABC. The organisers of State/Territory Qualifying Championships shall inform entrants before entries close for their State/Territory Qualifier of the method to be used in these cases for selecting qualifying beers for the AABC.”

15 July 2007 www.aabc.org.au website added

List of Categories and Styles for 2007 inserted as section E

27 September 2007 Rule D1 changed to remove requirement for qualifying entries to AABC to achieve a score of at least 60%, **but only for AABC2007**. This was based on a yes vote from all states with a condition that it revisited soon after AABC2007 to clarify the situation for future competitions. Some comments were:

- *Our judges were very strict and stuck firmly to the guidelines. We had several beers that were good, but out of style enough, or had a few classic faults that it caused a point loss. When they fell below the 60%, I was really curious how they would have stacked up against the other states.*
- *I think the judges really need some guidance. A mark below 60% means the judge is saying that the beer has problems and/or is not quite to style.*
- *In principal I think the 60% rule is a good one.*
- *I think we need a follow-up discussion about reference beers [for standardising scoring], which have proved very effective in recent ACT comps.*
- *A discussion soon after this year's national comp would be good to clarify the situation for next year's state comps*

30 January 2008 Rule D12 added following a unanimous vote of 12 AABA delegates in November 2007.

5 September 2008 Rules D1 and D8 amended following a unanimous vote of 10 delegates from all states (ACT, NSW, QLD, SA, VIC, WA)

Previously the rules read:

D1. *To qualify for the Australian Amateur Brewing Championship, a brewer must have placed first, second or third ~~(and scored at least 60% of maximum possible points)~~ in one of the year's State/Territory Qualifying Championships (see D8 for handling tied placings).etc.*

D8. *The “normal” procedure is to be used for awarding placings if there is a tie for category placings. For example, if there is a tie (equal scores) for first place, then two equal firsts will be awarded, and the next highest scoring beer will be awarded third place. If there is a tie for second place, then two equal seconds will be awarded, and no third place will be awarded. If there is a tie for third place, then two equal thirds will be awarded. In this last case, a total of four beers would qualify from a State competition for the AABC. If more than four beers would qualify for AABC because of tied placings, their acceptance for the AABC is at the discretion of the local organising committee. Competition organisers, if they so choose, may decide to arrange a taste-off to avoid tied placings.*

23 September 2008 Corrected delegate list inserted.

17 February 2009

Updated delegate list to show changes in ACT delegates.

Added section E on AABC Taxonomy following a unanimous vote of 9 AABA delegates in December 2008 (from NSW, QLD, SA, VIC, WA).

Added 2009 AABC category and style list, subject to change.

19 March 2009

Incorporated finalised 2009 list of styles following unanimous vote of 11 AABA delegates in March 2008 (from ACT, NSW, QLD, SA, VIC, WA) to amend the Low Alcohol category limit to <4% ABV and modify a number of style guidelines to fit this new limit, as presented in a "Review of Low Alcohol Category".

11 May 2010

Added style 8.1 Australian Bitter Ale

21 June 2011

Change to rule D3 to explicitly allow fresh wort kits and to disallow Brew-On-Premises beers. The rule previously read:

The competition is restricted to amateur brews, that is to beers that have not been brewed on premises licensed as a commercial brewery. Beers produced from extract kits and wort kits and Brew-On-Premises beers are allowed as they not considered to be commercially brewed. Entries must be submitted under the brewer's name(s).

Added 3 styles

8.4 American Amber Ale

12.2 American Stout

16.1 American Wheat or Rye Beer

Housekeeping of Rule D10 to remove following description of handling tied placings because these were resolved in the changes to rule D8 in 2009.

D10. Following removed: Ties in placings are resolved using rule D8. If there is a tie for first place, then the sum of points normally available for first and second places (3 + 2 = 5 points) will be split equally between the two winners (i.e. 2½ points each), and the third placegetter will receive 1 point. If there is a tie for second place, then the points normally available for second and third places (2 + 1 = 3 points) will be split equally between the two second placegetters (i.e. 1½ points each).

**NEED TO UPDATE add 2017 major update
2019 minor update (NEIPA)**