

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.)