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## **SUPERMARKETS MUST DO MORE TO PREVENT OBESITY**

Health promotion foundation VicHealth has welcomed new Deakin University research into the nutrition policies of our supermarkets and is urging retailers to lift their game and make their stores healthier.

The *Inside our Supermarkets* report released today ranked major supermarkets according to their nutrition policies, with highest ranked Woolworths scoring 46 out of 100 and IGA at the bottom of the table with a score of just eight.

In response, VicHealth has urged the nation's supermarkets to take action, including reformulating their own home brand products, introducing healthy checkouts and cutting back on junk food specials.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said while the report highlighted some positive steps supermarkets were taking to promote good nutrition, it was clear that much more needed to be done.

"Australians are eating and drinking ourselves sick. Two thirds of us are overweight or obese and at greater risk of a range of chronic illnesses like heart disease, stroke and diabetes," Ms Rechter said.

"We know that the majority of household groceries are purchased in Australian supermarkets. Supermarkets have an enormous reach and an enormous opportunity to help us promote good health.

"Deakin's report shows us that supermarkets are starting to change, there is much better food labelling across the major chains and there are some great healthy eating programs like free fruit for kids and home-cooked recipe ideas.

"Yet overall there is a lot of work to be done. An easy first step is for supermarkets to commit to healthy checkouts and by ditching the shelves of chocolate bars and sugary drinks, which might drive profits but come at a big cost to our health."

VicHealth dietician Jenny Reimers said the Victorian Salt Reduction Initiative is currently supporting supermarkets to reformulate their brands as part of the [Unpack the Salt campaign](#), which can make a big difference to the nation's health.

"We want to see supermarkets do more to make the healthy choice the easy choice," Ms Reimers said.

"Supermarkets have an enormous opportunity to create change. Small steps, like stocking healthy fresh foods at the checkouts and including more healthy products in their catalogues, will make a big difference in encouraging customers to choose healthier food and drinks.

"We also know that many supermarket home brand products still contain far too much salt, saturated fat and added sugar. We're calling on supermarket chains to reformulate these products to be much healthier.

"It is no secret that we are in the middle of an obesity epidemic and poor diets are driving poor health outcomes – we'd like to see supermarkets step up the plate and help us to create positive change."

VicHealth spokespeople are available for comment. To arrange contact VicHealth Senior Media Advisor Rachel Murphy on 0435 761 732 or email [rmurphy@vichealth.vic.gov.au](mailto:rmurphy@vichealth.vic.gov.au)