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## **Health groups release landmark blueprint to tackle key driver of childhood obesity**

### **New research: 84% of consumers believe children should be protected from unhealthy food advertising**

The Obesity Policy Coalition has today released the first Australian plan for legislation that offers real protection for children from unhealthy food advertising – one of the key drivers of childhood obesity.

The OPC's evidence-based blueprint, which has been presented to the State and Federal Governments, explains how different types of advertising should be restricted (including TV advertising during peak children's viewing times), and proposes definitions of key terms, such as 'unhealthy food' and advertising 'directed to children'.

As well as overwhelming public support for reform, the initiatives in the blueprint have been endorsed by the Australian Medical Association, the Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance together with a host of other public health organisations\*.

“The Federal Government has given industry a chance to clean up their act, but self-regulation has proven to be a complete failure,” said Senior Policy Adviser for the OPC, Jane Martin.

“Our analysis indicates the current system of self-regulation is utterly ineffective in protecting children from being the target of junk food advertisers.

“In fact it allows junk food companies to advertise during the highest rating children's TV programs. It also permits them to use websites and Facebook, free toys, competitions and sports sponsorship as marketing tools to reach kids, as well as obtaining children's contact details and marketing directly to them via email, SMS or mail.

“Australian consumers have had enough of junk food companies marketing unhealthy food to children. New Cancer Council research released today found nearly 60% of grocery buyers<sup>1</sup> nominated TV advertising or toy giveaways as having the biggest impact on their children asking for an unhealthy food product,” said Ms Martin.

The research found that 83% of grocery buyers want the government to step in and ban this type of advertising at times when children watch TV. The majority of respondents (95%) who support a ban would like to see it implemented on TV from at least 4pm to 9:30pm.

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<sup>1</sup> Obesity Prevention Policy Proposals: Public Acceptability 2008 to 2010 study



The OPC would like to see the federal Government tackle this as a national issue, however, legislation could be implemented at a state level if the Federal Government fails to act.

“Implementation of this proposal by Federal and state governments would be a hugely important step towards decreasing children’s exposure to junk food marketing and reducing the burden of obesity in this country.”

The Obesity Policy Coalition partners include Diabetes Australia - Vic, Cancer Council Victoria, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) and the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Obesity Prevention at Deakin University.



### **OPC consumer research: Key findings**

- 84% of consumers believe children should be protected from unhealthy food advertising.
- Just under 9 in 10 people were in favour of the government introducing stronger restrictions to reduce the amount of unhealthy food and drink advertising seen by children, with 76% strongly in favour.
- Asked up to what age children should be protected up to: One-third of consumers said 17 years; 21% up to 14 or 15 years and 28% said 12 or 13 years.
- 83% of grocery buyers are in favour of a ban on advertising of unhealthy foods at times when children watch TV, with 66% strongly in favour.
- 95% of respondents who supported bans on TV believed that advertising should be banned from at least 4pm – 9.30pm.
- When asked what most commonly negatively impacted their children’s food purchase requests, grocery buyers reported television commercials (29%) or toys and giveaways (29%).
- 85% of consumers are in favour of restricting or stopping toys and giveaways.
- 89% of consumers want the government to regulate the use of unhealthy food products in games and competitions on websites aimed at children.
- 97% of those surveyed believe the government should regulate the use of email or SMS food marketing to children. 79% think the practice should be stopped altogether.

### **Note to editors**

# Media release



**Obesity Prevention Policy Proposals: Public Acceptability 2008 to 2010 study**

A random sample of 1521 adults who were the main grocery buyer, residing in private households in metropolitan and regional areas across all Australian states and territories were surveyed in 2010 by the Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer at Cancer Council Victoria.



**Analysis: Junk food advertising allowed under food industry codes**

See table attached.

\*Organisations include:

**Coalition on Food Advertising to Children (CFAC)**

The member organisations of the CFAC are:

- Australian and New Zealand Obesity Society
- Australian Dental Association
- Australian Dental and Oral Health Therapists Association
- Australian Health Promotion Association
- Australian Medical Association
- Cancer Council Australia
- Home Economics Institute of Australia
- Nutrition Australia
- Public Health Advocacy Institute of Western Australia
- Public Health Association of Australia
- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
- Young Media Australia
- Ms Kaye Mehta, Senior Lecturer in Nutrition and Dietetics, Flinders University
- Dr Rosemary Stanton OAM

**Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance (ACDPA)**

The members of ACDPA are:

- Cancer Council Australia
- Diabetes Australia
- Kidney Health Australia
- National Heart Foundation of Australia
- The National Stroke Foundation

Media release

