

AUSTRALIAN CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION ALLIANCE



MEDIA RELEASE

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Senate report on junk food ad bans avoids tough decisions

A Senate committee's rejection of proposed restrictions on junk food advertising to children reflects the major political parties' reluctance to take tough decisions to reduce childhood obesity, the Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance (ACDPA) said today.

ACDPA Chair, Professor Ian Olver, said he was disappointed that the only recommended action from the Senate committee inquiring into junk food advertising to children was to refer the findings to the Government's Preventative Health Taskforce.

"The Taskforce has already recommended restrictions on junk food advertising be part of a comprehensive strategy to reduce obesity and overweight in Australia," Professor Olver said.

"Referring material collected at the inquiry to the Taskforce is just going through the motions.

"The submissions generally reflect the schism in this debate – public health advocates call for advertising regulation, while commercial interests say restrictions would not work.

"The major political parties at the federal level appear to support the industry view in the absence of longitudinal evidence. This is despite two state governments [South Australia and Queensland] looking seriously at advertising restrictions, while even the industry is making noises about better self-regulation as the call for restrictions gathers momentum.

"While we wait for the level of scientific evidence required by policy makers, more children will be constantly encouraged to consume foods high in fat, sugar and salt. The best evidence is the enormous sums of money injected into saturation media advertising to encourage consumption of unhealthy foods."

Professor Olver said obese children tended to become obese adults, putting them at increased risk of developing chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, kidney disease and some cancers.

"At a time when one in four children is overweight or obese we need to do everything we can to help our kids preserve their health into the future by eating healthy food and maintaining a healthy weight," he said.

"But our children are exposed to a huge volume of advertising for unhealthy food and beverages during their peak television viewing times, which influences their food preferences and eating habits and, ultimately, their weight."

The Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance comprises: Cancer Council Australia, Diabetes Australia, Kidney Health Australia, the National Heart Foundation of Australia and the National Stroke Foundation.

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