

AUSTRALIAN CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION ALLIANCE



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Time to stop industry self-regulation charade on fast food ads to kids

Australia's largest disease prevention groups are calling for mandatory restrictions on unhealthy food advertising to children to be introduced without delay in the wake of evidence that industry self-regulation has failed to reduce children's exposure to unhealthy fast food advertising.

"It's time for the Australian Government to put an end to the industry's self-regulation charade by introducing mandatory restrictions that that will make a real difference," said Professor Greg Johnson, chair of the Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance.

Professor Johnson said that an analysis of TV advertisements before and after the introduction of the Australian Quick Service Industry Initiative for Responsible Advertising and Marketing to Children showed no difference in the frequency of unhealthy fast food ads during children's peak television viewing times.

"This study just confirms that industry self-regulation doesn't work and is just an attempt to stave off stronger measures that would have a real effect," Professor Johnson said.

"Despite industry claims about 'responsible' advertising, our children are still exposed to a huge volume of advertising for unhealthy foods and beverages during their peak television viewing times, and this influences their food preferences and eating habits and, ultimately, their weight," he said.

"With one in four children overweight or obese, and rates even higher for disadvantaged kids this is completely unacceptable."

Professor Johnson 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.

"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.

"If we really want to reduce our children's exposure to unhealthy food advertising and the burden of obesity, then the Government must bite the bullet and introduce effective mandatory restrictions as soon as possible."

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Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance members: Cancer Council Australia; Diabetes Australia; KidneyHealth Australia; Heart Foundation; National Stroke Foundation.