

JUNK FOOD INJUNCTION

2007 WINTER EDITION



The
Cancer
Council
New South Wales

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

This is an exciting time for those of you who are keen to see improvements in the way that food is marketed to children.

The Children's Television Standards that govern TV advertising to children are up for review and are open for public consultation NOW! The Cancer Council together with the Coalition on Food Advertising to Children will be preparing a submission, and you should also consider making one.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority has an obligation to consider all submissions, so make your voice heard and help protect children from commercial exploitation by food marketers. In this issue of Junk Food Injunction we have provided you with information and suggestions for making your own submission.

Update: Pull the Plug on Food Advertising Campaign

In the autumn edition of Junk Food Injunction we called for your support for the advocacy campaign, to influence the outcome of the Children's Television Standards review. Thank you to everyone who has signed a postcard. We have had a great response with more than 16,000 signed postcards (both hard copy and electronic) collected at the time of printing. All of these postcards will be delivered to the Australian Communications and Media Authority in mid-August, to coincide with the end of the public consultation period for the new standards. Nothing says public support quite like a truckload of signed postcards at your doorstep!

There is still time for you and your friends and colleagues to sign a postcard if you haven't already, visit <https://www.cancercouncil.com.au/pulltheplug>, before the 15th August.

CHILDREN'S TELEVISION STANDARDS REVIEW: The Time for Action is Now!

After 18 months of scoping, the Australian Communications and Media Authority have finally released the Issues Paper for the Children's Television Standards review. At first glance, this paper seems promising, with a reasonable proportion of the content canvassing changes for TV food advertising to children. However, on closer scrutiny some key advertising features appear to have been selectively excluded from the review process; namely the repetition of advertisements and the acceptability of competitions, celebrities and cartoon characters to be associated with advertised food products. For other aspects of food advertising, a range of issues have been outlined, with no suggested regulations yet available to critique.

Considerable attention has been given to the potential loss of revenue, for broadcasters, should stricter advertising regulations to children come into force. It is difficult to feel too concerned for TV broadcasters, considering the enormous revenue that they generate (\$3.4 billion in revenue generated by Australia's three major television networks between 2002 and 2003). Any revenue that is lost from food marketing to children would surely be just a drop in ocean. A recent review of the regulations that govern TV food advertising in the UK acknowledged that broadcasters are likely to lose some revenue with new regulations that exclude all advertisements for high fat, sugar and salt foods during programs for children, however a phase in period would allow them to replace the restricted advertisements with other non-food advertising.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority paper outlines options for changes that range from maintaining the status quo to the complete prohibition of all food advertisements and premiums (give aways, competitions etc) directed at children. Key questions have been provided on various topics relating to TV food advertising to children, to guide public submissions. The Issues Paper can be viewed at http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC_310262. Now is the time to speak up about the issues that concern you about TV food advertising to children. The closing date for submissions is Friday 17 August 2007. See the back page of this newsletter for suggested inclusions for your submission.

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WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO TV FOOD ADVERTISING

The Centre for Health Promotion, Children, Youth and Women's Health Service in South Australia has produced a practical resource for primary schools on TV food advertising - *TV Food Ads: Educate and Advocate*. This resource takes a whole school approach, integrating awareness and advocacy about TV food advertising into the school curriculum, the school environment and providing links between the school and the community. This resource provides:

- teaching ideas to help students develop their critical media literacy skills
- ways to reinforce curriculum messages through wider school practices, such as within the canteen or fundraising activities, and
- information on how to raise awareness about TV food advertising amongst staff, parents and families.

For further information on this resource visit:
www.wch.sa.gov.au/foodadstokids.html

For an order form, contact the Centre for Health Promotion on:

Ph: (08) 8161 7777

Email: cywhs.healthpromotion@cywhs.sa.gov.au

Cost: \$33.00 (includes GST) + \$3.30 postage and handling

PARENTS ADD WEIGHT TO THE TV AD DEBATE

In March this year The Coalition on Food Advertising to Children conducted a survey into Australian parents' attitudes to TV food advertising to children and parental support for strengthening the Children's Television Standards (the regulations governing TV advertising to children). Four hundred parents of children aged 0-14 years across Australia were randomly selected to participate.

More than three-quarters of parents were "somewhat" or "very concerned" about unhealthy food advertising on TV. The majority of these parents worried about:

- the sheer amount of unhealthy TV food advertising
- the use of celebrities or cartoon characters to promote food products
- the use of premiums such as free toys and giveaways to attract children, and
- the selective promotion of only the positive nutritional attributes of a food product. For example, it appears to be a common marketing tactic of confectionery manufacturers to label their products as low fat, whilst ignoring their high sugar content.

When asked about their perception of the current Children's Television Standards, an overwhelming proportion of parents believed that the current regulations were not effective and that the regulations should be strengthened. More than half strongly supported the regulations to be changed to a ban on unhealthy food advertising during times when children are watching TV.

Parents' concern about food marketing to children extended beyond the TV set, with a high level of concern reported for other marketing strategies including the Internet, children's magazines, fundraisers and sponsorship of children's sport.

This survey highlights the extent of parental concern about food advertising to children, and the strength of community support for changes to the regulatory environment for TV advertising to children. The survey findings were widely covered by the media and have been used by The Coalition on Food Advertising to Children in its ongoing advocacy.



The survey shows parents don't believe their kids are being protected from the onslaught of junk-food advertising on TV... These ads have been expertly designed to make kids want to eat more junk food, and we know they work

Kathy Chapman, The Cancer Council NSW
(The Age - 16/05/07)

CHOICE FOOD FOR KIDS: IT'S CHOICE!

CHOICE has recently launched their parent-friendly website CHOICE Food for Kids. This website provides parents with independent information about the nutritional content of popular children's foods. CHOICE has been busy building up a repertoire of analysed food products for various food categories, and also provides an opportunity for consumers to nominate food products they want analysed. Food products are rated according to a traffic light coloured system according to their total fat, saturated fat, sugar and sodium (salt) content. A red rating indicates that a product has a high level of these unhealthy nutrients, amber indicates a moderate level and green indicates a low level.

CHOICE Food for Kids contains many opportunities for parents to learn about or be involved in topical issues in children's nutrition, including campaigns, blogs and polls. Visit <http://www.choicefoodforkids.com.au/> to access all of these features.



ADVERTISERS JUMP ON THE REGULATION REVIEW BANDWAGON

With the looming threat of more effective TV food advertising regulations for children following the Children's Television Standards review, the Australian Association of National Advertisers, the advertising industry's peak body, has announced the review of their own Advertising to Children Code.

Coincidence? We think not! This move by the advertising industry is an attempt to evade tighter government regulations, and to give the perception that advertisers can responsibly market to children without the interference of government. Already their tactic is working. The Children's Television Standards Review Issues Paper makes reference to the review of the Australian Association of National Advertisers Code for Food and Beverages Advertising and Marketing, which took place in November 2006. It states that in this review, the Food and Beverages Advertising Code was extended to include a range of subject matters and media types, giving the impression that the new code is meritorious. In reality the changes to the code have been mostly symbolic, making only broad statements about the nature of food advertisements and no concrete restrictions of the types of foods that may be advertised to children, nor any restrictions on the programs or viewing periods that advertisements can be broadcast.

The Cancer Council, as part of The Coalition on Food Advertising to Children has submitted comments to the Australian Association of National Advertisers for their review.

In a nutshell

- The Children's Television Standards are currently open for public comment. Make a submission today and add your comments on this important issue.
- These regulations have not been reviewed since their introduction in 1990. Don't wait another 17 years to have your say!
- There is still time to support the Pull the Plug on Food Advertising campaign, to sign a postcard visit <https://www.cancercouncil.com.au/pulltheplug>

Real kids' food: Healthy Recipes

Lentil and sweet potato soup

Serves 8

Ingredients:

½ cup (100g) red lentils
2 cups (500ml) boiling water
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 red onion, chopped
2 large carrots, peeled, cut into large slices
1kg sweet potato, peeled, cut into large slices
1 large head broccoli, cut into florets
6 cups (1.5L) water
green onion, low-fat natural yogurt, to serve

Method:

1. Combine lentils and boiling water in a large jug. Set aside.
2. Heat oil in a large saucepan on medium. Cook onion for 2 minutes, until soft.
3. Add lentils and soaking water, carrot, sweet potato, broccoli and 6 cups water.
4. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer for 30 minutes, until vegetables are tender. Cool slightly.
5. Using a hand blender blend until smooth. Season with pepper to taste.
6. Serve topped with green onion and a dollop of natural yogurt.

Top 5 Tips on What to Include in a Submission to ACMA

The following points relate to some key questions outlined in the Australian Communications and Media Authority's Issues Paper. To read the Issues Paper go to http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD//pc=PC_310262.

1. Should the CTS be amended to specifically address the issue of food advertising independently or advertising more generally?

The Children's Television Standards need to be amended to protect children from high levels of food advertising. Restricting only food advertising means the debate is focused on advertising's effects on obesity, rather than on the commercial exploitation of children more generally. Some countries, for example Sweden, restrict all advertising to children. It seems likely that this approach will receive much opposition, so focusing only on restricting food advertising makes stronger regulations more likely.

2. Should industry be required to adopt a monitoring and reporting role regarding the outcomes of the new AANA Food and Beverages Marketing and Communications Code before any changes to the CTS are considered?

This proposal doesn't go far enough to address the issue of monitoring and compliance of advertising to children. The industry code is insufficient. Only statutory regulations can ultimately be relied upon for changes to the children's advertising environment.

3. Should advertising provisions to children (currently in both the CTS and the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice) be consolidated under the CTS?

Yes, this will provide the public with a clear picture of all of the available regulations and complaints procedures.

4. Should the amount of food advertising allowed during C programs be limited or banned? Should all food advertising directed to children be banned?

TV viewing data has shown that children's viewing is not limited to C programs. The regulations need to extend beyond these programs. Banning all food advertising to children, while children are actually watching is likely to have the largest public health impact. This blanket ban would preclude advertising to children during all viewing times. Banning all food advertising, rather than only unhealthy food advertising, will simplify the issue of attempting to classify foods neatly as either healthy or unhealthy. Non-commercial advertising and community service announcements for healthy food, such as Go for 2 & 5 fruit and vegetable campaign, should still be permitted.

5. Should the use of premium offers in food advertising be banned during C programs or in all advertising to children?

Premium offers (give aways, competitions etc) should not be included in food advertisements directed at children. Young children lack the developmental capacity to distinguish between the premium offer and the food product. Premiums increase children's interest and preference for a product. The regulations need to apply further than just during C programs. Banning premium offers in all food advertising to children would be the most appropriate option.

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Publisher: **The Cancer Council NSW**

ISSN: 1834 - 3767 CAN/06/12B

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