

ACTION ON JUNK FOOD ADVERTISING FOR CHILDREN

THE
GREENS



Childhood obesity is a complex issue with many causal factors. The Greens will introduce legislation to limit the amount of junk food advertising on television, which will significantly reduce children's exposure to this kind of product marketing. While an advertising ban alone will not eliminate the problem of obesity it's a sensible first step that has the support of health experts, including doctors, community groups and, most importantly, parents.

The Greens will reintroduce our private member's bill Protecting Children from Junk Food Advertising (Broadcasting Amendment) Bill which encourages healthier eating habits among children and prohibits the broadcasting of advertisements for junk food during children's television viewing time by:

- Preventing the broadcast of advertisements or sponsorship announcements for these food or beverages between 6.00am and 9.30pm on commercial television – this requirement would be in addition to the requirements of the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice.
- Introducing standards for the control of food or beverage advertising based on nutrient profiles set by the Food Standards Australia New Zealand.

Background

There is growing evidence to show that children are susceptible to what they see on television. Food advertising directly influences children's choices and increases their requests for foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt. A 2003 review¹ of the international literature on the impact of food advertising to children concluded that children under 12 did not have the cognitive ability to understand the concepts of marketing. The study further concluded that food promotion can directly affect children's food preferences, purchases (or what they 'pester' their parents to buy) and what they eat. The Greens understand that parents don't always have the time or the energy to resist the constant 'pestering' by their children or the misinformation directed at children through junk food advertising.

¹ 'Food Advertising and Marketing Directed at Children and Adolescents in the US', International Journal of Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity, 2003

ACTION ON JUNK FOOD ADVERTISING FOR CHILDREN



Australian children's exposure to television food advertising is among the highest in the world and a high proportion of these advertisements are for non-core or extra (energy-dense, nutrient-poor) foods. According to the National Preventative Health Taskforce Australian children watching 20 hours of television or more per week are twice as likely to be overweight or obese as children who watch less television.²

There is evidence in Australia that the foods advertised during children's television viewing times, particularly in popular children's programs have higher rates of high-fat/high-sugar compared with the foods advertised during adults' viewing hours; and during popular children's programs.³ The Greens want to reinforce and normalise healthy eating for Australian children by ending this exposure to advertising unhealthy foods to children during peak viewing periods.

A study in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health⁴ found that there is widespread parental concern about food advertising aimed at children and strong support for tighter restrictions. Almost 80 percent of respondents were concerned about the volume of advertisements, 68 percent were concerned about the methods used to market unhealthy food to children, and 87 percent supported a ban on unhealthy food advertising during children's viewing times. The 2007 survey commissioned by the Coalition on Junk Food Advertising to Children (CFAC)⁵ found that 90 percent of parents agreed that advertising food high in fat, sugar and salt directly to children was 'unconscionable'.

2 Wake M, Hesketh K and Waters E. Television, computer use and body mass index in Australian primary school children. *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health*. 2003; 39:130-4. Available from: www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/118891741/abstract?CRETRY=1&SRETRY=0

3 Kelly B, Smith B, King L, Flood V and Bauman A. Television food advertising to children: the extent and nature of exposure. *Public Health Nutrition*. 2007; 10:1234-40. Available from: <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=1363208>

4 Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, Volume 32 Issue 4, Pages 341 – 347, Published Online: 6 Aug 2008

5 Coalition on Food Advertising to Children (CFAC), May 2007