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Walt Disney's junk food ad ban exposes TV's influence on kids



Walt Disney has announced it will institute a junk food advertising ban on programs for children across its networks.

Executive Manager of the Obesity Policy Coalition (OPC), Jane Martin, said the announcement was potent as it acknowledged the powerful role that television advertising can play in influencing children's behaviour.

"For so long we've heard the junk food industry talk about how ineffectual TV advertising is (despite sinking millions of dollars into it), now we see a major US network acknowledge the impact TV can have on children's diets, and therefore, childhood obesity."

"We know that TV advertising affects what kids eat, what they choose to eat and pester their parents for. In light of the current childhood obesity crisis, these practices are unethical and the Australian government needs to shift from its current support for ineffectual self regulation by the industry to the stronger statutory regulations that parents are calling for."

"The industry self-regulatory codes don't meaningfully reduce children's exposure to unhealthy food advertising. There are no penalties for breaching the codes and the interpretations by the Ad Standards Board (when complaints are made) are so narrow they render the codes irrelevant."

"While this is a positive step from the Disney Channel, it will need to be closely monitored to ensure that it is making a difference," said Ms Martin.

In Australia around a quarter of all children are either overweight or obese and there is clear evidence that unhealthy food marketing is a major driver of what children eat and what they want to eat and what they pester their parents for.

"So far we have relied on industry to do the right thing by our children, it's now time for government to step in and restrict junk food marketing to children," said Ms Martin.

Media release



The World Health Organization recommends countries develop policy mechanisms to reduce children's exposure to unhealthy food marketing and eliminate it from children's settings.

About the Obesity Policy Coalition

The Obesity Policy Coalition is a group of leading public health agencies who are concerned about the escalating levels of overweight and obesity, particularly in children.

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.



Media release

