OPC urges Senate to support junk ad bill

The Obesity Policy Coalition (OPC) has urged all Federal MPs to support a Bill to be introduced into the Senate tomorrow to protect children from junk food advertising.

Jane Martin, Senior Policy Adviser for the OPC said the current system of self-regulation by multinational corporations was utterly ineffective.

“Research released this week by the South Australian government has shown that claims by the industry that self-regulation is working are a sham. The research found children are still being bombarded by ads for junk food between 6pm and 10pm at night when some of the most popular TV shows for children are on.”

“When unhealthy food can be advertised during popular children’s TV shows such as Junior Masterchef, and junk food companies have the ability to directly market to children online, then you’d have to say the loopholes are bigger than the safety net that self-regulation is meant to provide.”

Ms Martin said she was pleased to see the proposed legislation covers the marketing and promotion of junk food not only on TV, but also through digital media channels such as websites, SMS and email.

“Increasingly we are seeing large multinational food companies complementing their mainstream media buys with cheap, highly targeted online platforms such as Facebook and interactive web games, giving them direct access to children.”

“Allowing junk food companies unfettered marketing access to children, while we are trying to encourage Australians to adopt healthier lifestyles, is counter-productive. It’s time the health of young Australians was put above commercial interests.

“We urge all MPs to support this Bill that could have a significant impact on the health of our children. If we don’t address obesity in a comprehensive way that includes reducing the marketing of unhealthy foods, the current generation of children is predicted to have a life expectancy less than their parents,” she said.
Ms Martin said there was high public support for restricting junk food advertising to children with 83% of grocery buyers in favour of the government stepping in to ban advertising at times when children watch TV.

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 Victoria, The Cancer Council Victoria, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) and the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Obesity Prevention at Deakin University.

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1 Obesity Prevention Policy Proposals: Public Acceptability 2008 to 2010 study