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Sanitarium proves industry can ‘green light’ traffic labels

A proposed front of pack traffic light labelling system launched by Sanitarium today is a big step towards helping consumers make informed decisions about the food they purchase, according to the Obesity Policy Coalition (OPC).

Jane Martin, senior policy adviser for the OPC, said the ‘Healthy Eating System’, which is based on multiple traffic light labels, was a welcome advance by a manufacturer in light of considerable resistance from the broader processed food industry towards improved labelling that best supports healthy eating.

“With obesity at record levels and only projected to increase, this shows how the food industry can play an active role in improving public health by arming consumers with information to make healthier choices, the easier choices.

“At present, it is very difficult for consumers to sort the fat from the fiction; the Daily Intake Guide (DIG) system favoured by some large food manufacturers is not well understood and doesn’t enable consumers to differentiate easily between healthy and unhealthy foods,” she said.

Sanitarium’s research found that 45% of households do not use the DIG system at all and that awareness of the system was much lower in men and people with lower levels of education. Only 54% of respondents were able to correctly identify the healthiest food using the DIG system, compared with 90% using the Healthy Eating System and 86% with straight traffic light labels.

Ms Martin said traffic light labelling was recommended by the Federal Government’s Labelling Logic review.

"The review recommended that traffic light labels be introduced on a voluntary basis, so it is very encouraging to see companies such as Sanitarium tackling the challenge head-on. We encourage all manufacturers and in particular the Australian Food and Grocery Council to support the lead of Sanitarium, one of its key members, and actively work to improve the health of Australians," said Ms Martin.

"If all manufacturers got on board it would be a major win for Australians who currently don’t have clear and simple information about the food they’re buying," said Ms Martin.

Recent Cancer Council Victoria research indicates that 87% of Australian consumers are in favour of traffic light labelling on food packaging.



Media release



About the Obesity Policy Coalition

The Obesity Policy Coalition is a group of leading public health agencies which 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.

The Obesity Policy Coalition supports such policies as:

- Restrictions on junk food marketing
- Improved labelling on packaged food, including traffic light labelling
- Tax and pricing strategies to support healthy eating



Media release

