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Mac Off - Get Junk Food out of Junior Sports

71% of Australians want to see fast food given the boot from children's sports



A coalition of leading health agencies, the Obesity Policy Coalition (OPC) is calling on the Victorian Government to kick junk food brand promotion out of children's sports in light of the latest incursion by McDonald's into junior football yesterday – the Mac Pack.

Executive Manager of the OPC, Jane Martin said that the programs such as Mac Pack are an underhanded way of marketing junk food to children at a time when there is a lot of concern about childhood obesity and it's high on the government's agenda.

"Increasingly we are seeing unhealthy food companies attempting to buy themselves a 'healthy halo' by associating their brand with junior sport. It is a marketing strategy pure and simple, not an altruistic interest in funding sporting clubs or helping kids to improve their handball skills," said Ms Martin.

"If McDonald's really cared about the health of our children it would stop promoting itself to them and using football stars who are incredibly popular and influential to push their brand. Unhealthy food and sport are incompatible and linking the two in this way is unethical given children's limited ability to recognise marketing messages and their intent."

Research¹ has shown that children are particularly susceptible to the influence of brand sponsorship of sport with 10-11 year-olds reporting they liked to return the favour to sponsors by buying their products; and that sponsors were 'cool'.

Almost three-quarters (71%) of respondents to a Cancer Council Victoria survey of 1500 Australians agree that junk food companies should be restricted from sponsoring children's sporting activities.

¹ [Kelly B](#), [Baur LA](#), [Bauman AE](#), [King L](#), [Chapman K](#), [Smith BJ](#). "Food company sponsors are kind, generous and cool": (mis)conceptions of junior sports players. [Int J Behav Nutr Phys Act](#). 2011 Sep 5;8:95.

Media release



“Parents are wise to this sort of marketing. They’re telling us they’re sick of unhealthy products and brands being spruiked to their children or worse their children being used as mobile billboards and brand ambassadors for fast food companies,” said Ms Martin.

Ms Martin said that allowing junk food companies into junior sport was counterproductive to the government’s current efforts to address unhealthy eating particularly in schools and early childhood settings.

Ms Martin said the Mac Pack program was the latest in a long line of promotions targeting children with unhealthy food such as McDonald’s sponsorship of Little Athletics and Hoop Time Basketball as well as Nestle’s Milo sponsorship of junior cricket.



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

