

Submission No. 76

(Inq into Obesity)

FE 18/06/08



13 June 2008

**Submission to**

**House Standing Committee on Health and Ageing**

**Public Inquiry into Obesity**

**by the**

**Confectionery Manufacturers of Australasia (CMA)**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to Obesity Inquiry. The CMA would welcome the opportunity to be heard in support of this submission.

The CMA is the peak industry body representing manufacturers of chocolate, sugar and gum confectionery, suppliers of ingredients, machinery, packaging materials and services to the industry, and wholesaler and distributor firms. We have 210 members in Australia and New Zealand. Our Australian members are multinational organisations, major companies, small and medium enterprises and niche businesses operating in Australia, employing Australians, creating Australian icons and exporting to the world.

Our contact details are: Trish Hyde, Chief Executive Officer, Confectionery Manufacturers of Australasia, PO Box 1307, Camberwell, Vic, 3124.

**Overview**

The CMA welcomes and supports the Inquiry. It is an important opportunity to discuss community and industry concerns about the rate of growth in obesity and in the light of this discussion work towards a healthier Australia.

**The CMA, on behalf of its 210 members, asks the House Standing Committee on Health and Ageing to;**

- **continue public forums and engage broader than just the health sector to find ways to build a healthier Australia;**
- **in its deliberations, adopt the philosophy that there are no bad foods, only bad diets;**
- **consider education programs in helping people understand the role of treats in diets; and**
- **consider encouraging the food industry to reformulate and innovate for healthier products alternatives.**

# **CMA Submission**

## **Comment on terms of reference**

The CMA notes the breadth of the Committee's terms of reference, in particular that it will recommend what governments, industry, individuals and the broader community can do to prevent and manage the obesity epidemic in children, youth and adults.

Ideally the Inquiry would have explored how to create a healthy society, combining social, cultural and biological factors that make up well-being. Given the breadth of the Inquiry the CMA has made a high level submission.

## **Prevalence of obesity and impacts on health**

Today, there are more overweight Australians as a proportion of the population than ever before in our history. Health professionals, governments and welfare groups have identified the large health risks people face throughout their lives as a result of their weight. This social crisis needs to be addressed and everyone, including the food industry, has a role to play.

There appears to be no debate about the underlying scientific cause of obesity; energy intake is greater than energy expended. Where debate does exist, is in how to prevent obesity and how best to manage the health and well-being of those suffering from obesity.

The weight of debate and evidence suggests that the answers are complex, with no simple 'silver bullet' solution. No food, television, or couch has single-handedly caused a person to become obese. But rather all good things should be enjoyed in moderation. Like most people, confectionery makers know that chocolates and lollies are a treat – to be enjoyed in moderation.

In fact, there is general consensus that a combination of a balanced diet and active lifestyle are key to the management and prevention of obesity.

Some believe industry bodies are not able to be objective about social issues as they are always considering the commercial consequences. Our industry believes we have a vested interest in ensuring Australians are able to enjoy confectionery as a treat for generations to come. An unhealthy nation equals unhealthy businesses in the long term. For our part, the industry welcomes the opportunity to participate in finding the solutions.

**The CMA thanks the House Standing Committee on Health and Ageing, for the opportunity to participate and asks the Committee to continue public forums and engage broader than just the health sector to find ways to build a healthier Australia.**

## **Confectionery's part in Australians diet**

According to the 1995 National Nutrition Survey, confectionery represents only a small proportion of an average Australian's daily energy intake - approximately two per cent of kilojoules consumed for adults and four per cent for children. Furthermore, consumption data available to date shows that confectionery consumption has not varied greatly over time.

### **There are no bad foods – only bad diets**

There is an increasing tendency by some to class foods into good and bad – demonising the so-called bad foods. The CMA believes this is misleading and unhealthy. There is a risk that labelling some foods as 'bad', may encourage these foods to be consumed inappropriately and result in children, in particular, not understanding the role of treat foods in their diets.

Furthermore, it is irresponsible to classify foods on the basis of just the energy, fat, sugars and salt that they contain, while ignoring the remaining nutrients that these foods contribute to an overall diet over time.

According to the Dietary Guidelines for Australian Adults (Commonwealth of Australia 2003), there are no such foods as good and bad foods and it is inappropriate to take its overall dietary recommendations and apply it to a single food item. The focus should be on the overall diet and confectionery as a treat food, can have a positive and legitimate role in a balanced diet.

Australian confectionery makers are in no doubt that their products are treat foods. We want people to understand the role of treat foods in their diet.

We contend that for a healthy diet people need to think not of healthy and unhealthy food, but healthy (balanced) diets and unhealthy (unbalanced) diets.

**In deliberations, the CMA asks the House Standing Committee on Health and Ageing, to adopt the philosophy that there are no bad foods, only bad diets.**

### **Being Treatwise**

The confectionery industry believes that there is a role for confectionery in people's lives. For centuries it has been a treat shared and given with great affection. Something most of us can admit to indulging in from time to time. But most importantly, it is a treat.

To reinforce the treat message, the CMA launched '*Be treatwise*' – a confectionery industry initiative with global links, designed to educate and raise consumer awareness of the role of treats in a balanced diet and active lifestyle.

Incorporating a front of pack logo and on the reverse, thumbnails showing the percentage of daily nutrients that the product contains. *Be treatwise* is a reminder at the time of purchase and consumption.

*Be treatwise* labelling is on products in-store now and more will appear as product packaging is changed over.

In addition to this initiative, CMA members have, for the most part, voluntarily self-imposed restrictions on advertising to children, provided smaller portions sizes in recent years and reformulated products to reduce energy.

**The CMA asks the House Standing Committee on Health and Ageing to consider education programs in helping people understand the role of treats in diets.**

### **Steps towards a better future**

Can we make confectionery a better treat? Yes. There is growing scientific evidence that dark chocolate in small portions may have health benefits and there is the opportunity to innovate to further improve nutritional value. Equally, there is an opportunity to reformulate to lower fats or sugars to reduce the kilojoules per serving and innovate to keep the desirable taste. Without changing confectionery's status as a treat food, there is scope to make a broader range of treat choices available for consumers.

Unfortunately, the industry is being dissuaded from reformulating and innovating confectionery because the proposed health and nutritional claims standard that will soon be included in the Australian and New Zealand Food Standards Code significantly limits the ability to make health claims on confectionery.

**The CMA asks the House Standing Committee on Health and Ageing to consider encouraging the food industry to reformulate and innovate for healthier products alternatives.**

***'They place chocolates on your pillow to  
make you smile.***

***Let's remember the effect of happiness  
on our constitutions.'***