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**Sent:** Friday, 20 June 2008  
**To:** Committee, HAA (REPS)  
**Subject:** Submission for the Inquiry into Obesity in Australia

I'm diabetic. I have Meniere's Disorder, which requires a low-sodium diet for good control. I have had a life-long struggle with obesity, and I keep hoping I'll win. I'd like to make some comments on what affects me.

I'm suggestible

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Food advertisements with yummy-looking pictures, especially TV ads with voices, affect me a lot. In fact, I can feel full after dinner and not be thinking of food at all -- until a food ad comes on. Mostly food ads are for high-energy foods with a high content of sugar, salt, and/or fat -- because most ads are for processed foods, and sugar, salt and fat are what make them taste good. Not to mention lots of flavourings and colourings.

I find the Daily Intake Guide initiative totally useless

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1. The dietary values are based on a mythical adult. I say "mythical" because the requirements for adults vary between men, women, pregnant or lactating women, menopausal women, and elderly people generally -- not to mention on the basis of activity, height, and healthy weight. And of course the values don't apply to children. How are we expected to apply these values to ourselves as individuals?
2. The percentages are given on a per-serving basis. Although packages give a recommended serving size, most people don't weigh or measure their servings. If they did, they would often find that their serving size is much larger than the recommended serving size -- BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT FOOD INDUSTRY ADVERTISING TEACHES US. Take a look at the children digging into big bowls of cereal in TV ads; these servings must be several times larger than the recommended serving size.
3. This system does not correlate to the Australian Dietary Guidelines. This is particularly annoying for those of us who have to live on low-salt (low-sodium) meals. There is a very simple definition of what constitutes a low-salt food: it has 120 milligrams or less of sodium per 100 grams of the food. If we eat low-salt food in sensible quantities, we really don't have to worry. In contrast, the Dietary Intake Guide condemns us to the old-fashioned, difficult system of counting milligrams of sodium all day, every day -- probably the main reason most people don't manage to stay on low-sodium diets.

It would be so much easier to understand this system if the values were simply given as high, medium, or low in relation to a serving. Using the Australian Dietary Guidelines, it shouldn't be difficult to what high, medium, or low means.

A similar method has been used to design the Traffic Light System which is recommended by the Food Standards Agency of Great Britain. It is described in full at the following website:

<http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/foodlabels/trafficlights/>

It's simple to use, even for children. Foods with lots of green lights are generally healthier than foods with more amber or red lights. Red light foods are treats, not everyday foods.

Why can't Australia come up with something that's this easy to use, even in a crowded supermarket when you're rushed for time, rather than the Dietary Intake Guide, which is difficult (if not impossible) even at the best of times.

I eat when I'm hungry, angry, lonely, tired, even happy

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I eat emotionally because that's what I've learned since I was a small child. Food is a reward, or comfort. Food stuffs down feelings or fills up empty places.

With the help of a psychologist who has done extensive work with people with eating disorders, and the help I get from Overeaters Anonymous, I'm learning to eat -- and live -- a lot more healthily.

I wish it was as simple as "eat less and exercise more"!

I apologise for being late

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Thank you for considering this submission, even though it is late.

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