

# FED UP!

A tale of junk food marketing to kids



hmm...



what's the...



buzz?

[ choice ]

## What's this story about, anyway?

This is a story about how junk food is sold to kids.

No one wants children to grow up unhealthy, but it's time we listened to parents instead of just blaming them.

That's why CHOICE has asked parents across Australia to tell the real story of how junk food marketing affects their kids and families.

# FED UP!

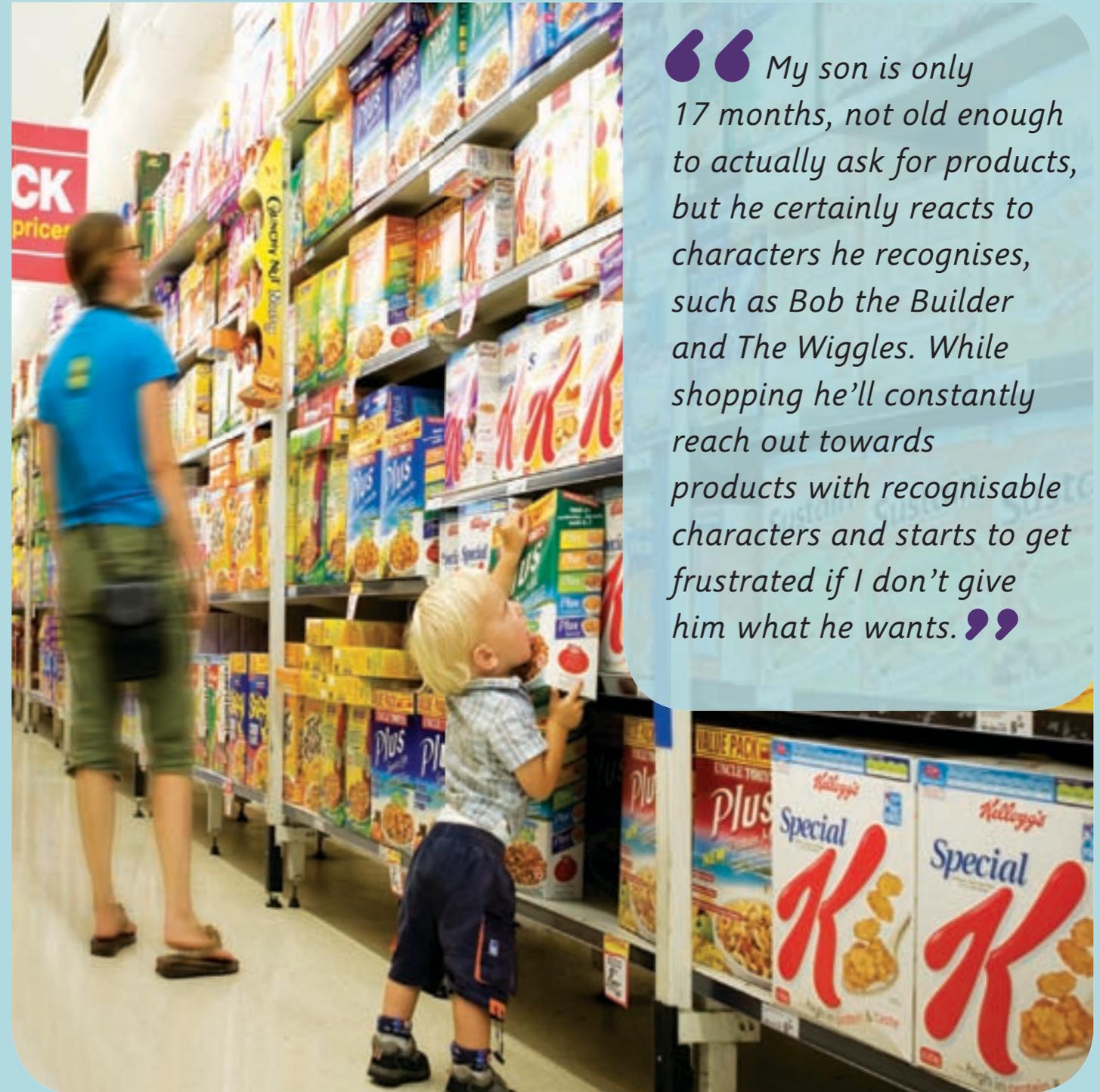
A tale of junk food marketing to kids

Here's what parents have to say ...



88%

The number of Australian parents who believe that the marketing of food specifically to children contributes to parents' difficulties in ensuring children develop healthier eating habits.



“ My son is only 17 months, not old enough to actually ask for products, but he certainly reacts to characters he recognises, such as Bob the Builder and The Wiggles. While shopping he'll constantly reach out towards products with recognisable characters and starts to get frustrated if I don't give him what he wants. ”



**P**ester power is real. The World Health Organization confirms what every parent already knows: the relentless marketing of junk food influences children's food preferences and which foods they pester their parents to buy.



**T**he number of Australian parents who say their children have asked for specific foods or drinks as a direct result of marketing ~ this includes advertisements, as well as giveaways, collectables and competitions plus the use of characters and celebrities to promote a food product.

“ My children love products that feature a website offering games or prizes. Kinder Surprise chocolates come with a code which you can use to access special online games. It makes the product seem much more exciting ~ the chocolate is secondary to the special feature. ”



Meanwhile...



**155** million school-aged children around the world are overweight or obese ~ that's 1 in 10.

In Australia, it's an alarming 1 in 4 children.

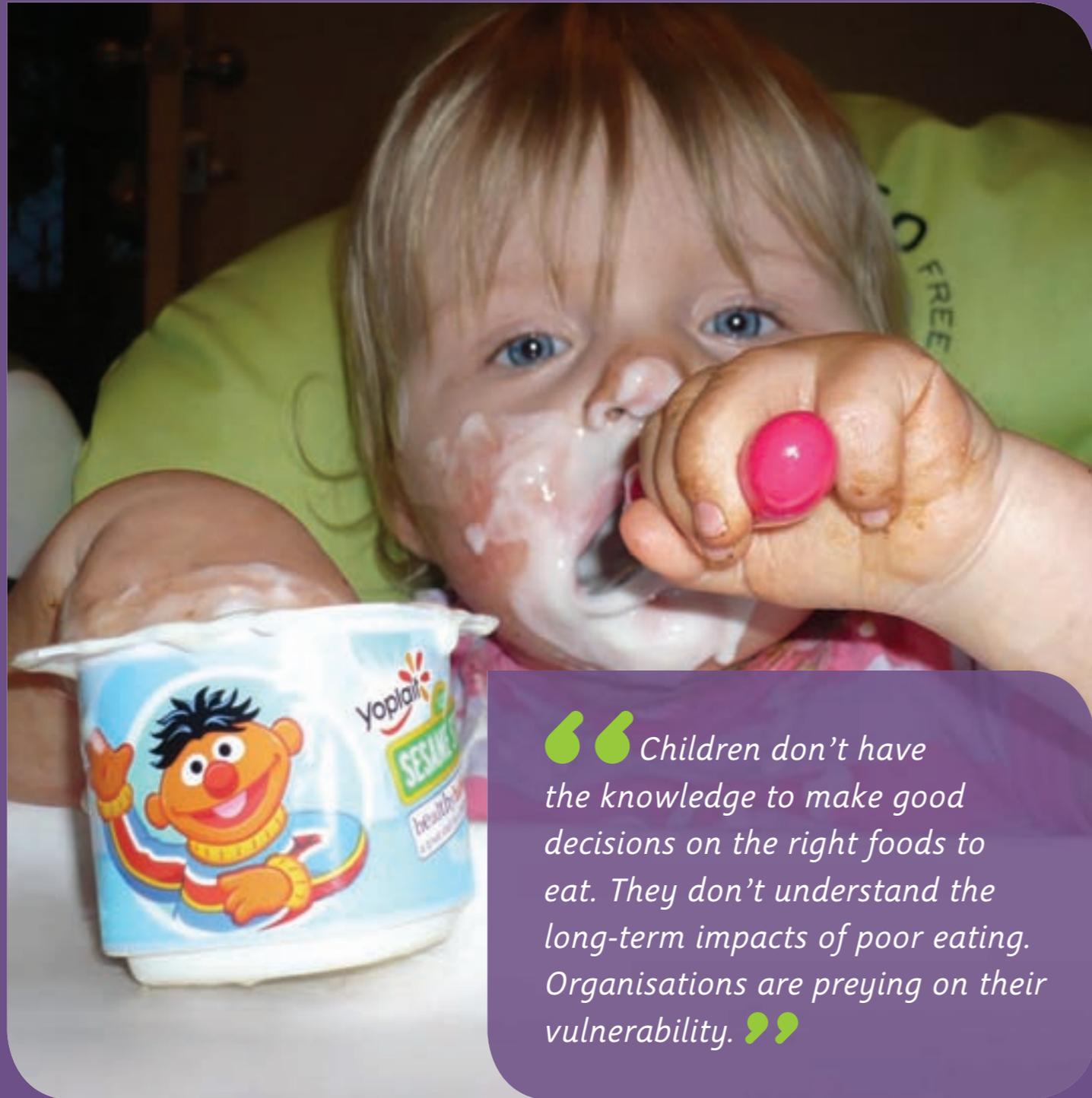


**O**verweight children are more likely to grow up to become overweight adults. Bad childhood eating habits are difficult to break and in later life can lead to

- eeek! stroke
- oh no! high blood pressure
- dear me! high cholesterol
- sugar! type 2 diabetes
- heavy! cardiovascular disease
- bad news! some cancers

Obesity costs Australia \$21 billion a year.





“Children don't have the knowledge to make good decisions on the right foods to eat. They don't understand the long-term impacts of poor eating. Organisations are preying on their vulnerability.”

# But are ads really the problem?

“If consumption was as easy as advertising, then, my golly, everything would be easy. It doesn't work that way.”

*Executive Director  
Australian Association of  
National Advertisers*

The advertising industry says there is only a “weak link” between television commercials for junk food and increased consumption of these products.

Yet they also claim that “advertising can ~ and does ~ play a positive role in influencing healthy food choices.”

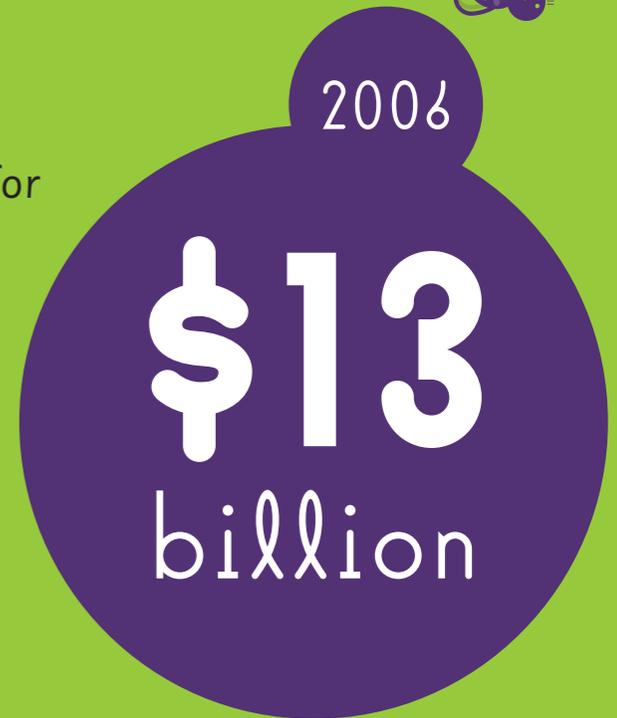


“ My son loves cricket and idolises the Australian cricket team. Because they promote KFC in the ad breaks, he demands KFC to be just like his heroes. This is disturbing as cricketers should be promoting sport and physical activity, not junk food! ”

**F**ood marketing is big business. The food, drink and confectionary industries spent US\$13 billion on worldwide advertising in 2006.

In Australia

- wow! \$391 million was spent on food marketing in 2005/06
- that much! 71% of marketing spend was for TV advertising
- really! Confectionary (19%) and breakfast cereals (14%) accounted for the biggest proportion of all money spent on food marketing
- far out! Fast food companies such as McDonalds, KFC, Pizza Hut, Hungry Jacks and Domino's Pizza spent \$115 - \$130 million in total on food marketing



So why not  
just turn off  
the TV?

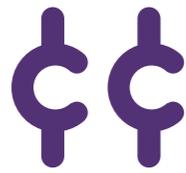


Multi-million dollar campaigns promote junk foods to kids just about everywhere: from the sporting field to the supermarket aisle, online, in magazines and alongside favourite TV shows and films.

And if that's not enough ~ toys, celebrities and popular cartoon characters double as mascots for an endless array of soft drinks, burgers and confectionary.

“ I have no control over sporting clubs and schools rewarding my children by handing out soft drinks and lollies as a reward for healthy activity! ”

**J**unk food advertisers target young children and teenagers for their



pocket money ~  
children have real  
spending power

Please

pester power ~  
children influence their  
parents' grocery spending



brand loyalty ~  
today's children are  
tomorrow's adults.





“ The number of nutritional claims that McDonald’s make is unbelievable, yet the kids’ meals are not at all healthy ~ I remember the Shrek green highly calorific milkshakes! There was absolutely every biscuit shape and cereal bar you could think of for Shrek. Why couldn’t we have peas marketed as Shrek cannonballs? ”



BUT we don't want to take the fun out of childhood, Surely !!





“ Of course I like giving my children treats from time to time, but on my terms, not because of the latest advertising gimmick. ”

I t's not about banning birthday cake, chips, burgers or chocolate ~ just making parents' lives a little easier.

“ The food, tobacco and alcohol industries have lucrative markets to protect, and there is a pervasive assumption that the solution to galloping rates of obesity, diabetes and other lifestyle diseases lies in individuals exercising greater self-control. But preaching self-control will not work if healthy choices are constantly being undermined by other, more powerful influences. While the law is not a complete answer, it can help to create supportive environments for changing the average behaviour of populations. ”

Roger Magnusson and Ruth Colagiuri  
Medical Journal of Australia

**F**or every US \$1 the World Health Organization spends on trying to improve the nutrition of the world's population, US \$500 is spent by the food industry to promote processed food.



**I**n the land of make believe, all children eat their spinach, get plenty of exercise and aren't at all influenced by junk food marketing.

But when it comes to encouraging children to make healthy food choices, the reality is that parents are up against it ~ and the growing rates of childhood obesity suggest they're losing the battle.

The good news is this story can have a happy ending.

It's time to put little bellies before big profits and turn this 'junk food generation' around.



# Acknowledgements and sources

All quotes featured come directly from parents' responses to the CHOICE Fed Up campaign survey, unless otherwise attributed.

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CHOICE thanks the following organisations for their support of the Fed Up campaign and their work to protect children from the unhealthy influence of junk food marketing

Australian Medical Association – [www.ama.com.au](http://www.ama.com.au), Coalition on Food Marketing to Children – [www.cfac.net.au](http://www.cfac.net.au), Consumers International – [www.junkfoodgeneration.org](http://www.junkfoodgeneration.org), International Obesity Taskforce – [www.iotf.org](http://www.iotf.org), NSW Centre for Overweight and Obesity – [www.coo.health.usyd.edu.au](http://www.coo.health.usyd.edu.au), Obesity Policy Coalition – [www.opc.org.au](http://www.opc.org.au), Parents Jury – [www.parentsjury.org.au](http://www.parentsjury.org.au), The Cancer Council Australia – [www.cancercouncil.com.au](http://www.cancercouncil.com.au)



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Designed and illustrated by Cynthia Nge



fed up  
alright

“As parents, it is our job to teach our kids to choose healthy food. Most children are too young to understand junk food, and they think that because a product shows their favourite character it must be good. I believe that ads that target kids are a large contributing factor to the increasing number of overweight kids.”

choice