



Committee Secretariat
Community Affairs Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

27th October 2008

Dear Committee Secretariat,

I am writing to you on behalf of The Parents Jury to express our support for the “Protecting Children from Junk Food Advertising (Broadcasting Amendment) Bill 2008” to ban unhealthy food advertising during children's TV viewing hours, and make suggestions to increase the Bill’s effectiveness.

The Parents Jury is a web-based network of over 3,600 parents who are interested in the prevention of overweight and obesity and the overall improvement of children’s nutrition and physical activity environments.

The Parents Jury is a unique program that fosters and harnesses the views and collective efforts of a large number of parents. We are supported by Diabetes Australia member organisations, Cancer Council Australia and its member organisations, The Australian and New Zealand Obesity Society, and VicHealth. These organisations jointly have a strong interest in working together towards healthier food and activity environments for children and turning around the rapidly increasing overweight and obesity levels amongst Australian children.

The Parents Jury is a dynamic platform through which parents can express their opinions; communicate with each other, share experiences and offer support; gather information and advocacy resources; and work together to campaign towards a healthy lifestyle for all Australian children.

The Parents Jury is supported by:



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The Parents Jury focuses its advocacy efforts on a number of key areas that have been determined by our members. These are: the improvement of food marketing practices to children, healthy school food and activity environments, improved physical activity environments in the local community and the display of unhealthy foods at supermarket checkout counters. We regularly ask Parents Jury members for their opinions on these issues and develop advocacy campaigns that specifically represent their views. Food marketing to children has been cited by our members as their top priority for advocacy and action.

The Parents Jury believes that the current provisions regarding food and beverage advertising to children in the Children's Television Standards are not adequate. Australian children are exposed to an unacceptably high level of television advertising for unhealthy food and drinks both throughout the day and during the evening period in which they constitute a large viewing audience.

Many of the advertisements for unhealthy foods incorporate techniques that overtly encourage pester power or promote foods in such a way that certain benefits are highlighted whilst others are deliberately omitted. Levels of overweight and obesity amongst children are rising rapidly in Australia. The over consumption of foods that are high in fat and sugar combined with increased sedentary behaviour are recognised as contributory factors. Both of these factors are directly associated with television watching.

The Parents Jury wholeheartedly supports the introduction of legislation that will implement a ban on all television advertisements for unhealthy foods and drinks from 6am to 9pm every day of the week. However the current Bill only applies to dedicated children's viewing periods, not the times when greatest numbers of children are watching. We also encourage the implementation of restrictions on other types of unhealthy food marketing to children including the use of celebrity and character endorsements, premium offers and competitions, Internet sites, SMS and email marketing, and cinema and print advertising.

It is imperative that a ban on unhealthy food advertising covers the times when large numbers of children are still watching television. Recent research has demonstrated that the peak viewing time for children is between 6pm and 9pm every day of the weekⁱ, proving that a ban that only applies to C periods will not be sufficient in protecting Australian children.

The classification of unhealthy foods and beverages should include those that are high in fat, sugar and salt and be determined by a nutrient profiling model such as that adapted by FSANZ (www.foodstandards.gov.au).

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The draft review of the Children's Television Standards released recently by the Australian Communications and Media Authority has done little to protect children from unhealthy food advertising. We sincerely hope that the Senate is able to demonstrate leadership on this issue by making the bold move towards the banning of unhealthy food advertising to children and shielding them from its potentially harmful effects.

The Parents Jury supports the more detailed submissions made to the Senate by the Obesity Policy Coalition and the Coalition on Food Advertising to Children.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,

Justine Hodge
The Parents Jury Manager

ⁱ Children's (5- 12 year old) TV viewing for 5 Australian Metropolitan cities. Purchased from OzTam (Australian Television Audience Measurement), by Centre for Overweight & Obesity, Sydney, May 2006.

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