



Public Health Association  
AUSTRALIA

# Protecting Children from the Marketing of Unhealthy Foods and Beverages

## Policy Position Statement

<b>Key messages:</b>	Marketing of unhealthy food and beverages, across all media and settings, can influence children's life-long food choices and health. Government-led legislation is required to reduce children's exposure to unhealthy food marketing, across a wide range of media including online platforms. Voluntary measures have failed to protect children from current and future public health impacts of poor diet.
<b>Key policy positions:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Australian governments should prioritise the protection of children and adolescents from the influence of the marketing of unhealthy energy-dense nutrient-poor food and beverages.</li><li>2. Australian governments should develop a national regulatory approach, including the use of legislation, that effectively reduces Australian children's exposure to unhealthy food and beverage marketing, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• government endorsed criteria, such as the Australian Health Council developed <i>National intermin guide to reduce children's exposure to unhealthy food and drink promotion</i>, to determine which foods and beverages can/ cannot be marketed to children</li><li>• a comprehensive approach, covering all media and settings where children are exposed to unhealthy food marketing</li><li>• legislative provisions that protects children from all unhealthy food marketing, including through online platforms, that children are exposed to, regardless of the intended audience</li><li>• effective complaints mechanism and meaningful sanctions for breaches</li><li>• an effective monitoring system</li><li>• transparent, independent, and accountable administrative and governance processes</li><li>• provision for systematic, independent review of the regulatory scheme.</li></ul></li></ol>
<b>Audience:</b>	Federal, State and Territory Governments, policymakers and program managers, PHAA members, media.
<b>Responsibility:</b>	PHAA Food and Nutrition Special Interest Group
<b>Date adopted:</b>	September 2023
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# Protecting Children from the Marketing of Unhealthy Foods and Beverages

## Policy position statement

Note: This position statement should be read in conjunction with the Protecting Children from Unhealthy Food and Beverage Marketing Background Paper, which provides evidence and justifications for the public health policy positions in this position statement.

### PHAA affirms the following principles:

1. The marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages has a detrimental impact on children's food choices and health.<sup>(1)</sup> The power and exposure of unhealthy food marketing is even greater through digital media.<sup>(2)</sup>
2. Evidence shows that policy to reduce the exposure of marketing of energy-dense nutrient-poor foods to children is a cost-effective strategy to address childhood overweight and obesity.<sup>(3, 4)</sup>
3. Government-led regulation is the only approach to reduce children's exposure to unhealthy food marketing across all media and settings.<sup>(5)</sup>
4. Evidence shows that industry codes for food marketing does not lead to meaningful reductions in children's exposure to unhealthy food marketing. They also contain significant flaws in substantive rules and content, and governance processes. Industry codes are a deliberate approach used by industry worldwide to substitute for, and delay, the adoption of stronger regulatory measures.

### PHAA notes the following evidence:

5. [Please refer to the associated Background Paper]

### PHAA seeks the following actions:

6. Australian, State and Territory governments should:
  - Prioritise the protection of children (aged <18 years) from the influence of all forms of marketing of unhealthy, energy-dense, nutrient-poor food and beverages.
  - Develop a national regulatory approach, that includes the use of legislation, to effectively reduce Australian children's exposure to unhealthy food and beverage marketing, including:
    - a) Government endorsed food classification criteria, such as the Australian Health Council developed *National intermin guide to reduce children's exposure to unhealthy food and drink promotion*, to determine which foods and beverages can/cannot be marketed to

children; use of a broad definition of marketing; prohibit all unhealthy food marketing that children are exposed to, regardless of the intended audience.

- b) Adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regulatory framework that includes all media and settings where children are exposed to unhealthy food marketing. This should include
    - i. Ensure TV, radio and cinemas are free from unhealthy food marketing from 6am to 9.30pm
    - ii. Prevent processed food companies from targeting children with their marketing
    - iii. Ensure public spaces and events are free from *all* unhealthy food marketing
    - iv. Protect children from online marketing of unhealthy food
    - v. Prohibit all location based and price-based marketing of unhealthy foods in food retail settings
    - vi. Prevent processed food companies from sponsoring events, including sports and festivals.
  - c) establishing an effective monitoring system and include meaningful sanctions for breaches
  - d) ensuring that administrative and governance processes are transparent, independent, and accountable and
  - e) providing for systematic, independent review of the regulatory scheme.
7. State, Territory and local governments should consider areas where they can regulate independent of the need for national regulation, e.g., on transport infrastructure and at stadiums.
8. Consistent with PHAA's Unhealthy Political Influence policy position statement, donations from the food and beverage industries responsible for products featuring added sugar, sodium, and saturated and trans fats to political parties should be prohibited.

### PHAA resolves to:

- 9. Advocate for the above steps to be taken based on the principles in this position statement.

**ADOPTED September 2023**

**(First adopted 2009)**

## References

1. Cairns G, Angus K, Hastings G, Caraher M. Systematic reviews of the evidence on the nature, extent and effects of food marketing to children. A retrospective summary. *Appetite*. 2013;62:209-15.
2. World Health Organization. (2016). *Tackling food marketing to children in a digital world: trans-disciplinary perspectives: children's rights, evidence of impact, methodological challenges, regulatory options and policy implications for the WHO European Region*.  
<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/344003>
3. Brown V, Ananthapavan J, Veerman L, Sacks G, Lal A, Peeters A, et al. The Potential Cost-Effectiveness and Equity Impacts of Restricting Television Advertising of Unhealthy Food and Beverages to Australian Children. *Nutrients*. 2018;10(5).
4. Bauman A, Bellew B, Boylan S, Crane M, Foley B, Gill T, et al. Obesity prevention in children and young people aged 0-18 years: a rapid evidence review brokered by the Sax Institute. Summary report. Prepared for the NSW Ministry of Health. Sydney: Physical Activity Nutrition Obesity Research Group, The University of Sydney; 2016.
5. World Health Organization. Global Action Plan on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases 2013-2020, updated Appendix III, EB 140/27 (Annex I),. 2013 [cited 2017 14 July]. Available from: [http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/EB140/B140\\_27-en.pdf?ua=1](http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB140/B140_27-en.pdf?ua=1)
6. Hickey K, Schmidtke A, Martin J. Brands off our kids! Four actions for a childhood free from unhealthy food marketing. Melbourne: Obesity Policy Coalition; 2021.