Marketing of Food and Beverages to Children

Policy Position Statement

Key messages: Excessive marketing and promotion of unhealthy food and beverages to children can influence their life long food choices. Voluntary measures have failed to protect children from current and future public health impacts of poor diet. Government-led regulation is required to reduce children’s exposure to unhealthy food marketing, across a wide range of media, because the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages has a detrimental impact on children’s food choices and health.

Key policy positions:

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.

2. Develop a national regulatory approach, including the use of legislation, that effectively reduces Australian children’s exposure to unhealthy food and beverage marketing, including:
   - government endorsed criteria, such as the WHO Nutrient Profile Model for the Western Pacific Region, to determine which foods and beverages can/cannot be marketed to children
   - a robust definition of marketing ‘directed to children’
   - a focus on television advertising and online marketing, children’s settings such as schools, children’s and family events, playgrounds and children’s sport as initial priorities
   - an effective complaints mechanism and meaningful sanctions for breaches
   - an effective monitoring system
   - ensuring that administrative and governance processes are transparent, independent, and accountable
   - provision for systematic, independent review of the regulatory scheme.

Audience: Federal, State and Territory Governments, policy makers and the general public.

Responsibility: PHAA Food and Nutrition Special Interest Group

Date adopted: 26 September 2018

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This position statement should be read in conjunction with the Marketing of Food and Beverages to Children 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.¹
2. Evidence shows that policy to reduce the marketing of energy-dense nutrient-poor foods to children is a cost effective strategy to address childhood overweight and obesity.²,³
3. Government-led regulation is the optimal approach to reducing children’s exposure to unhealthy food marketing across a wide range of media.⁴
4. Evidence shows that industry self-regulation of food marketing does not lead to meaningful reductions in children’s exposure to unhealthy food marketing, and contains significant flaws in its substantive rules and content, and its governance processes. Self-regulation is a deliberate approach used by industry worldwide to substitute for and delay the adoption of state legislation.

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 and adolescents from the influence of the 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 criteria, such as the Nutrient Profiling Scoring System in the Nutrition Content and Health Claims Standard or an adaptation of the World Health Organization Nutrient Profile Model for the Western Pacific Region, to determine which foods and beverages can/cannot be marketed to children
     b. a robust definition of marketing ‘directed to children’
     c. a focus on television advertising and online marketing, children’s settings such as schools, children’s and family events, playgrounds and children’s sport as initial priorities
     d. establishing an effective complaints mechanism and meaningful sanctions for breaches
     e. establishing an effective monitoring system
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f. ensuring that administrative and governance processes are transparent, independent, and accountable and

7. It may be practical to use a phased approach, such as introducing limitations on TV advertising to 9:00pm as an initial step. Regulation to limit marketing should then be expanded to other media (e.g. online), and settings, to prevent a shift to other promotional channels rather than an overall reduction in children’s exposure to unhealthy food and beverage marketing.

8. Reducing children’s exposure to unhealthy food and beverage marketing online (e.g. through advergames and social media) and through children’s settings (e.g. schools, children’s and family events, playgrounds and children’s sport) are also priorities.

9. 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.

PHAA resolves to:

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

11. Collaborate with non-government organisations and others to collaboratively advocate for government action to effectively reduce children’s exposure to unhealthy food marketing.

ADOPTED 2018
(First adopted 2009, revised in 2012 and 2015)
References


