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Ms Michele Herriot
Director, Health Promotion Branch
SA Health
PO Box 287
RUNDLE MALL SA 5000

Submission: Television advertising and the consumption of unhealthy food and drinks by children.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on how we can make a difference in the growing obesity problem in Australia.

I agree that advertising plays a significant part in the consumption of unhealthy foods particularly that of 'fast food' restaurants where their products are promoted as a whole meal, not just a snack. Fast food restaurants, although making some effort to provide healthy alternatives, mostly provide foods very high in salt and fat along with sugary soft drinks. People know this but the convenience outweighs the negative health affects. For a fairly small price you can feed the whole family with no cooking, no dishes, and happy children. Broadcasting advertisements for these products after school, just before tea time is targeting hungry children who then tell often tired parents that is what they want for tea. A quick and easy option for parents with the only casualty being the long term health of the family.

I agree with one of the options at point 3.3.1 in the consultation paper, that advertising of unhealthy foods should be restricted to hours between 8.30 pm and 7am. As stated in the consultation paper children are most likely to view television between 7am and 8.30pm so removing advertising between these hours could make a significant difference.

I believe there are other measures that can be taken to slow down the consumption of unhealthy foods within supermarkets.

The positioning of junk food at each checkout should be banned and possibly replaced with fruit that can be purchased in single serves such as bananas and apples.

At the end of a shopping trip, it is all too convenient for people to grab a chocolate bar as a 'treat' or to keep the kids quiet while waiting in the queue. Children are currently forced to look at the junk food while waiting in the queue and hassle parents to buy them. Supermarkets, although obviously in it for profit, need to have limitations placed on them where these foods are positioned. These foods should also be left out of the weekly discount specials and catalogues.

Symbols on packaging providing a healthy food rating, similar to the ticks used for power and water efficiency on appliances, would help customers to make the right decisions quickly.

Above all, like most things it comes down to education by parents and teachers. Children need to learn from an early age which foods are 'sometimes' foods and the importance of 'good' foods. The introduction of healthy eating in schools is a good start and should eventually be made compulsory. At the very least canteens should only sell healthy foods eliminating all junk foods from their menus.

Like most things prevention is better than a cure when it comes to our children's health and diets so the education needs to start early in order to achieve the best outcomes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Liz Penfold". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mrs. Liz Penfold MP
Member for Flinders

Cc Vickie Chapman, Shadow Minister for Health,
Michelle Lensink, Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs