

Media Release

EMBARGOED 00.01 Thursday 10th March 2022

Cancer Council condemns unhealthy food and drink advertising as pester power prevails

Cancer Council is today raising awareness of the impact of unhealthy food and drink advertising on Australian children's health, with a new campaign and advocacy efforts launching in Victoria and New South Wales.

The efforts come as new research released today shows that increased advertising exposure amongst children is associated with a higher intake of unhealthy food and drink.

The National Secondary Students' Diet and Activity (NaSSDA) survey found that children who were exposed to high levels of food and drink advertising were more than twice as likely to have tried a new food or drink product compared to children with low exposure, and were twice as likely to ask a parent for a product they had seen advertised.

Cancer Council's Nutrition, Alcohol and Physical Activity Committee Chair, Clare Hughes says protecting children from unhealthy food marketing is recognized worldwide as vital in addressing poor diet and high obesity rates.

"We all want our kids to enjoy a healthy childhood, but this is impossible when the processed food industry spends millions of dollars every year on advertising in places they know children will be exposed to it.

"The new NaSSDA research highlights that the marketing of unhealthy food and drinks promote the consumption of such foods, which can lead to obesity and increased risk of 13 different types of cancer and other serious disease later in life.

Two-pronged approach to tackling the issue

The new data comes as Cancer Council New South Wales and Cancer Council Victoria use a two-pronged approach to ramp up awareness and advocacy efforts in the space.

Cancer Council Victoria is today launching [FoodFight](#), a new campaign to raise awareness of unhealthy food and drink advertising by the processed food industry with data revealing that Victorian children are exposed to at least 25 unhealthy food and drink advertisements each day.

The campaign calls on Victorians to show their support for protecting kids from unhealthy food and drink advertising by signing a statement on the FoodFight website.

Meanwhile, Cancer Council NSW is joining forces with 13 health experts and organisations to call on the NSW Government to remove unhealthy food advertising from government-controlled property, particularly public transport and asking the public to sign a petition at [Our Kids, Our Call](#).

A New South Wales published audit of 90 school bus routes to suburban Sydney primary and secondary schools found children travelling to school would be exposed to up to 2,800 unhealthy food advertisements a year, just from the transport mode they used.

In addition, a recent 2022 audit of Sydney buses found that more than four in five (83%) food advertisements were for unhealthy foods while, in 2019 two thirds (61%) of food and drink advertisements on Melbourne’s public transport network were for unhealthy food and drinks.

Hughes says “It is evident that food marketing influences children’s choices and eating habits and advertising of unhealthy foods, particularly on public transport, reaches a significant number of young people each day.

“We commend the Australian Government on the recent release of the National Obesity Strategy and want to ensure that it is effectively implemented so that more is done to protect Australian children from harmful food advertising.”

- ENDS -

About the research

National Secondary Students’ Diet and Activity (NaSSDA) survey, 2018

A national sample of secondary school students aged 12-17 years (N=8,763), examined the association between exposure to food and drink advertisements and adolescents’ dietary choices and intake and found:

- Children with a high advertising exposure were more than twice as likely to report trying a new food or drink they had seen advertised at least once in the past month, compared with children with low advertising exposure.
- Those with high advertising exposure were also more likely to have asked a parent or carer to buy a product seen on an advertisement in the past month.
- The chances of reporting high unhealthy food intake were greater among students who had a high frequency of exposure to unhealthy food and drink advertising compared to students who reported low advertising exposure.

Cancer Council Victoria’s *Food Fight* will air across TV, radio and digital channels from 15th March, 2022. The campaign [microsite](#) will invite Victorians to support Cancer Council Victoria’s campaign, share it with their networks and upload examples of unhealthy food and drink advertising around Victoria that is targeting kids.

Signatories to the Joint Statement

- Cancer Council NSW
- Australian Dental Association (NSW)
- Australian Medical Association NSW
- Diabetes NSW
- Dietitians Australia
- Early Start at University of Wollongong
- Healthy Kids
- Heart Foundation NSW
- Nutrition Australia NSW
- Parents’ Voice
- Public Health Association of Australia (NSW)
- Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue

- Prof Louise Baur AM, FAHMS. President-Elect, World Obesity Federation
- Dr Rosemary Stanton

Our Kids, Our Call Campaign

- Our Kids, Our Call is a Cancer Council NSW campaign to stop manipulative junk food marketers targeting children and putting a whole generation at risk of future health problems.
- The joint statement attached provides further detail.