

Guidance for advertising and marketing affecting children

**Response to consultation
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About Dietitians Australia

Dietitians Australia is the national association of the dietetic profession with over 7500 members, and branches in each state and territory. Dietitians Australia is the leading voice in nutrition and dietetics and advocates for food and nutrition for healthier people and healthier communities.

This submission was prepared by members of the Dietitians Australia Food Regulatory and Policy Committee following the [Conflict of Interest Management Policy](#) and process approved by the Board of Dietitians Australia. Contributors include Dietitians Australia members with wide ranging expertise in areas including public health, food systems, food industry and academia.

Recommendations

Dietitians Australia strongly supports the proposal

Dietitians Australia strongly supports the proposal for Guidance for advertising and marketing affecting children.

Overweight and obesity affects about 1 in 5 children globally,¹ and 1 in 4 children in Australia.² Emerging evidence suggests this has increased in high-income countries during the COVID-19 pandemic as children spend less active time outside the home, disruptions to routine, and stresses associated with the pandemic.³⁻⁵

Exposure to unhealthy food marketing is widely accepted in literature⁶⁻¹³ and by leading international health organisations¹⁴ to be a direct contributor to poor diets and unhealthy weight gain in childhood. Even with industry codes in place in Australia and internationally, children are still being exposed to high levels of unhealthy food marketing through TV advertising, games, internet and print marketing.^{11-13, 15, 16} The World Health Organization¹⁴ and global literature⁶⁻¹³ supports strong regulation of unhealthy food marketing as best practice.

Further, the use of children and child labour in unhealthy food marketing must be explored. As social media transforms and becomes more and more ingrained into our daily lives, so do innovative and subversive forms of marketing. Enter, the phenomenon of 'kid influencers'. Kid influencer social media accounts target children and their carers. Often, companies will gift a product to a kid influencer to be promoted on their social media account. This form of marketing generates millions of impressions for unhealthy food and drink brands through product placement,^{17, 18} and raises the issue of child exploitation.^{19, 20}

We support the development of an international standard aligned with World Health Organization guidelines that puts the health and wellbeing of children first, and is free from commercial interests.

Australia must actively participate in Guidance development

Dietitians Australia strongly supports Australia's active participation in this work. Australian experts on food marketing affecting children are recognised internationally for their work on this issue in Australian and international contexts.

Public health experts must be actively involved

Dietitians Australia and other public health experts must be actively invited to be involved in the development of Guidance for advertising and marketing affecting children. Public health experts across fields such as food, nutrition, child psychology, behaviour change, child labour ethics, and health promotion have invaluable expertise to inform robust guidance.

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