



Proposal to Display Kilojoule Content of Food and Drinks in Large Chain Food Outlets and Supermarkets

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The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) is the national association of the dietetic profession with over 5800 members, and branches in each state and territory. DAA is a leader in nutrition and advocates for food and nutrition for healthier people and healthier nations. DAA appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the Proposal to Display Kilojoule Content of Food and Drinks in Large Chain Food Outlets and Supermarkets by the Victorian State Government.

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DAA interest in this consultation

DAA advocates for a safe, nutritious and sustainable food supply which provides food security for all Australians. DAA considers that food labelling regulation makes an important contribution to a safe food supply.

DAA is responsible for the Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) program which is the foundation of self regulation of the dietetic profession in Australia. As experts in nutrition, APDs assist the population with the translation of food labels and health claims. APDs also provide nutritional expertise relating to the development of food products and labelling that must comply with the current regulatory framework.

Recommendations

DAA recognises the need for Australians to access appropriate information to assist them to make healthier food choices at supermarkets, fast food and snack food chains. DAA supports the proposed kilojoule menu labelling scheme, as part of a multi-strategy approach to encourage healthy eating to align with legislation in New South Wales (NSW), Queensland, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory.

DAA recommends placing strong emphasis on supportive, targeted public education to raise awareness of dietary energy requirements and ensure that provision of kilojoule information is understood. Literature from Australia and the United States of America has shown limited effects of kilojoule labelling alone when there was no accompanying public education^{1,2,3}. The 8700 campaign launched on 1 March 2012 in NSW included advertising on table tops in food courts, social media engagement, radio advertising, and public relation activities to encourage traffic to the 8700.com.au website and phone applications⁴. Evaluation demonstrated positive results from the NSW campaign.

DAA recommends that an evaluation plan is included to assess the impacts and suitability of the Victorian scheme in a similar fashion to the evaluation undertaken by the NSW Food Authority. That evaluation considered the following outcomes⁵:

- Businesses understand and comply with the regulatory requirements.
- Regulatory agencies manage and enforce the regulation.
- The Food Authority implements a consumer education program.
- Consumers have information to make healthier choices at fast food and snack food chains.
- Consumers have awareness and increased knowledge of energy, particularly kilojoules (kJ) values displayed in qualifying outlets.
- Consumers purchase fewer kJ from qualifying outlets and/or adjust their kJ consumption at other meals during the day.

The Victorian Government should ensure that an ongoing compliance program is conducted particularly during the legislation implementation. Monitoring compliance should include⁵:

- Routine visual checks of food outlets by Local Council Officers for the presence of menu labelling.
- Review of menu labelling to ensure they comply with the requirements.

In addition to these outcomes, it may be relevant to measure whether the kilojoule menu labelling scheme is able to reduce the number of visits to fast food and snack food chains and whether it creates a shift in the types of chains frequented by Victorians or particular populations. These outcomes may help to determine future public health initiatives.

References

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2. Dodds P, Wolfenden L, Chapman K, et al. The effect of energy and traffic light labeling on parent and child fast food selection: A randomised controlled trial. *Appetite* 2014; **73**: 23-30.
3. Elbel B, Kersh R, Brescoll VL, et al. Calorie labeling and food choices: A first look at the effects on low-income people in New York City. *Health Affairs* 2009; **28**(6): 1110-1121.
4. NSW Government, Strategic Communications. 8700.com.au. Sydney: NSW Government; n.d. (Available from: <http://www.advertising.nsw.gov.au/campaigns/8700comau>, accessed 19 April 2016).
5. NSW Food Authority. Food Evaluation of kilojoule menu labelling. Newington: NSW Government; 2013. (Available from: http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/scienceandtechnical/fastchoices_evaluation_report.pdf, accessed 15 April 2015).