



**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO OBESITY REPORT 'WEAK'
SAYS OBESITY ACTION GROUP
27 November 2007**

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) has questioned the Government's response to the Health Select Committee Inquiry into Obesity and Type 2 Diabetes.

Director Leigh Sturgiss says the Government's increased focus on health promotion, while positive, cannot hide the fact that it has chosen not to implement measures that would really make a difference.

"The issue of obesity, much like that of tobacco use, needs a strong, comprehensive approach that includes health promotion and regulation. The Government has opted for only part of the equation – supporting breastfeeding and healthy lifestyle campaigns – but without also introducing strong measures like banning the marketing of unhealthy food and drinks to children.

"While OAC welcomes the acceptance of recommendations such as the establishment of a cross-ministerial committee, additional research and monitoring, and the extension of the fruit in schools programmes, these measures on their own will make little difference to our obesity rates.

"The recommendation to appoint an independent commissioner on obesity has also been passed up, meaning there is no one with accountability in place making sure things actually happen."

Leigh Sturgiss says, along with a ban on the advertising of unhealthy products to children, OAC would like to have seen the introduction of food labeling so people could easily identify healthy foods.

She says the response shows the Government accepts there is now a substantial body of evidence for marketing as a contributing factor in the child obesity epidemic.

"This was the Government's opportunity to declare war on obesity in New Zealand, and really make an impact on the marketing front. Instead, we have a weak response that focuses on health promotion and discussion with industry, which will make little difference without regulation.

"Working with the food and advertising industries is never going to be the answer—these industries are out to make a profit, not to protect people's health."

For further information

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