



MEDIA RELEASE

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***"This isn't about a Nanny state, this is about stopping the junk food industry being in charge of the nursery."***

**Obesity Action Coalition tells Health Committee it must not give in to the peddlers of junk food**

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) has told Parliament's Health Select Committee that, with the country in the grip of an obesity crisis, the committee must not cave in to pressure from the junk food industry over the proposed Public Health Bill.

The Health Committee is considering the Bill, part of which could allow regulations restricting the marketing or advertising of junk food to children.

OAC Executive Director Leigh Sturgiss told the committee the public health workforce uses a tool called the "scream test".

"The likely success of a proposed measure is gauged by the degree to which the affected industries protest. If there is no "scream", chances are the proposed measure will be ineffective. The tobacco industry and its allies used to scream a lot, and now the fast food industry and its allies are screaming as well," Ms Sturgiss said.

"We all know what foods we should eat more of or less of. This is not a question of a 'knowledge deficit'. But regulation is often needed for people to act on things they already know will benefit them but haven't done anything about.

"As this committee noted in its own report on the Inquiry into Obesity and Type 2 Diabetes, behaviour change is not achieved by education or information alone. The committee decided that environmental change is necessary to make it possible for people to attain and maintain healthy lifestyles.

"Regulation would also ensure that all players in the junk food industry know the rules, and what the impact would be, should the rules be ignored."

Ms Sturgiss told the committee that it wasn't just public health advocates who thought regulation was needed: parents and grandparents and

caregivers of children have said the same thing in surveys conducted by the Heart Foundation, Cancer Society and others.

“This Government needs to show the same commitment to reducing the obesity epidemic as it did when dealing with tobacco. This isn’t about a Nanny state, this is about stopping the junk food industry being in charge of the nursery,” Ms Sturgiss said.

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The Obesity Action Coalition’s goal is to improve the diet and overall health of New Zealand children through a marked reduction in the commercial promotion of foods and beverages to children under the age of 14.

It believes the vital first step is to extend the statutory regulations to prohibit all television food and beverage advertising during programmes where children make up a significant proportion of the viewing audience. This would not preclude the promotion of healthy eating messages to children through non-commercial social marketing.