



**OBESITY ACTION COALITION WELCOMES PROPOSED TIGHTENING OF
ADVERTISING RULES
For immediate release 26 June 2008**

The Obesity Action Coalition is welcoming a proposed measure in the Public Health Bill that would allow the Ministry of Health to regulate against advertising unhealthy foods if a code of practice is ignored.

The Health Select Committee tabled its report on the Public Health Bill in Parliament today.

OAC Director Leigh Sturgiss says marketing of foods high in salt, sugar and fat has an impact on what children prefer, buy and eat, and OAC has been recommending for some time that these marketing practises should be regulated.

“We are really pleased the Health Committee is recommending regulation on how goods can be advertising or marketed.

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

“As the 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. It decided environmental change is necessary to make it possible for people to attain and maintain healthy lifestyles.

“Regulation would also ensure all players in the junk food industry know the rules, and what the impact would be if they ignore them.”

The Committee is also recommending provisions be tightened to require codes of practices that state objectives and targets against which progress can be assessed.

“We are relieved it will be the Ministry of Health setting these measures, not the food or advertising industries. We hope real measures will be put in place that will have a real impact.”

Leigh Sturgiss says the food and advertising industries now have two years to show they are serious about helping to address childhood obesity.

“The industries must stick to a to-be-developed code of practice around advertising unhealthy foods to children. They will have two years to get their act together or face regulation.”

She says there are a number of parallels with the advertising of unhealthy foods and the advertising of tobacco.

“It would be great to see obesity rates drop like smoking prevalence rates have. We shouldn’t forget that regulation of tobacco advertising was instrumental in this drop.”

For more information

Leigh Sturgiss
Executive Director
Mob: 0274 591 664
Ph: 04 473 8031

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 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.