To whom it may concern

Submission: Food and Drink Marketing in Canberra, particularly those aimed at children

The Heart Foundation ACT welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the consultation of food and drink marketing in Canberra. The Heart Foundation ACT would like to take this opportunity to present recommendations to redress the imbalance of unhealthy food and beverage marketing to children based on the findings from the Heart Foundation audit, Advertising to Children in the ACT: Persistent, Pervasive, Persuasive.

According to the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Chief Health Officer's Report 2014, around one quarter of children and adolescents between the ages of 5 and 17 years of age are overweight or obese. Overweight and obesity during childhood is a serious issue. The excess weight accumulated carries the risk of both short and long-term health consequences including increased risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and respiratory diseases, some cancers, mental illness and impaired psychosocial functioning in later life.

The Australian Dietary Guidelines encourage children to achieve and maintain a healthy body weight by consuming a wide variety of foods from the five food groups and limit discretionary choices that are high in fat, sugar and/or salt. The ready availability and promotion of high fat, salt and sugar foods and beverages that characterises the Australian landscape does not support this goal. Indeed, the 2011-12 National Nutrition Survey found...
that children (aged 2-18 years) in the ACT obtained 34% of daily energy from discretionary foods.

The current landscape of food and beverage marketing in the ACT promotes a diet that is contrary to the recommendations contained in the Australian Dietary Guidelines. Overall, 78 per cent of the food and beverage advertisements targeted at children are for unhealthy products. Rather than supporting children to limit these foods and beverages, marketing is enticing them to consume ever greater quantities as part of their daily diets.

The short term effects of marketing on children’s food and beverage preferences are well documented. There is a large and growing body of evidence that suggests unhealthy food and beverage marketing influences food preferences, purchase requests, consumption and diet/health status. The diets of many children now appear to reflect more closely the high fat, salt and sugar eating patterns promoted through advertising than the diet encouraged by the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating.

Children are considered a vulnerable segment of the community who require protection from marketing for unhealthy foods, in much the same way that they were protected from tobacco marketing when the risks associated with tobacco smoking became known. In 2010, in recognition of the evidence of the effects of unhealthy food marketing on children, the World Health Assembly (WHA) endorsed recommendations for countries to strengthen policies to reduce the impact on children of marketing of foods high in saturated and trans fatty acids, added sugars and salt.

The Australian National Diabetes Strategy 2016-2020, released on 13th November 2015 and endorsed by the Australian Health Ministers’ Advisory Council also recommends reducing the exposure of children and others to junk food marketing to support the prevention of people developing type 2 diabetes.

To make progress in the battle against growing rates of overweight and obesity, focus must be given to redress the imbalance of unhealthy food and beverage marketing in the ACT. A comprehensive approach is required to work at many levels; encouraging the support of the ACT community, businesses, sports organisations and ACT Government.

This submission recommends the following actions:

**Ideally - reduce children’s exposure to unhealthy food and drink marketing:**
- Implement an unhealthy advertising exclusion zone of at least 200 meters around preschools, primary schools, secondary schools, playgrounds, family and child clinics, paediatric services and sporting and cultural events;
- Ban unhealthy advertising on bus shelters;
- Ensure via a staged process, at least 50 per cent of all advertising at government owned sporting venues is healthy. The advertising location should be taken into consideration to ensure healthy advertising is included at the point of sale of food and drinks;
- Remove via a staged process, unhealthy food and drink sponsorship of sport;
- Mandate at least one checkout free from unhealthy food and drink marketing in all chain supermarket and small retail outlets. This should include an exclusion zone to account for free-standing tubs and drinks fridges that are not part of the permanent checkout display;
• Mandate an unhealthy food and drink marketing exclusion zone in shopping centres on general concourses and child designated areas; and
• Ban toy give-aways with the sale of unhealthy food and drink.

At the very least - support ACT businesses and local sport organisations to create a healthier food environment:
• Develop and coordinate an alliance of healthy food businesses;
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• Develop and coordinate an alliance of healthy sport sponsors, including sponsors that do not sell food and drinks;
• Create healthy food and drink business awards to incentivise and increase exposure for businesses; and
• Develop robust business models for profitable healthy canteens and educate and support local sport organisations to implement.

Preferably – implement and continue community initiatives to create a healthier food environment:
• Government to develop replacement healthy food and drink advertising campaign for (but not limited to) supermarket checkout aisles, bus shelters, sport venues and sponsorship of second tier peak sport bodies. Organisations who accept replacement sponsorship to be restricted from renewing or securing unhealthy food and drink sponsorship;
• Government to provide incentives for start-up healthy food ventures;
• Phase out unhealthy food and drink vending machines in all government work places and replace with healthy options;
• Continue to expand the footprint of ACT Government, Water on Tap stations to make tap water a readily available drink of choice; and
• Conduct a citizens’ voice forum as in Victoria.

We wish you well with your deliberations and would be keen to assist with any enquiries you may have.

Yours sincerely

Mr Tony Stubbs
CEO ACT Division

1 ACT Health: (2014), Australian Capital Territory Chief Health Officer’s Report, ACT Government, Canberra, ACT.


5 Heart Foundation: (2014), Advertising to Children in the ACT: Persistent, Pervasive, Persuasive.


9 World Health Organisation, 2010, Set of recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children