

INQUIRY INTO INQUIRY INTO CHILDHOOD OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY

Organisation: Coordinated Obesity Advocacy and Carers Help Incorporated
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C.O.A.C.H
COORDINATED OBESITY ADVOCACY & CARERS HELP
INCORPORATED

INQUIRY INTO CHILDHOOD OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY

Submission by Andre Nasr AKA Australia's Heaviest Man on behalf of
Coordinated Obesity Advocacy and Carers Help Incorporated

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The team that really cares...

As the ONLY registered Not-for-profit obesity organisation for BOTH people who suffer with obesity and their carers, we at C.O.A.C.H (Coordinated Obesity Advocacy and Carers Help Incorporated) believe we are in a strong position to NOT only guide strategies on how to reduce childhood overweight and obesity BUT we are also willing, capable, passionate and qualified to be able to participate in MANY of the strategies needed.

Our members have lived this cruel and debilitating condition OR helplessly witnessed their loved ones slowly suffer. Like MANY, they have tried to obtain help from numerous healthcare professionals, government and non-government organisations and ANY other way they could think of hence equipping them with firsthand understanding of all the barriers that make it difficult to manage their obesity or prevent their family members from becoming obese.

We believe that education along with support IS the key but HOW WE ENGAGE PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN to make achieving a healthy weight and lifestyle their priority, is a KEY foundation to our submission.

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Parents and children are constantly bombarded with conflicting information from many sources with self-serving motives and misleading marketing strategies with claims of “IT’S LOW FAT OR LITE” or “IT’S HEALTHY FOR YOU” subconsciously leading to enticements to increase consumption.

We believe they are MORE likely to respond to strategies designed and delivered by people who have lived this debilitating condition including Australia’s Heaviest Man, his carer and his family.

Unfortunately, as a Not-for-profit Health Promotion charitable and advocacy organisation, one of the hardest yet MOST common area of opposition we encounter and NEED to breakthrough is first and foremost from the ill-informed parents of overweight or obese children.

We face resistance from parents and carers, who REFUSE to accept ANY responsibility for what and how much their children consume. So if we can’t win them over, then let’s arm their children with the tools and resources to do so.

It’s NEVER too late to make a change, we NEED to change what has become normal. We NEED to make healthy, normal again.

In order to turn around the overwhelming trend of increasing childhood overweight and obesity, we will require actions at ALL levels of society.

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We therefore propose to start with the following initiatives as they can easily be rolled out and are very cost effective:

- **ZERO TOLERANCE**

A strong, nationwide ZERO tolerance on ALL non-nutritious foods and beverages in ALL public school canteens is VITAL in reducing the obesity rate and rise in related diseases and conditions. We believe that more MUST be done at school and merely providing SOME healthy options in the school canteen is just NOT enough.

Given the choice between an apple or a donut, which would you choose?

Establishing clear and direct guidelines for the school and school canteens to follow and adhere too is ESSENTIAL, whilst providing updated training on nutritional values and healthy food preparations for healthy children.

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Schools should help to ensure that children do NOT bring unhealthy foods to school, by working with parents to set strict guidelines on packed lunches in the same manner we currently do for children with allergies.

If we eliminate temptation, even if ONLY for those few short hours children are at school then we are giving them a fighting chance to live and lead a healthy and long life.

We need to provide useful resources and extracurricular initiatives, targeting children as they transition into their teenage years. A reward system where children/teenagers can earn extra credit towards their grades and/or towards their tertiary education would be widely welcomed by BOTH students and their parents.

Engaging teenagers MAY be difficult but NOT altogether impossible, talks such as the initiative from the above mentioned Australia's Heaviest Man would be a great start. Once we have captured their imagination and have their attention, we can then incorporate visits from local sports heroes to show them the contrast in lifestyles including the advantages and disadvantages of making informed choices and the lasting effect those choices can make on an individual's quality of life.

Save ONE child, save ONE family, save a WHOLE nation!!!



The team that really cares...

- **NON-NUTRITIOUS 2 HEALTHY AND DELICIOUS**

Conducting lessons based on the above initiative but this time showcasing the healthier alternatives to children's favourite fast foods.

Demonstrations can be a great way to get our point across to the children, who will in turn take this exciting newfound delicious and nutritional knowledge back home and help educate their parents, siblings and grandparents.

Providing the children with inexpensive, simple, easy to read and follow, step-by-step take home recipe cards that will encourage the children to help influence their parent's nutritional choices and get the family proactive and preparing these meals together.

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- **REALITY BITES**

A very effective initiative that we are hoping to participate in, is informing our school children of the adverse effects of obesity by inviting guest speakers who are suffering from gross morbid obesity to give talks to the children on the harsh reality of living with obesity.

Seeing is believing and is FAR more insightful than reading something in a textbook.

A visit from Australia's Heaviest Man, willing to answer any and ALL questions from the curious children, parents, carers and teachers, will be a REAL eye opener. Yes, such a visit MAY attract snickering, jeers and finger pointing BUT it will be a greater insight to the debilitating effects of obesity and FAR more insightful than watching a generic video, searching on the internet or reading in magazines or text books. This initiative, will MOST definitely have a lasting effect.

CAUTION!!!

The following initiatives may NOT be popular and due to the copious amount of revenue generated, will probably NEVER pass the Senate but we believe that these proposed initiatives hold the power to reversing childhood obesity.

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- **FAST FOOD TAX**

The introduction of a Fast Food/Junk Food Tax is something, we **STRONGLY** urge the Government to consider **AND** implement. Whilst we know and accept that there will be strong opposition, we truly believe it will be an **ESSENTIAL** tool in helping to reduce our appalling obesity rate.

There was public uproar when the Alcoholic Lolly Drinks Tax was implemented but look at how effective that has been. Simply by making an unnecessary product more expensive, instantly makes it harder for those in the lower socioeconomic bracket to access and over indulge in.

People have the right to consume cigarettes and alcohol **BUT** due to the adverse effects on society, the healthcare system and in turn the taxpayer; the tax levies implemented have been widely accepted and proven to be effective. Why should Fast/Junk Food, one of our nation's **BIGGEST** threats be exempt???

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The current revenue these Fast Food **GIANTS** generate are merely a drop in the ocean, compared to the **OVERWHELMING** strain obesity and obesity related diseases, conditions and issues are placing on our **STRUGGLING** public healthcare system.

- **BAD TASTE ADS**

Advertising is a common aspect of today's society and is strategically conducted and presented to entice and persuade consumers to respond in a particular way.

Approximately 30% of advertisements aired during children's television viewing hours in Australia were representing companies intending to influence and manipulate children towards unhealthy food products.

In a similar way, Australian sporting teams are often sponsored by companies who market unhealthy food products to children and young adults. Recent reports show that during a high-profile cricket match the KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken) logo was clearly visible for 61% of playing time and XXXX beer logo clearly visible for 75% of playing time in a similar event.



The team that really cares...

As a country dominated by sporting heroes, with a **STRONG** child based audience during televised times, the inclusion of unhealthy foods and alcohol sponsorship may indicate to children that even their **MOST** idolised sporting heroes support such unhealthy products.

Advertisements in Australia for tobacco smoking reflects the negative outcomes associated, through the use of graphic and gruesome images. Unhealthy food, in comparison, is not portrayed in the same light, despite the equality of consequences.

Instead, commercials, billboards and television advertisements portray Fast Food and energy dense products with attractive colours and happy/energetic staff members, persuading children to believe that high calorie junk food promotes a positive and rewarding experience.

6 • **FOR YOUR OWN WELFARE**

In lower socioeconomic areas in particular those with a highly dense indigenous population, we are now able to restrict the percentage of welfare payments that can be used to purchase alcohol, cigarettes or spent in gambling establishments.

Why can't we do the same for Fast Food or readily available Junk Food in our major Supermarkets?

Instead, we could try offering incentives to source **FRESH** and **NUTRITIOUS** produce directly from our farmers, local butchers and green grocers **ALL** who undoubtedly would be willing to participate in such initiatives.

We thank you for the opportunity to express our ideas and we look forward to offering our services, in any way required. Together, we **CAN** make a difference!!!

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