

**Submission
No 36**

INQUIRY INTO CHILDHOOD OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY

Organisation: Commonwealth Department of Health

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Australian Government

Department of Health

The Director
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Legislative Council, Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Director

**Commonwealth Department of Health Submission
New South Wales Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Social Issues inquiry
into childhood overweight and obesity**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the New South Wales (NSW) Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Social Issues (the Committee) inquiry (the inquiry) into childhood overweight and obesity in NSW.

This submission provides information on key Australian Government strategies that the Department has implemented to combat both childhood and adult overweight and obesity in Australia, that contribute to addressing childhood overweight and obesity in NSW.

Health Star Rating system

The Australian Government is continuing to work with the States and Territories, New Zealand, and food industry to implement the interpretive front-of-pack labelling scheme known as the Health Star Rating (HSR) system, which was a recommendation of the independent 2011 report: *Labelling Logic: Review of Food Labelling Law and Policy*.

The HSR system is a joint Australian, state and territory governments and New Zealand government initiative developed in collaboration with the food industry, public health and consumer groups. The HSR system is being implemented voluntarily by the food industry over five years (June 2014-June 2019).

The HSR system provides a quick, easy, standard way to compare similar packaged foods and is designed to assist consumers to make healthier food choices. The HSR system rates the overall nutritional profile of packaged food and assigns it a rating from ½ a star to five stars.

There has been significant uptake of the HSR system in Australia with over 4,000 products currently displaying the HSR system graphic. At least 90 companies have adopted the HSR system and some companies have already made significant efforts to reformulate products to reduce nutrients of concern and increase positive nutrients, resulting in a higher star rating.

An HSR Advisory Committee oversees the implementation and evaluation of the system with representatives from Government, public health and consumer groups and the food industry. The HSR Advisory Committee reports regularly to the Australia and New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation, via the Food Regulation Standing Committee.

More information is available on the HSR website (www.healthstarrating.gov.au).

Healthy Food Partnership

On 8 November 2015, the Australian Government announced the Healthy Food Partnership (the Partnership) a new collaboration of public health groups, food industry bodies and government.

The Partnership is a non-regulatory, collaborative forum between the Australian Government, food industry bodies and public health groups that is aimed at tackling obesity, encouraging healthy eating and empowering food manufacturers to make positive changes to their product portfolio. The Partnership aims to improve the dietary habits of Australians by making healthier food choices easier and more accessible and by raising awareness of better food choices and portion sizes. The Partnership is chaired by the Minister with portfolio responsibility for food policy, the Hon Dr David Gillespie MP, Assistant Minister for Rural Health.

The Healthy Food Partnership (the Partnership) will build upon the many actions of governments, food industry bodies and public health groups alike to achieve increased health knowledge, healthier choices and better health outcomes through food policy for the Australian population.

Initiatives under the Partnership will be voluntary in nature and will focus on making achievements in the following areas:

- continue to support industry to reformulate their foods, supported by the Health Star Rating system;
- support consumers to eat appropriate levels of core foods such as fruit, vegetables, whole grains, meat, fish and dairy, and appropriate levels of energy intake;
- educating consumers on appropriate portion and serve sizes; and
- improving consumers' knowledge and awareness of healthier food choices, including through developing and publicising tools and resources to consumers and health professionals.

Australia's Physical Activity & Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines

Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines are supported by a rigorous evidence review process that considered:

- the relationship between physical activity (including the amount, frequency, intensity and type of physical activity) and health outcome indicators, including the risk of chronic disease and obesity; and
- the relationship between sedentary behaviour/sitting time and health outcome indicators, including the risk of chronic disease and obesity.

These Guidelines are for children and adults of all ages irrespective of cultural background, gender or ability. The guidelines are available on the Department of Health website and are also available in the *Make your move – Sit less – Be active for life! Brochures*.

Girls Make Your Move – Physical Activity Campaign

Launched in February 2016, the *Girls Make Your Move* campaign is about inspiring, energising and empowering young women and girls aged 12-19 years to be more active. It

reinforces the many benefits of an active life, whether through recreation, incidental physical activity or sport.

The campaign was in response to research that the proportion of girls aged 15–17 years (55.9%) reporting no or low exercise levels was 46% higher than boys (38.3%) in 2014/15. Young women also tend to reduce their participation in sport and reduce their physical activity levels at a faster rate than their male counterparts. The campaign addresses this by increasing their participation in physical activity and sport by generating positive perceptions towards exercise, reducing perceived barriers to participation, and generating intentions to be more active.

Comprising of a website, Instagram presence with over 7,000 followers, advertising across traditional and social media, events and public relations, the campaign has reached over 80% of girls aged 12-19 years. The campaign has been positively received, with more than one in five (23%) girls surveyed indicating they had done more physical activity or sport as a result of the campaign.

More information is available on the Girls Make Your Move website (<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/girlsmove/publishing.nsf/Content/home>).

Sporting Schools Initiative

Sporting Schools is Australia's largest school-based sporting participation program to help children foster a lifelong interest in sport. The Sporting Schools initiative aims to encourage school aged children to participate in sport-based physical activity before, during and after school.

Sporting Schools brings together schools and sports to help get Australian children active in their local communities. The program is open to all Australian primary schools, and with quality programs developed by over thirty national sporting organisations, offers a fun and supportive environment for children and coaches.

More information is available on the Sporting Schools website (<https://sportingschools.gov.au/>)

Healthy Weight Guide - Website

The Healthy Weight Guide was released in early 2016 and was developed to help all Australians achieve and maintain a healthy weight. The Healthy Weight Guide is a comprehensive source of information available to the Australian public on how to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. The information is relevant to most people, no matter what your weight or how ready you are to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. There is also information for specific age groups and life stages.

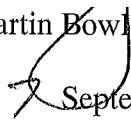
The Healthy Weight Guide consists of a website, as well as downloadable materials for those who prefer to work with hard copies, and provides: information about healthy weight, physical activity and healthy eating; tips and tools to assist with achieving and maintaining a healthy weight; and a registered area where users can record and track their weight and progress.

More information is available on the Healthy Weight Guide website (<http://healthyweight.health.gov.au/wps/portal/Home/home>).

The Department would be happy to discuss these strategies further with you or your representative should you require any further information. The contact officer for this submission

Yours sincerely

Martin Bowles PSM

 September 2016