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Fall in 'Unhealthy' TV Ads



Advertising of high fat, sugar or salt foods on kids TV has virtually ceased in Australia following a national health campaign.

The campaign, by the Australian Food and Grocery Council's 'Responsible Children's Marketing Initiative', has been a great success according to a new industry report.

During its first 12 months in operation, the industry-code has also proved successful with several iconic products that are popular with children being made healthier by leading food manufacturers, the new RCMI Interim Report for 2009 found.

Under AFGC's landmark initiative which has strict compliance criteria, 16 leading food and beverage manufacturers have committed not to advertise to children, unless they promoted healthy dietary choices and a healthy lifestyle consistent with scientific standards.

AFGC Deputy Chief Executive Dr Geoffrey Annison said the success of the industry code - separate from the Australian Quick Service Restaurant industry pledge - highlighted that Australia's food and grocery manufacturing industry was helping to make a difference on children's exposure to high fat, sugar or salt (HFSS) foods.

"During 2009, there were no breaches of the industry code reported to authorities and 10 companies did not directly advertise their products to children," Dr Annison said. "As a result, television advertising to children of certain foods has virtually ceased during children's programs."

Some of the 2009 highlights of the initiative - which applies to all forms of media and is underpinned by a compliance program with complaints administered by the Advertising Standards Bureau (ASB) - included:

- Fonterra Australia reformulated its chocolate and strawberry YoGo dairy desserts to include 25 per cent less sugar and reduced fat.
- George Weston Foods reformulated its Golden Crumpets to reduce the sodium content, representing a total sodium reduction of 8 per cent.

Other related achievements included: Nestlé Australia reformulated products to deliver improved nutrition such as Allen's lollies (25 per cent reduced sugar in lollies) and Uncle Tobys Roll-Ups (40 per cent less sugar, made with real fruit and no artificial colours or flavours). Kraft Food Australia/New Zealand reported that the new Vegemite product contained 65 per cent less fat than original product combined with butter.

Dr Annison said industry was committed to doing its bit to improving the health of all Australians. "This initiative - which now has two more signatories General Mills Australia and National Foods - shows a continuous improvement process which includes reformulation and product innovations.

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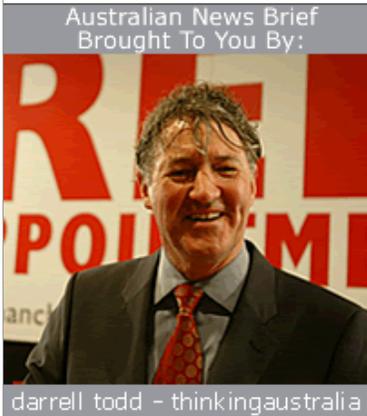
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