

Put our children's health first

It is time for Australia's political leaders to put the health of our children and future generations ahead of all other interests. Refusing to consider a tax on sugary drinks is not sound public health policy, the Consumers Health Forum says.

Given more than 20 countries have now introduced levies on sugary beverages, Australia is falling shamefully behind in taking the step supported by the World Health Organisation to curb our intake for unhealthy drinks.

"The Consumers Health Forum has joined with other health groups in recent years to urge the Government to introduce a health levy and to stop the promotion of unhealthy food and drinks at sport events and in children's television viewing times," the CEO of the Consumers Health Forum, Leanne Wells, said.

"CHF supports the Australian Medical Association's renewed call for these measures which come amid comprehensive evidence such as The *Tipping the Scales* report by the Obesity Policy Coalition and the Global Obesity Centre which presented a consensus view of Australia's leading experts and health organisations on a national strategy to counter the challenge of obesity.

"Obesity now poses a bigger health risk to Australians than smoking and it is time for our governments to follow the pioneering example of Australia's track record in reducing tobacco use and take up the eight-point plan advocated in *Tipping the Scales*.

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Consumers shaping health

“It is disappointing that neither of the two main political parties appear prepared to consider a measure which would add to revenue rather than expenditure and would send a healthy signal to parents and children.

“In our submission to the Government for the 2018 Federal Budget, CHF has proposed a range of steps including:

- Laws to stop exposure of children to unhealthy food and drink marketing on free to air television until 9.30 pm
- Mandatory healthy food star rating from July 2019 along with stronger food reformulation targets
- A national activity strategy to promote walking, cycling and public transport use
- A 20 per cent health levy on sugary drinks.

“Surveys by CHF and other groups in recent years have shown strong public support for measures such as a sugar levy. The failure of political leaders to adopt this widely-supported cost-free health option is of concern particularly when we know the cost impacts of treating the consequences of obesity have, and will continue to have, on our health system” Ms Wells said.

ENDS

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