

TASKFORCESUBMISSION: submission

NAME: Beverly Jenkin

POSITION: Chief Executive Officer

ORGANISATION: Australian Toy Association

SUBMISSION1: Submission to the Preventative Health Taskforce
Taskforce Discussion paper, Australia: The Healthiest Country by 2020

Summary and Recommendations

1. The Australian Toy Association (ATA) urges the National Preventative Health Taskforce to adopt the Value of Play Program as part of its obesity prevention and overweight strategy.
2. The ATA will actively participate in the development and implementation of such a strategy by involving its own 260 members and seeking the co-operation of international fraternal organisations which are leaders in play and child health research, notably the National Toy Council in the United Kingdom.

The Australian Toy Association represents the vast majority of the toy, hobby and nursery industry in Australia.

Introduction

The Australian Toy Association commends the Government for taking a positive approach to national health issues by developing a National Preventative Health strategy and establishing the Preventative Health Taskforce.

Of the three areas targetted by the Taskforce, the Australian toy, hobby and nursery industries can make a positive contribution to the first: overweight and obesity prevention.

The Value of Play

This Government initiative reflects the reality that prevention is better than cure. Recent public debate on obesity in Australia has been deflected into unproductive directions particularly relating to advertising and marketing.

In relation to childhood obesity, clearly exercise and active play are important preventative measures. The ATA represents Australian industries specialising in products for children and family leisure as well as learning and entertainment to enhance their future health and prosperity.

As its contribution to combatting childhood obesity, the ATA has developed the Value of Play program consisting of printed materials and on-line resources for parents to promote active lifestyles for children. (Refer to online parents' page on the ATA website www.austoy.com.au.) The material stresses the importance of developing physical skills as well as social, cognitive and personal skills. The physical skills highlighted are agility, balance, hand eye coordination, physical coordination, dexterity and strength.

The ATA has participated in the obesity debate, attending the annual Healthy Lifestyle forums and making submissions to parliamentary and regulatory inquiries. There is a clear consensus that prevention of obesity will be achieved by greater activity on one hand and better nutrition on the other. The ATA's most effective contribution can be on the activity side, in the promotion of active lifestyles for children.

Greater attention to physical activity in the education environment and encouragement of sporting and other formal exercise regimes are obviously important and will undoubtedly be given due recognition by the taskforce.

However for the prevention of overweight and obesity strategy to be comprehensive, attention should also focus on children's spare time which is when they have fun, actively play with toys and other children and use their creative imagination.

The ATA submits that its members and partners can contribute to the development and implementation of the Taskforce's strategy by combatting obesity by promoting active lifestyles for children in the "spare time" space between formal education/physical activity and family time.

Through the activities of the Association itself, such as its website and the annual Toy Fair, and the distribution networks of its members, the ATA has an unrivalled channel of communication to children as well as to their parents and guardians. The ATA welcomes this Government initiative and offers its services and facilities in the interests of combatting obesity among Australian children.

For further information please contact ...

PRIVACY: yes

SUBMIT: Submit