



31 December 2008

The Secretary
Preventative Health Taskforce
MDP 16
Department of Health and Ageing
GPO Box 9848
Canberra ACT 2601

SUBMISSION ON THE NATIONAL PREVENTATIVE HEALTH STRATEGY

Young Media Australia welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on this matter.

This submission has been prepared for Young Media Australia by Barbara Biggins OAM (Hon CEO) and Pamela Wright (Development Officer) on behalf of the Board of the Australian Council on Children and the Media (also known as Young Media Australia (YMA)). For further information, please contact Barbara Biggins at above address.

INTRODUCTION

1. Young Media Australia (YMA) is the information and parenting arm of the Australian Council on Children and the Media (ACCM). The ACCM is a not-for-profit national community organisation structured as a company limited by guarantee. The ACCM has a national Board of Directors representing the states and territories of Australia, and has a national membership of organisations and individuals who support the aims of the organisation, viz to stimulate and maintain public interest in the provision of suitable films and television programs for children.
2. The ACCM has a comprehensive organisational membership which includes ECA (Early Childhood Australia (formerly AECA Australian Early Childhood Association)), ACSSO (Australian Council of State Schools Organisations), AHISA (Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia), AEU (Australian Education Union), SAPPA (South Australian Primary Principals Association), Federation of NSW P&C (Parents & Citizens), and the Mothers' Union in Australia. Our members have a special interest and/ or expertise in media issues and children.
3. The ACCM's mission is to promote a quality media environment for Australian children and to raise community awareness of children's needs in relation to the media.
4. The ACCM's core activities include the collection of research and information about the impact of media on children's development, and advocacy for the needs and interests of children in relation to the media.
5. The ACCM's core services include
 - a 24/7 freecall helpline 1800 700 357,
 - a website www.youngmedia.org.au containing a wealth of media-related information (attracting over 1200 visits per day),
 - a popular child-friendly movie review service (*Know before you go*),
 - the development of parent media awareness materials, and

Promoting healthy choices and stronger voices in children's media since 1957

Australian Council on Children and the Media trading as Young Media Australia
Patrons: Steve Biddulph Baroness Susan Greenfield
Pres: Jane Roberts; Vice-Pres. Elizabeth Handsley; Hon CEO: Barbara Biggins, OAM

- making submissions, and participating in media interviews, related to media regulation.

6. This submission reflects the following principles

6.1 The International Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 17, viz

“Parties recognise the important function performed by the mass media and shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health. To this end, States Parties shall: [in part]

(e) Encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being, bearing in mind the provisions of Article 13 and 18.”

6.2 The Charter for Childrens’ television

This was formulated at the first World Forum on Children and Television held in Melbourne in 1995, and revised during the following years., and includes

1. Children should have programs of high quality which are made specifically for them. These programs, in addition to entertaining, should allow children to develop physically, mentally and socially to their fullest potential.

6.3 Objectives h,i, j) of the *Broadcasting Services Act* at para 3.of The Act.

- (h) to encourage providers of broadcasting services to respect community standards in the provision of program material; and
- (i) to encourage the provision of means for addressing complaints about broadcasting services; and
- (j) to ensure that providers of broadcasting services place a high priority on the protection of children from exposure to program material which may be harmful to them;

6.4 The Policy Guidelines on Children’s Television of the Australian Council for Children and the Media.

7. In the preparation of this submission, YMA has

- informed itself of the current state of advertising in programs watched by children
- reviewed the research literature as it relates to the impact of media on children. This is an ongoing activity of YMA.

SUMMARY

From its extensive and ongoing program of review of the impacts of advertising and marketing on children, Young Media Australia strongly supports the Discussion paper’s targets for prevention, viz. obesity and overweight, alcohol drinking, and smoking.

YMA finds strong evidence that greater media exposure, and from an early age, is associated with long-term negative health outcomes for children and adolescents, especially in relation to childhood obesity.

YMA therefore supports those proposals for prevention related to product marketing, but believes that these could be strengthened with the addition of some additional strategies (See Comment).

YMA is also very supportive of proposals for public education campaigns, but believes that for these to be effective they need to include a strong focus on early intervention in relation to children's media exposure and strong supports for parents to act as media educators in early childhood.

YMA is one of a very few organisations in Australia offering such information, strategies and support. Partnerships between the proposed National Prevention Centre and experienced community organisations, such as Young Media Australia would increase the effectiveness of such strategies.

COMMENT

YMA's core business includes reviewing research into the impacts of advertising, marketing and product placement on children and adolescents.

1. From this ongoing review, YMA finds that :

- children under the age of 7 or 8 yrs do not understand the selling intent of advertisements, and are therefore vulnerable to misinformation, puffery and exaggeration used in many ads.
- Early exposure to advertising increases children's vulnerability, and is not associated with greater understanding of advertising and selling intent.
- many advertisements undermine the self esteem of children, making them feel anxious about themselves- anxieties only satisfied by purchase
- major studies of advertising on children and adolescents have reported impacts detrimental to health. For eg
 - i) The American Psychological Association (2004) *Report of the Taskforce on advertising and children*, found that

"a variety of studies have found a substantial relationship between children's viewing of tobacco and alcohol ads and positive attitudes towards consumption of such products. Children find many such commercials attractive ... and consequently have high brand awareness of such products and positive attitudes toward them. These products and their spokescharacters have been found featured in programming and publications frequently viewed by minors, and reviews of this research (including the Surgeon general's analysis) conclude that advertising of them contributes to youth smoking and drinking. " APA 2004, p6

ii) A 2008 report commissioned by Commonsense Media finds growing evidence of the serious health impacts especially in relation to obesity and overweight, alcohol drinking, and smoking, which are related to media exposure see <http://www.common sensemedia.org/about-us/press-room/press-releases/study-reveals-media-damages-child-health>

This review of 173 studies from the past 28 years about the impact of media on children finds a correlation between media exposure and negative health outcomes. Researchers from Yale University School of Medicine, National Institutes of Health and California Pacific Medical Center examined the effects of media exposure on seven health issues: childhood obesity, tobacco use, drug use, alcohol use, low academic achievement, sexual behaviour and attention deficit disorder with hyperactivity.

- Many food advertisements are misleading to children, in that they lack information about unhealthy aspects of the food , for eg the British Heart Foundation recently

commissioned a study of food ads which found that they mislead children and parents through the use of

- quality claims
- selective nutritional claims
- selective health claims
- emotional “insights”
- misleading imagery

(British Heart Foundation 2008)

Other studies have compared the differences in appeals in food ads between those directed to parents and those to children. This highlights the need for parental awareness of such techniques. (Warren, R et al 2008)

- Alcohol promotion occurs through paid ads in sporting telecasts, billboards, and product placement in movies, music videos etc. YMA made a submission to the Senate in 2008 on limiting alcohol advertising, and raising issues related to
 - the effectiveness of alcohol advertising
 - what constitutes an advertisement
 - restricting the time for screening alcohol advertising
 - defining alcohol ads “which are aimed at children”

(Young Media Australia 2008)

These are all issues which need to be considered in any review of product marketing related to alcohol.

- Bans on the advertising of cigarettes are circumvented by the exposure of children and adolescents to attractive smoking portrayals in TV programs, and movies. (Paul, CL et al 2008)
In any review of product marketing, the classification of movies and TV programs that contain glamorised depictions of smoking should be an important consideration.
- Product placement in TV programs, films, and videogames is a growing practice that circumvents some advertising restrictions (Lum, K et al 2008).
 - * Reviews of product marketing for junk food, smoking and alcohol drinking, should include scrutiny of the practice, and consideration of regulatory remedies.
 - * Public education campaigns need to include awareness-raising of the range of techniques used to promote these items.
 - * YMA provides parents with information about product placement in movies, via its *Know before you go* review service aimed at parents of children under 15yrs.
- Product marketing extends across magazines and the Internet, and in some cases will not be able to be regulated. This highlights the need for parents to be equipped as media educators. (Cowburn, G & Boxer, A (2007); Kelly, B; Chapman, K (2007))

2. YMA finds that early exposure to advertising and marketing increases the likelihood that children will be accepting of messages about the desirability of consuming advertised products for their happiness, self esteem and body image. It is all important that early exposure to advertising of all kinds is avoided.

3. Regulation of children's media environment is a very important strategy.

However, regulation of the marketing of particular products and to particular audiences, while possible and effective in some media, is not the whole answer. Further, achieving change may be slow (cf junk food ads regulation), and in some cases impossible. It is vital therefore that parental awareness is raised about the types, occurrence and techniques used in product marketing, especially for foods, alcohol and cigarettes.

4. Many parents lack access to the necessary information, strategies and support to be effective moderators of their children's media experiences. Others may be reluctant, as it can be difficult. It is essential that parents are given these skills, as most media awareness programs delivered direct to children via schools are delivered too late in the child's history of exposure to product marketing.
5. Young Media Australia is one of a very few organisations in Australia offering media awareness supports to parents. We provide access to these supports via our website www.youngmedia.org.au, and via a 24/7 national freecall Helpline 1800 700 357, and via targeted distribution of published resources.
6. In relation to the prevention of obesity and overweight, YMA has 5 years of experience in the research, development, dissemination, and evaluation of early intervention resources for parents of young children in relation to impact of food ads on children under 8 years. With the aid of grants from the Telstra Foundation, between 2004 and 2008, YMA has researched, developed, trialled and evaluated a brochure, Fact sheets, DVD and booklet, and session programs aimed at encouraging parents of young children to avoid food advertising. Copies of these resources and evaluation report have been sent under separate cover. See *References*.
7. However, these resources have had limited distribution across Australia, due to a lack of funds for wider promotion and dissemination. YMA believes these resources could be a useful tool to support the NPHS proposals, but our resources are limited by the availability of organisational and project fund grants.
8. Further, Young Media Australia has a ground breaking research proposal (developed during 2008, with the support of the Australian Research Alliance on Children and Youth) which could develop and provide effective tools for assisting parents in mitigating the impact of product marketing..

This research proposal developed by a new collaboration between YMA, the Parenting Research Centre (Vic), academics from the University of SA and Flinders University and 2 US researchers, seeks to investigate and develop resources to assist parents of children under 7 years to mitigate the impacts of advertising on children's self esteem. YMA is seeking funding for this project. See *References*

9. YMA would welcome the opportunity to work with the proposed National Prevention Centre in the areas of public education and product marketing.



Barbara Biggins OAM
Hon CEO

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http://www.youngmedia.org.au/pdf/fact_sheets/03_06_ads_strategies.pdf

http://www.youngmedia.org.au/pdf/fact_sheets/03_05_ads_body_image.pdf

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Attachment 1: About Young Media Australia

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ACCM's core services include:

- the national freecall 24/7 YMA Helpline (1800 700 357)
- the YMA website www.youngmedia.org.au containing a wealth of media-related information (attracting over 1000 visits per day)
- the popular child-friendly *Know before you go* movie review service (now with more than 420 movie reviews)
- the development of parent media awareness materials, and
- making submissions, and participating in media interviews, related to media regulation.

Parents can access our services via :

- YMA website www.youngmedia.org.au which contains a wealth of information for parents and carers, and attracts over 900 visits per day.
- YMA Helpline, (national, freecall, 24/7) which helps parents deal with issues such as children scared by coverage of disasters on TV, or concerned that their children are spending too much time with videogames, for example.

YMA also provides an award-winning movie review service *Know before you go* . This gives an assessment of the child-friendliness of all current G, PG and some M cinema releases. These reviews are published on the YMA website, or can be accessed via the YMA Helpline. An edited version of one movie each week is published in the review section of the Adelaide Advertiser. This service received a National Child Protection Award in November 2005.

YMA's unique information and research program is conducted by a small team of part-time staff working with professionals who donate their time and expertise. T

The ACCM has DGR and ITEC status. It is funded from membership and licence fees, donations, and project grants.