



SUBMISSION TO THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

INQUIRY INTO FAST FOOD AND OBESITY

AUGUST 2006

Section 1—Organisational details

1.1 Name

Australian Council on Children and the Media (trading as Young Media Australia (YMA))

1.2 Description

Young Media Australia (YMA) is a unique national community organisation, based in Adelaide, whose members share a strong commitment to the promotion of the healthy development of Australian children. Their particular interest and expertise is in the role that media experiences play in that development.

YMA:

- is committed to promoting better choices and providing stronger voices in children's media.
- collects research and other information about the impact of media on children and young people.
- advocates on behalf of children, youth and their parents, and
- provides parents and caregivers with information and strategies to aid in managing media.

1.3 More details

Please see attached Statement for more information about Young Media Australia.

Section 2—Submission details

2.1 Terms of reference include:

1. The recent trends into fast food and beverage consumption in SA
2. The impact of fast foods on obesity and the health of South Australians

3. The marketing of fast foods and its impact on particular groups, especially children
4. The measures, including regulatory, which can be taken to reduce any negative impact from fast foods at the Government, community, corporate and family levels.

2.2 *Our background in these issues:*

YMA has long held concerns about the impact of fast food consumption on the health of young South Australians, and about the role that the marketing of some foods, including fast food, plays in influencing the eating preferences of the young. YMA has:

- made many submissions to government inquiries on this topic (to the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, Australian Broadcasting Authority, and Free TV Australia (formerly FACTS and CTVA))
- conducted national conferences related to these issues
- delivered conference papers and written articles
- conducted research in SA into levels of advertising that children have been exposed to, into the techniques used to appeal to the young, including what misleads and deceives. (*Good to Eat or Good for You* 1998-2000). That research showed that advertising for fast foods was clustered in TV programs shown in the afternoon and early evening.
- Conducted a major project, on food advertising and children under the age of 7 years, in 2005/6 (*Through Thick or Thin*, supported by the Telstra Foundation). This project included a major survey of parents of 4 and 5 year old children about many issues related to food advertising, and including their views on the need for greater regulation. As yet unpublished, the results of this survey will be released to the Committee.
- Developed parent awareness resources (infomercial, 60sec ad, brochures and Fact Sheets) which encourage parents to “keep their children out of the firing line” (also part of the *Through thick or thin* project)
- YMA is a member of the Coalition on Food Advertising to Children (CFAC), and strongly supports the evidence provided in relation to Reference 2 and 3 by CFAC.

2.3 YMA wishes to comment in detail on reference 4.

2.4.1 Government measures

YMA holds the view that present regulatory remedies, in the Free TV Australia Codes of Practice and in the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) Children’s TV Standards (CTS), are inadequate to protect children from the harm which results from frequent exposure to food advertising for foods of low nutritional value. This harm lies in the shaping of young children’s eating preferences towards those foods which are advertised as “good to eat”, but which are not necessarily “good for them”.

2.4.1 (ctd)

YMA wishes to give evidence to the Committee on parents' views of the need for greater regulatory action by governments.

YMA also urges this government to fund the expansion of existing parent awareness programs and strategies to mitigate the impact of the all-encompassing fast food marketing to the young.

2.4.2 Community measures

YMA strongly believes that there is insufficient support for parents attempting to deal with the multi-faceted marketing strategies used to encourage the unhealthy consumption of fast food. This is not a problem for the solution of which parents should have to wear all the responsibility.

The community, including health and other children's professionals, should be publicly expressing their concerns, about the targeting of young children in this way, and should be pro-active in encouraging parents to keep their children "out of the firing line".

YMA has sought in its "Keep them out of the firing line" project to both inform and enlist health professionals in informing parents of the risks to young children of food marketing practices.

The community needs to financially support those community agencies, such as Young Media Australia, which are endeavouring to assist parents with information and strategies to deal with food advertising.

2.4.3 Corporate measures

YMA is most concerned at the marketing practices for fast food, which have an impact on young children. Children under the age of 7 cannot deal effectively with such marketing and advertising.

These practices include cross marketing between fast food outlets and cinema films (often classified M, and therefore inappropriate for children in any event); the use of premium offers to entice children for frequent visits; product placement in movies and TV programs; the use of characters from children's entertainment on food packaging.

Corporations should, at the very least, cease marketing to children under 7.

Noted US media commentator Robert Mc Chesney says

"There is no way around it: the government must act on behalf of children, because market competition and the pursuit of profit forces the commercial system to neglect the long term well-being of children. **The media corporations simply turn children upside down until all the money falls out of their pockets (and their parents!), and then they let go.**"
(McChesney, 2002, p.29-30)

2.4.4 Family measures

YMA believes that a whole of community approach is needed to reduce the impact of marketing of fast food on the young. This whole of community approach must include action at government, corporation, community and family levels. This is not a problem that parents can be expected to deal with on their own.

However, there are measures that families can take to mitigate the impact of fast food marketing practices.

YMA has extensive experience in the development of materials for parents which inform and provide strategies in minimising potentially harmful media impact. YMA's most recent project has developed a basic strategy and resource materials for parents, and has been shown to be effective in dealing with food advertising. YMA wishes to discuss these in more detail with the Committee.

YMA also wishes to discuss with the Committee our plans for a second stage of this project (to be commenced soon with financial support from the Telstra Foundation).

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

YMA welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry. This written submission is brief and in outline. YMA requests a time at which it can expand on this outline and present further evidence to the Committee in an oral submission.

For further information, please contact the undersigned.



Barbara Biggins OAM
Hon CEO
8234 9396/ 8376 2111

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YMA is Australia's only national advocacy organisation representing the interests of children and young people in relation to print, electronic and screen based media.

YMA is committed to promoting better choices, and providing stronger voices in children's media.

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Mission statement

Our 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.

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What YMA does

- collects and reviews research and information related to children and the media
- provides information and advice on the impact of print, electronic and screen based media on children and young people
- advocates for the needs and interests of children in relation to the media
- conducts and acts as a catalyst for relevant research.

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How YMA does it

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- provides information to parents and caregivers via the **Young Media Australia website www.youngmedia.org.au** with over 60 topics relating to children and media use (including movie reviews) These topics are also available in hard copy format.
- provides advice and information via a 24 hour a day / seven days a week , national freecall **Young Media Australia Helpline 1800 700 357**. Helpline operators come from a strong child development and parenting perspective and can provide callers with research based information about the media. They can suggest strategies both for creating healthy media use and minimising harms.
- **represents community concerns** about the impact of print, electronic and screen based media on children and young adults to legislators, regulators and the media.

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YMA structure

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- YMA is a national not-for-profit community organisation, structured as a company limited by guarantee registered for the GST, has tax deductible status and is a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR)
- YMA has a national Board representative of all Australian states and its corporate members
- YMA has a comprehensive organisational membership which includes ECA (Early Childhood Australia (formerly AECA Australian Early Childhood Association), ACSSO (Australian Council of State Schools Organisations), APC (Australian Parents Council), AHISA (Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia), AEU (Australian Education Union), ACPCHN (Australian Confederation of Paediatric and Child Health Nurses), SAPPA (South Australian Primary Principals Association), Federation of NSW P&C (Parents & Citizens), Mothers' Union in Australia, Gowrie Child Centres
- The national office of YMA is located in Adelaide.

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YMA Corporate Management

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- The Board of YMA consists of one Honorary Director for each State and two Directors representative of corporate membership, that is ECA (Early Childhood Australia) and the AEU (Australian Education Union).
- Ms Barbara Biggins, OAM, is the Honorary Chief Executive Officer and advises the Executive Committee of the Board.

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