



Empty calories fuel fat levy

SOFT TARGET

Lucie van den Berg

OBESITY experts are backing a push to tax soft drinks in the same way as cigarettes, as a first step towards a "fat tax".

Sugary drinks were "empty calories" consumed predominantly by young people, Obesity Policy Coalition adviser Jane Martin said.

"Soft drinks are cheaper than milk," she said. "It's consumed by a population that is relatively price sensitive, which is very important if you are trying to change behaviour."

Australian boys aged

12-18 are the highest soft-drink consumers.

International obesity expert and Yale University professor Kelly Brownell advocated a soft-drink tax yesterday.

"We have seen how effective tobacco taxes have been in reducing rates of smoking, so there is no reason to believe such taxes wouldn't be as effective in reducing the consumption of high sugar and fat foods," Prof Brownell told the 46th Australian Psychological Society Annual Conference.

The Parent's Jury said trying to maintain a healthy diet for their children could be a tough challenge.

"With one in four Australian children regarded as either overweight or obese, we would urge the government and industry to work together to create supportive environments for parents to make informed, healthy choices," a spokeswoman said.

Denmark was first to impose a "fat tax", increasing the cost of foods containing saturated fats. Australian Food and Grocery Council chief Kate Carnell said there was already a 10 per cent tax on processed foods.

"Food taxes are regressive as they penalise people who can least afford it," she said.

with AAP

heraldsun.com.au

Video: See how Denmark became the first country to impose a fat tax

