



Should less-healthy foods be taxed more?

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WITH the imposition of a fat tax in Denmark, calls are now being made for the installation of something similar in Australia to curb rising obesity rates.

“Six out of ten Australian adults and one in four children are overweight or obese,” says Jane Martin, senior advisor with the Obesity Policy Coalition. “We think unhealthy foods should be taxed and the funds raised used to subsidise healthy food for people on low incomes,” she added.

So what does the average shopper think?

“Bring it on,” urges one woman. “It will do us all good!”

Another insists: “Taxes are not the answer, just like the carbon tax is not the answer as regards curbing pollution. Food is already too expensive.”

Ms Martin argues that price is an important factor in food buying decisions and it’s of concern that the cost of healthy foods is rising faster than the cost of alternatives.

“We know price plays a role in our decisions and taxes are



SLIM CHANCE: Would a tax on junk food encourage people to stick to a less energy-rich diet?

placed on alcohol and cigarettes to change people’s behaviour. But are we smoking and drinking less?

“A tax on junk food was recommended by the National Preventative Health Task Force but the government failed to respond to it,” Ms Martin continued.

It was ignored in last year’s Henry Tax Review and is not on the agenda for this week’s tax

forum in Canberra.

A spokesman for Health Minister Nicola Roxon said the government was doing more to tackle obesity than any other administration. However, I for one would have to say I know of nothing specific in progress.

Perhaps it would be in Ms Roxon’s interest to make public the action her department is taking to curb the obesity epidemic.