



Health ministers should turn on the lights

TOMORROW health ministers across the country will decide whether or not Australia should adopt a traffic light labelling system on grocery food items.

While the Federal Government is citing lack of evidence for this type of system, we know that a simplified green, amber and red light for fat, salt, sugar and saturated fat can be highly beneficial for consumers when it comes to choosing healthier foods for their family.

For the past 20 years, Australian waistlines have been growing. We now have the fastest rising rate of obesity in the world. Overweight and obese people now outnumber smokers. If left unchecked, we face a tsunami of Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and associated serious health problems.

It defies logic that at a time when state and federal governments are beginning to invest in obesity prevention strategies, they will not support such a vital initiative to help deal with overweight and obesity.

The Obesity Policy Coalition's research shows the majority (87 per cent) of shoppers want a traffic light system. So why is the Government so out of step with community expectations?

If the ministers will not consider a traffic light system, it will be a regrettable missed opportunity to turn the tide on the obesity epidemic.

**Julie Woods,
dietitian,
program manager,
food and nutrition,
VicHealth**



Traffic light labels on food would help tackle obesity, says VicHealth