



FED:Industry failing on junk-food ads: report

By Sam McKeith

SYDNEY, Dec 7 AAP - Industry measures to reduce the amount of junk food advertising kids are exposed to may not be working, a report has found.

The report, by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), has found there continues to be widespread community concern about junk food advertising to children, despite industry moves to curb exposure.

The ACMA report said it's not clear whether two initiatives introduced 18 months ago by the food industry have reduced the amount of junk-food advertising to which children are exposed on free-to-air television.

"At this stage it appears to the ACMA that the community concerns flagged with the ACMA in 2007-09 remain," the report released on Wednesday states.

"Industry initiatives have not yet addressed all these community concerns."

Concerns included the impact of advertising on children's food choices, the volume of food advertising, and misleading claims about the health benefits of food products, the report found.

Despite the findings, ACMA did not recommend changes to the regulation in the area, which is made up of voluntary industry codes.

There would also be no further monitoring of the current industry schemes targeting food advertising to children, the media regulator said.

Obesity Policy Coalition spokeswoman Jane Martin said the federal government was failing to protect children from harmful advertising.

"The report highlights the inadequacy of self-regulation," she told AAP.

"Community concern hasn't gone away, various agencies continue to pass the buck, and there's increasingly sophisticated marketing to children even on free-to-air television.

"The government is losing pace with how advertisers are marketing to children."

She said programs such as It's A Knockout were full of junk food advertising aimed at kids, but could escape regulation under the current system.

"It's not just the advertising within the breaks, but that program is full of marketing for McDonald's - it's got the branding, and it's even got the hosts saying, 'I'm lovin' it'," Ms Martin said.

Cancer Council Australia says the report downplays evidence of regulatory failure.

"Children are still being exposed to the same level of junk-food advertising as they were before these industry-friendly, self-regulated initiatives were introduced," Nutrition and Physical Activity chairwoman Kathy Chapman said in a statement.

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