



## Take note of the joules to save the kilos



**I**F YOU knew the healthy-sounding fruit smoothie you just ordered (as a snack) actually contained as many kilojoules as a burger, would it make you stop and look for something less energy-dense?

At the moment you don't have the option because the information isn't consistently available or displayed.

So you consume your light and fluffy smoothie because, well it's light and fluffy — right?

I can hear you say: "We got along just fine without kilojoule labelling on menus in the past, thank you." But almost two-thirds of the Victorian population weren't overweight or obese back then. Nor did we eat out or eat on the run as much, with fast food now accounting for more than 40 per cent of meals eaten out.

Improving the information available to consumers is critical to empowering them to make healthier choices.

Evidence shows us that kilojoule information on menu labels influences customers to order meals with fewer kilojoules and improves the healthiness of the foods sold. Kilojoule labelling could also help consumers to understand that some fast-food products marketed as healthy choices are in fact high in kilojoules (for example, salads with high-kilojoule dressings and those light and fluffy smoothies which can be high in sugar and fat).

Last year, the *Labelling Logic* report recommended both kilojoule and traffic light labelling on fast food menus. It's a move supported by consumers with a survey conducted by Cancer Council Victoria in 2010 finding 84 per cent of consumers surveyed were in favour of the government requiring food and drink chains to display the number of kilojoules in items on menu boards, and 79 per cent said they would use this information when deciding

what to order.

Of course, it's also important to couple this with a statement about daily kilojoule requirements to enable consumers to put the information into context and educate people through a community awareness campaign.

We've seen mandatory kilojoule labelling on menus of fast food chains come into force in New South Wales and announced in other states as well. Victoria now needs to back up its commitment to the health of its people and show policy support for initiatives such as Jamie Oliver's Healthy Eating Enterprise by proceeding with legislation to mandate kilojoule labelling on fast-food menus.

With the focus on healthy eating, now is the time for the Government to empower people to sort the fat from the fiction on their fast food menus.

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