



REVEALED: McDonald's, KFC face supersize rates rise

FAST FOOD FAT TAX



John Masanauskas and
Madeline Healey

FAST food giants such as McDonald's and KFC face big fat rate increases in a new attack on the obesity crisis.

A Melbourne council will consider hitting major fast food outlets up to 400 per cent more on their rates in a move backed by

dieticians and health groups.

Darebin Council's move could be followed by other councils concerned about the spread of junk food chains despite warnings about illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease.

Darebin councillor Gaetano

Greco said council was investigating a rate slug to discourage and penalise major food outlets.

"Councils have the responsibility of looking after the health and wellbeing of their community," he said yesterday.

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McDonald's, KFC may cop fast-food fat tax

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"Here we are, looking at an extra tool that council can use to limit or control the spread of fast-food chain outlets," Mr Greco said.

Councillors voted to explore the option as part of a wider campaign against Type 2 diabetes after they were told that using planning controls against the outlets would not work.

Extra money from rate increases will be poured into health promotion programs.

Leading dietitian Rosemary Stanton said it was a fantastic idea.

"There's nothing wrong with anyone eating anything occasionally, but when these foods become extremely cheap, they're eaten too often," she said. "So anything we can do to cut down on consumption is a good thing, and fewer outlets would be a good idea."

Obesity Policy Coalition executive manager Jane Martin said it showed councils realised it wasn't just about promoting healthy food, but discouraging bad eating behaviour. But Lord Mayor Robert Doyle said

Darebin's move was laughable, the sort of policy that gave local government a bad name.

"Do you levy a differential rate on Coles because they have a chocolate aisle?" he said. "They say it's about healthy eating, so does that mean they ban every fish and chip shop and Chinese takeaway?"

A McDonald's spokeswoman said that similar to owners of local fish and chip shops, Thai and pizza stores, more than 70 per cent of McDonald's res-

taurants were owned and operated by local people.

"If higher rates are introduced, we believe that they should be made fair across the board and should not penalise particular companies or foods," she said.

The spokeswoman said McDonald's had cut sugar and salt content across its menu and was providing nutritional choices for customers.

with Preston Leader

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