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The plan to make all our kids fat

AUSTRALIA'S leading junk food manufacturers have been blasted for "trickery" and aggressive marketing to children in a report calling for an overhaul of advertising regulations.

An independent review commissioned by The Cancer Council Australia uncovered what researchers says is extensive promotion of unhealthy products directly to children.

The report analysed the public policy statements of eight of the nation's largest food companies and found many fail to deliver on their commitment to responsible marketing.

"Our findings suggest that, despite these policies, most of the products promoted to children were high in sugar, fat and salt," lead author University of Wollongong Professor Sandra Jones said.

The report said seven companies — Cadbury, Kellogg's, Kraft, McDonald's, Nestle, Streets and Uncle Toby's — marketed directly to children.

The eighth examined, Coca-Cola, did not market to children, but was found to "aggressively" target teenagers.

Cadbury was found to make heavy use of fantasy themes to sell its chocolate, while Natural Confectionery Company "introduced the idea of 'healthy lollies'".

Kraft and Nestle were criticised for "cute" characters on packaging, while McDonald's focused on toys that encouraged repeat visits.

The Cancer Council is now calling for regulation of junk food marketing to children to try and stem an expected surge in obesity-related cancers.

Manufacturers say food advertising has been proven to have little bearing on obesity.