



# 2022 Federal Election Priorities

## Change Australia's food environment to improve diets, increase the number of Australians with a healthy weight and promote a healthy population

All Australians should be able to live in a society that promotes their health and wellbeing. As we go about our daily lives, and as children play and learn about the world around them, our environment should promote healthy, delicious food, supporting us to improve our health and wellbeing and setting the foundation for a healthy future for Australian children.

Instead, Australia's food environment puts the profits of the processed food industry above public health. It enables processed food companies to:

- bombard Australian children with marketing for unhealthy food and drinks, ensuring sugary drinks, confectionary and fast food are normalised and desirable;
- use harmful sugar ingredients in foods for babies and toddlers and promote these foods using claims and product names to make them appear healthy;
- label packaged foods without informing consumers about harmful sugars; and
- sell sugary drinks containing excessive amounts of sugar at low prices.

We must act now to improve the food environment for every Australian – this is a key factor in improving diets, reducing the number of Australians above a healthy weight and preventing associated chronic diseases and conditions, including some cancers, heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

The next Australian Government must take urgent action to protect and promote the health of Australians. To achieve this, the following key four actions should be implemented under the framework of the [National Obesity Strategy](#) and the [National Preventive Health Strategy](#).

### 1. Protect Australian children from unhealthy food marketing

Our children cannot escape unhealthy food marketing – it is everywhere, acting as wallpaper in their lives. Children should be able to go to school without a soft drink company putting a billboard at the bus stop, to watch a video online or a TV show without first seeing an ad for a burger chain and to go to their favourite sporting game without fast food chains paying to cover the stadium with their unhealthy brands.

Our community wants this to change – with 7 out of 10 Australian adults supporting government action to protect children from unhealthy food marketing.

Mandatory government regulation to protect all Australian children from the processed food industry's unhealthy food and drink marketing needs to:

- ensure TV, radio and cinema are free from unhealthy food marketing from 6am to 9:30pm;
- prevent processed food companies targeting children;
- ensure public spaces and events are free from unhealthy food marketing; and
- protect children from digital marketing of unhealthy food.

See our plan, [Brands off our kids](#), for more detail.

## 2. Inform consumers about the harmful sugars in packaged foods

Australians deserve to know if their food contains sugars that are harmful to their health, or to the health of their children. Right now, Australians don't know because food manufacturers do not have to put the amount of harmful sugars on food labels. This means that Australians do not have the information they need to reduce the amount of harmful sugar in what they eat and what they feed their families.

To give Australians complete information about the sugars in their food, the Australian Government must:

- introduce mandatory added sugar labelling on the Nutrition Information Panel of packaged foods; and
- implement an accurate and comprehensive definition of added sugar that includes all sugars that are harmful to health, including sugars derived from processed fruit products.

For more information, read our [brief on added sugar labelling](#).

## 3. Protect the health of the youngest Australians by improving the composition, labelling and promotion of commercial baby and toddler foods

Packaged foods that are developed and marketed for babies and toddlers by the processed food industry should promote good health and good dietary habits, setting young children up for a healthy future. But many contain harmful sugar ingredients and are then promoted using claims and product names to make them appear healthy.

The first three years in a child's life are a critical opportunity to establish healthy dietary patterns and food preferences. To ensure that all foods made for babies and toddlers support a healthy start in life, the Australian Government must set higher standards for the composition, labelling and promotion of these foods. Regulation is needed to ensure all commercial baby and toddler foods:

- are of high nutritional quality and meet strong, evidence-based standards on composition, including limits on harmful sugar content;
- are labelled accurately with front-of-pack names reflecting ingredients and the percentage of key ingredients specified in the ingredients list; and
- do not carry promotional claims.

See our page, [Kids are sweet enough](#), for more information

## 4. Reduce sugary drink consumption by introducing a health levy on sugary drinks.

Sugary drinks are a key source of harmful sugars in Australians' diets. A health levy on these drinks is widely recognised and supported as an effective tool to motivate sugary drink companies to reduce the harmful sugars in their drinks and to reduce the amount of harmful sugars consumed by Australians. Health levies can also raise significant revenue for governments.

Health levies on sugary drinks have been implemented in more than 50 countries and have been shown to be effective in encouraging reformulation of drinks to lower sugar and to reduce consumption of sugar from drinks. A health levy on sugary drinks in Australia is widely supported by more than 20 key health and consumer groups, including the Australian Council of Social Services. The Australian Government should implement a health levy that will increase the retail price of sugary drinks by at least 20%.

For further information about why Australia should implement a health levy on sugary drinks, and the experience of other countries, please see the [Obesity Evidence Hub](#).

### **About the Obesity Policy Coalition:**

*The Obesity Policy Coalition is a partnership between Cancer Council Victoria, Diabetes Victoria, VicHealth and the Global Obesity Centre at Deakin University; a World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Obesity Prevention. The Obesity Policy Coalition advocates for evidence-based policy and regulatory change to address overweight, obesity and unhealthy diets in Australia, particularly among children.*