



# Select Committee into the Obesity Epidemic in Australia

## Submission from the Outdoor Media Association

### 01 THE AUSTRALIAN OUT OF HOME INDUSTRY

Outdoor Media Association (OMA) members advertise third party products on digital and traditional signs across a variety of Out of Home (OOH) formats and locations, including airports, bicycle stations, billboards, buses, bus stations, cafés, doctors' surgeries, free-standing advertisement panels, medical centres, office buildings and lifts, pedestrian bridges, railway stations, shopping centres, taxis, trains, trams, universities and street furniture.

OMA members make significant economic contributions to government and the community. Each year, OOH contributes close to \$647 million to Australia's GDP and supports 3,100 jobs. Most OMA members are Australian owned and operated, with profits going back to the Australian economy. The industry provides a revenue stream to government, returning \$1 in every \$2 of revenue in rent and taxes.<sup>1</sup> In 2017, OMA members donated \$36 million in media services and advertising placement to over 220 community groups and charities.

The industry delivers essential services and savings; OOH built and maintains \$352 million of public infrastructure. The 17,664 pieces of public infrastructure delivered by OOH make our cities more user-friendly – the industry is investing in innovation and providing digital utility such as Wi-Fi and wayfinding services. OMA members operate a gold standard of safe and well-designed signs, which only display appropriate advertising content that complies with rigorous self-regulatory codes such as the Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA) Code of Ethics, the AANA Code for Advertising and Marketing Communications to Children, and the Australian Food and Grocery Council (AFGC) Responsible Children's Marketing Initiative (RCMI).

OOH is one of the most trusted channels to broadcast government and community awareness messages, including road safety, public health and community service campaigns.

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<sup>1</sup> Deloitte Access Economics (2016). "Out of Home Adds Value: Out of Home Advertising in the Australian Economy," Outdoor Media Association.

## **02 THE OUTDOOR MEDIA ASSOCIATION**

The OMA is the national peak industry body that represents 80% of Australia’s traditional and digital OOH media display companies and production facilities. Part of the role of the OMA is to help develop policy and regulation for outdoor advertising that is fair and equitable to governments, the community and the industry. The industry’s aim is to deliver high quality, well designed and innovative signage that provides economic and utility benefits to communities.

The OMA welcomes the opportunity to provide comment to the Select Committee into the Obesity Epidemic in Australia and encourages the Committee to open a constructive dialogue with all parties to ensure outcomes that target and effectively address the serious public health issues raised through this Inquiry. The OMA looks forward to working in partnership with the Government tackling these issues.

## **03 SELF-REGULATORY ADVERTISING CODES AND THE OMA PLACEMENT POLICY**

OOH advertising relies on self-regulation to address a range of issues; it allows the industry to establish standards, develop and apply codes of professional ethics, and ensures the community can have confidence in the actions and business practices of OMA members.

The self-regulatory system adhered to by OMA members is robust, efficient and nimble; it is effectively able to address new challenges and reflect evolving community expectations as well as responding to changes in the marketplace and technology, and it ensures that OMA members are able to be responsive as well. An independent Deloitte Access Economics report notes that “the self-regulatory approach achieves similar outcomes to government regulation in compliance and effectiveness, and performs better in terms of cost, efficiency and responsiveness.”<sup>2</sup>

Since 2009, one of the key self-regulatory codes honoured by OMA members is the AFGC’s Responsible Children’s Marketing Initiative (RCMI), designed to moderate the amount and type of food and beverage advertising directed to children. The code was developed to address community concerns about the advertising of foods high in energy, fat, sugar and salt to children highlighted by the Australian Communication and Media Authority (ACMA) in its 2005 report on the Review of the Children’s Television Standards. ACMA called on the advertising industry to “have regard to the strong concerns of interested parties in this area and consider how it can effectively address these concerns without additional regulation.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Deloitte Access Economics (2017). “Assessing the benefits of a self-regulatory advertising complaints handling system: Examining the regulatory system,” available from: <https://www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/economics/articles/benefits-self-regulation-advertising-complaints.html#>

<sup>3</sup> Australian Communications and Media Authority (2008). “Review of the Children’s Television Standards 2005 Report,” available from <https://www.acma.gov.au/-/media/Diversity-Localism-and-Accessibility/Report/pdf/Review-of-the-Childrens-Television-Standards-2005-Final-Report-of-the-Review.PDF?la=en>

An independent review of the Initiative conducted in 2012 demonstrated the significant changes to the way food and beverage companies market to children as a result of the voluntary code and found that the RCMI was “one of a suite of effective tools responding to the complex policy problem of childhood overweight and obesity.”<sup>4</sup>

As part of the OOH industry’s commitment to addressing community concerns, the OMA’s Placement Policy ensures that children and young people are not exposed to the advertisement of goods that are illegal for sale to children and young people (such as alcohol, gambling, and sex services and products).<sup>5</sup>

#### **04 OOH INDUSTRY AND HEALTH PROMOTION**

In an attempt to limit smoking uptake in the 1990s, State Governments partnered with the OOH industry to create health-promoting campaigns. Research into the efficacy of these campaigns demonstrated them to be highly successful and highlighted the power of utilising OOH for the promotion of health messaging, over simply introducing regulatory bans on the promotion of particular products.<sup>6</sup>

Successive studies clearly demonstrated that “replacement” health promotion activities (i.e. the substitution of tobacco advertising messaging with health promotion campaigns) delivered “health benefits that exceed those achieved by prohibition of tobacco sponsorship alone. [The campaigns] offer opportunities for environmental modification, promotion of anti-smoking messages, and targeting groups that are hard to reach.”<sup>7</sup>

OOH has the same potential for positive health promotion when it comes to tackling obesity in Australia, particularly amongst children and young people. The ubiquitous nature of the medium, combined with the industry’s reach and continual technological evolutions, make it the perfect partner to aid governments around Australia to communicate more effectively with the community.

#### **05 SUMMARY**

OOH is the only traditional media on a growth trajectory. With consumers demanding to be connected with the world on their terms, OOH is becoming more relevant than ever before. By aligning with mobile and digital technologies, those utilising OOH advertising are now able to connect with their audience anywhere, anytime. Technology has strengthened the impact of OOH, taking it from being a passive

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<sup>4</sup> Australian Food and Grocery Council (2011). “Australian Quick Service Restaurant Industry Initiative For Responsible Advertising And Marketing To Children: 2011 Compliance Report,” available from: <https://www.afgc.org.au/our-expertise/health-nutrition-and-scientific-affairs/advertising-to-children/>

<sup>5</sup> Outdoor Media Association Placement Policy, available from:

[http://www.oma.org.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/20558/OMA-Placement-Policy.pdf](http://www.oma.org.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/20558/OMA-Placement-Policy.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Holman C, Donovan R, Corti B, Jalleh G, Frizzell S and Carroll A. (1997). “Banning tobacco sponsorship: replacing tobacco with health messages and creating health-promoting environments,” *Tobacco Control*, 6(2):115–21. Available from:

<http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/picrender.fcgi?artid=1759553&blobtype=pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Holman CDJ, Donovan RJ and Corti B. (1994). “Report of the evaluation of the Western Australian Health Promotion Foundation,” Department of Public Health and Graduate School of Management. Perth: The University of Western Australia. Available from:

<http://heapro.oxfordjournals.org/content/8/3/199.abstract>

medium to one that can be fully interactive; a potential one-stop shop for promotion, engagement and transaction.

The OMA encourages the Committee to move beyond overly-simplistic regulatory bans that consistently fail to deal with the many levers driving a complicated public health issue such as obesity rates. Instead, we encourage a more nuanced and multi-faceted response, as we have seen in successful Australian health promotion campaigns.

OOH's commitment to responding to community concerns in a timely and effective manner, as well as the industry's track record in working with governments on community messaging, makes OOH the ideal partner to address health concerns impacting children and young people in Australia.