

Persuasive Speech Years 10 - 12: Traditional speech

There is no doubt about it – Australian children are becoming more obese. Who is responsible? The parents? The child? Or the wider community, including the education system and the government? Surely it is a combination of these. So all credit to the Federal Government for commissioning the report into obesity titled ‘Weighing it up: Obesity in Australia’. But surely the report could have been tougher in its recommendations, particularly those concerning how junk food is advertised to children. Industry self-regulation will not work. The government must step in.

Statistical research has proved that children are becoming fatter. According to the most recent National Health Survey, there was a significant increase in the proportion of children who were obese ‘from 5.2 per cent in 1995 to 7.8 per cent in 2007/2008’. Parents are better informed about high fat/high sugar foods versus those high in nutritional value. Schools have compulsory physical activity and new rules about canteen food items. The wider community offers a range of information and activity programs aimed at improving our health, including that of our children. Yet, ‘Australians’ waistlines continue to expand’, says Jane Martin, senior policy adviser for the Obesity Policy Coalition.

One contributing factor seems obvious: our children are bombarded with junk food advertising. It is on billboards, television, the internet – and so is virtually impossible to avoid. According to media research conducted by the Australian Communications and Media Authority, there is no proven link between obesity and television advertising. Kate Carnell, chief executive of the Australian Food and Grocery Council, is therefore right to suggest that further research should be undertaken. But no proof yet of a link does not mean that a link does not exist! Surely we should err on the side of caution and limit the temptation on children to eat junk food by reducing advertising.

The code has some strengths. At present the recommendations for advertisers say that all food marketed to children must meet ‘new sugar, salt and fat limits’ and the marketing must ‘encourage a healthy lifestyle and physical activity’. Though several fast food chains are already signatories, not all have committed to the new initiative. Why not? Because they do not have to. Thanks to the government, the fast food industry’s marketing experts are ‘self-regulating’. The chief executive of the Australian Association of National Advertisers, Scott McLellan, claims that advertisers have already reached a ‘high level of social responsibility’ in their marketing to children. It is in his interests, of course, to make this claim as no one would want to be seen as irresponsible. However, at present, there is no way of guaranteeing that advertisers do the honourable thing and protect children from, as Martin puts it, ‘the unfettered bombardment of junk food advertising in their everyday life’.

Strong opening statement about the underlying problem

Shows a reasonable rather than an emotional response
Clear contention that answers the question about the issue
Succinct topic sentence

Credible source
Recent statistics as supporting evidence
Shows some thinking about the wider issue of obesity and lifestyle
Quotes expert opinion as supporting evidence; this sentence also links the paragraph to the issue and the main contention

Assertive tone

Shows consideration of an alternative point of view

Exclamation mark conveys the writer’s conviction on the issue

Shift in tone to remind the audience that this is a reasoned response to the issue

Detailed references and quotations suggest that the writer’s opinion is considered and based on research rather than intuition and anecdotes

Includes a rebuttal of the opposing view

Young children are not won over by clear labelling about sugar and salt and fat levels. They are won over by the image of a favourite cartoon character and the promise of a free toy. True, it is the parents who pay for the meal packages, but children are very good at demanding and nagging until they get the plastic figurine that will complete the 'set'. There is an overwhelming number of products marketed at children and no parent can resist the pressure all of the time. Surely our elected government as the representative of the wider community needs to do as much as possible to help bring up our nation's children to be fit and healthy.

It would be nice to think we can trust advertisers to do the right thing by our children, but hey – isn't their job to sell, sell, sell? The government needs to raise the bar and make laws to impose reductions on fast food advertising in order to protect children.

This develops the idea of the previous paragraph, showing the ineffectiveness of the code.

Appeal to justice, fairness and responsible government. The argument has developed throughout the piece and culminates in this statement.

Conversational style and inclusive language position the audience to share the writer's point of view. The rhetorical question cuts to the heart of what advertising is all about.

The piece also finishes with a strong restatement of the main contention

From:

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