

## BCH POSITION STATEMENT

Date: May 2018



## Sugar Tax

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### **BCH Role**

Ballarat Community Health has a strong focus on illness prevention and health promotion. Our mission is to create opportunities and supportive environments which empower people to develop optimal health and wellbeing. This includes working with individuals, schools, workplaces and the broader community to advocate for, influence and promote healthy eating habits.

Given the summary of evidence available, Ballarat Community Health supports the introduction of a sugar tax as having potential to change some people's dietary habits, as part of a broad range of multifaceted, evidence based interventions focused on improving the overall health and wellbeing of the community.

Ballarat Community Health further supports the Dietitian's Association of Australia (DAA) suggested measures for reducing sugar sweetened beverage intake which include taxing sugar at a high rate, to make a difference in achieving behaviour change (that is, cutting intake of sugar-sweetened beverages among individuals). The Association also feels the money generated from such a tax should go towards supporting public health nutrition measures.

Work needs to be done on many fronts, in a comprehensive and coordinated way, to get people eating a better-quality diet, which will help address issues such as obesity and diet-related chronic diseases. Broader measures to reduce the consumption of all discretionary (or 'junk') foods include:

- Increased nutrition education and food literacy programs
- Reformulating foods to make them healthier
- Combatting nutrition misinformation and
- Restriction on advertising and marketing of unhealthy food and beverage advertising to children

### **Context**

- *VicHealth encourages the discussion of a sugar tax, an issue that was highlighted by the Victoria's Citizen Jury of Obesity in 2016 (VicHealth, 2016)*
- *Grattan Institute has published a report recommending an introduction of a sugar tax in Australia (Duckett, S.J. and Swerissen, H., 2016)*
- *The WHO recommend that no more than 5% (6 teaspoons) of daily energy intake should come from free sugars (World Health Organization, 2015)*
- *A similar tax has been implemented or announced in a number of other countries, including Mexico, Denmark, United Kingdom, Hungary and South Africa (Cornelsen, L. and Carreido, A., 2015)*

## Key Messages

- Soft drinks and fruit juice are classified as discretionary and can have between 5-8 teaspoons of sugar in a can or glass. Education and support needs to be directed towards food outlets and key settings such as early childhood services, schools, workplaces, community groups and sports clubs to provide and promote health food choices.
- Australian Health Survey 2011-2012 show that 55% of participants consume more free sugars than recommended and have an average of 60g (14tsp) a day( Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016).
- Consumption of free sugars, including products like sugary drinks can increase the risk of reduced bone strength, poor oral health and the development of diabetes (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2013).
- Putting a 40 cents tax per 100g of sugar on drinks is predicted to reduce sugary drink intake by 15% and generate \$500 million in revenue (Duckett, S.J. and Swerissen, H., 2016).
- The revenue generated from the tax needs to be put towards supporting evidence based public health nutrition strategies.
- Countries such as Finland, France, Hungary, Mexico and some states in the US have successfully implemented tax on sugary drinks and other energy dense foods, however the long term impact has yet to be evaluated with some countries repealing the tax (Cornelsen, L. and Carreido, A., 2015).
- A sugar tax needs to be part of a multifaceted approach to improving nutrition, which includes initiatives targeted at specific population groups (including children and the elderly); settings (including health care settings); and at whole of community.

## Sources

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Australian Medical Association, 2018. *Nutrition – 2018*. [online] Available at: <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/nutrition-2018> [Accessed 20 April. 2018].

Cornelsen, L. and Carreido, A., 2015. Health-related taxes on foods and beverages. *Food Research Collaboration Policy Brief, 20*.

Dietitians Association of Australia, 2016. *Sugary foods and drinks: Decades of advice from dietitians*. [online] Available at: <https://daa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Media-alert-Sugary-foods-drinks-Decades-of-advice-from-dietitians-FINAL.pdf> [Accessed 21 Feb. 2018].

Duckett, S.J. and Swerissen, H., 2016. *A sugary drinks tax: recovering the community costs of obesity*. Grattan Institute.

## Process for approval of Position Statements:

- Review/approval by Team Leader
- Review/approval by Management Group
- Register of statements is maintained by the CEO's office, along with master copies
- Once finalised, Position Statements are made available on the shared drive, included in the Thursday Update and provided to the Board of Directors.

National Health and Medical Research Council, 2013. *Australian Dietary Guidelines*. Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council, pp.67-85.

VicHealth, 2016. *Momentum grows for a sugar tax in Australia*. [online] Available at: <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/search/sugar-tax> [Accessed 20 Feb. 2018].

World Health Organization, 2015. *WHO guideline: sugar consumption recommendation*. [online] Available at: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2015/sugar-guideline/en/> [Accessed 20 Feb. 2018].

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Ballarat Community Health provides education, support and information to individuals, schools, workplaces and the community.

For more information contact:

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