

Wednesday 13 December 2017

Parents call for sugary Christmas truck to be scrapped

A collaboration of health bodies, angered by the arrival of the Coke Christmas Truck on Australian shores, have joined forces in an open letter to Coca-Cola and The Salvation Army. The collaboration, led by Parents' Voice, is particularly disappointed by Coca-Cola's decision to visit Tamworth. As with much of regional Australia, Tamworth has high levels of overweight and obese Australians, with 73.9 per cent of adults in the region either overweight or obese.

Coke has partnered with The Salvation Army for a tour of New South Wales and Queensland. Parents' Voice Campaigns Manager, Alice Pryor, points out that the partnership is about brand positioning for Coke: "It's well-known Coke is a harmful product packed with sugar. With one in four Australian kids overweight or obese, it's hard to comprehend they're deliberately targeting children in this at-risk community."

"Coke's decision to partner with The Salvation Army is not out of the goodness of their corporate hearts, it's about disguising their marketing techniques. The truck is essentially a giant mobile billboard marketing unhealthy products to vulnerable communities."

Sydney parent, Rachel Clemons, is equally concerned about the impact the truck will have on the communities in question: "It's outrageous that Coke is trying to make their brand synonymous with Christmas. The last thing children need at this special, family-focused time of year is to be manipulated by in-your-face marketing of sugary drinks."

Chief Executive Officer at the Public Health Association of Australia, Michael Moore, is also disappointed by the truck's arrival. Mr Moore expressed concern that it could further contribute to the health problems in the targeted communities of Tamworth, Townsville and Mt Isa: "The truck's route raises further suspicion about Coke's motivations. Townsville's kids are the heaviest in Queensland, with 21.4 per cent overweight and 9.3 per cent obese. There is no justification for Coke's presence in such a susceptible community grappling with obesity."

While Coke claims the tour will leave a "legacy" within the communities it visits, the truck will also end its journey at Sydney's Carols in the Domain, an event primarily for children. Ms Pryor added: "Parents are angry that despite Coca-Cola stating they don't market to kids under 12, they are now a major sponsor of Carols in the Domain. The Coke Christmas truck is stealth marketing aimed at Australian kids. This targeting of Australian kids must end."

The collaboration comprises of Parents' Voice, the Australian Dental Association, Australian Health Promotion Association, Dental Hygienists Association of Australia, Diabetes Australia, LiveLighter WA, Mai Wiru Sugar Challenge Association, Nutrition

Parents' Voice is supported by:



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Australia, Obesity Policy Coalition, Public Health Association of Australia, SugarByHalf, Sugar Free Smiles, YMCA Victoria, and members of the Food Governance Node at the Charles Perkins Centre, University of Sydney.

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Note to editors:

A petition to stop the Coke Christmas Truck from reaching its final destination, Sydney's Carols in the Domain, can be found online: <https://www.change.org/p/coca-cola-stop-the-coca-cola-christmas-truck>

Parents' Voice is an online network of parents interested in improving the food and activity environments of Australian children. It's supported by Cancer Council Australia, Diabetes Victoria, VicHealth and YMCA.

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