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**Media Release
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Free TV Australia warns against knee jerk response to the childhood obesity problem

Free TV Australia is opposed to renewed calls for ad bans as a way of addressing concerns about childhood obesity.

Free TV Chief Executive, Julie Flynn warned against a “knee jerk quick fix” response to the childhood obesity problem.

Ms Flynn said “There is no evidence that banning advertising will resolve what everyone agrees is a complex and multi-faceted problem.”

“But it is clear from the recent UK experience that ad bans have a very negative impact on children’s programming”.

UK ad bans have led to significant cuts in ad spend on children’s programming of around 30 million pounds so far. Production spending cuts are even higher with ITV alone estimated to have cut children’s production by around 30 million pounds a year.

Australian commercial free to air television is already heavily regulated in the area of children’s television. For over 25 years governments of both persuasions have chosen to deliver the important social and cultural objective of providing high quality child specific programming free to view for all Australian children through an advertiser funded model.

The Children’s Television Standard (CTS) is a condition of licence for all commercial free to air broadcasters and contains programming requirements (which include the requirement for each licensee to provide 390 hours of programming per year) and scheduling and content restrictions on advertising.

Broadcasters take their obligations under the CTS very seriously.

Ms Flynn notes further that “Commercial free to air television is the only media platform in Australia which is regulated both in terms of children’s programming requirements and advertising restrictions”.

“We are not aware of any other country in the world which chooses to regulate children’s programming in this way. Further advertising restrictions would seriously undermine funding for children’s programming”

The CTS are currently under review by ACMA and Free TV is preparing a submission which will be released shortly.

“We accept the need for regulation in this highly sensitive area but simplistic solutions such as advertising bans won’t solve the childhood obesity problem and will have a negative impact on quality children’s programming” said Ms Flynn.

Further detail on the regulation of advertising can be found in the attached flowchart and Q & A.

-ENDS-

Media enquiries and interviews:

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