

17 March 2016

www.phaa.net.au

The time is right for a sugar tax on soft drinks

This is a perfect time for Australia to push to protect public health via a sugar tax on soft drinks as the Government reviews tax reform says Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) President Professor Heather Yeatman.

“A sugar tax on soft drinks would benefit the health of Australians. Sugary soft drinks provide no nutritional value and evidence shows that people who are overweight are more likely to drink soft drink. The obesity epidemic in this country is similar to that in the UK. Australia needs to follow Britain’s example and implement a sugar tax on soft drinks to help lower obesity rates and improve public health,” said Professor Yeatman.

Britain’s Finance Minister George Osborne announced a sugar drink levy on drinks with more than five grams of sugar per 100 millilitres. Public health authorities in the UK and other countries have been calling for such action. Jamie Oliver pushed for the levy which will be introduced in 2018 and has [now called on Australia to follow suit](#).

“If Australia were to proceed with a similar levy it would likely start with taxing the *added sugar* in soft drinks.” said Professor Yeatman. PHAA Key Election Priorities 2013 listed a tax/levy on selected nutritionally undesirable foods, including high added sugar drinks, as a key priority and revenue opportunity for the Australian Government.

The idea is not new. Even in 2009 over [40 American States have small taxation measures on sugary drinks](#) and as long ago as 1776 Adam Smith suggested: *“Sugar, rum, and tobacco are commodities which are nowhere necessities of life, which are become objects of almost universal consumption, and which are therefore extremely proper subjects of taxation”*. The Wealth of Nations, 1776

“PHAA have been pushing for this levy for years and we now have a catalyst to make it a reality. Britain has provided a blueprint for Australia to follow and with the election approaching, this is a great time for the Government to review tax reform and how it could improve the health of all Australians while at the same time raising revenue,” said PHAA CEO Michael Moore.

“The income generated from the levy could be invested in public health initiatives including preventive programs and to promote nutritionally desirable foods for disadvantaged groups,” said PHAA CEO Michael Moore.

“The UK has sent a great message – too much sugar in your diet is bad for you. This levy shows the UK Government is committed to making a stand on obesity and improving public health. Australia has the ability to look at this example and see what needs to be reviewed and how Australia can utilise a similar sugar tax to target the overall public health for the country,” concluded Mr Moore.

For more information: <http://www.phaa.net.au/about-us/SIGs/food-nutrition>

For further information/comment:

Sophie Brown PHAA (Heather Yeatman and Michael Moore comment)

0421 749 608